

Dreaming Theory as Religion

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Editorial Appraisals:

Some qualified reviewers offer their own brief evaluation of the book. Otherwise most of our content represents the authors'-editors' own words as a preview to their approach to the subject, their style and point-of-view. <>

[Attention, Not Self](#) by Jonardon Ganeri [Oxford University Press, 9780198757405]

Jonardon Ganeri presents an account of mind in which attention, not self, explains the experiential and normative situatedness of human beings in the world. Attention consists in an organisation of awareness and action at the centre of which there is neither a practical will nor a phenomenological witness. Attention performs two roles in experience, a selective role of placing and a focal role of access. Attention improves our epistemic standing, because it is in the nature of attention to settle on what is real and to shun what is not real. When attention is informed by expertise, it is sufficient for knowledge. That gives attention a reach beyond the perceptual: for attention is a determinable whose determinates include the episodic memory from which our narrative identities are made, the empathy for others that situates us in a social

world, and the introspection that makes us self-aware. Empathy is other-directed attention, placed on you and focused on your states of mind; it is akin to listening. Empathetic attention is central to a range of experiences that constitutively require a contrast between oneself and others, all of which involve an awareness of oneself as the object of another's attention. An analysis of attention as mental action gainsays authorial conceptions of self, because it is the nature of intending itself, effortful attention in action, to settle on what to do and to shun what not to do. In ethics, a conception of persons as beings with a characteristic capacity for attention offers hope for resolution in the conflict between individualism and impersonalism.

[Attention, Not Self](#) is a contribution to a growing body of work that studies the nature of mind from a place at the crossroads of three disciplines: philosophy in the analytical and phenomenological traditions, contemporary cognitive science and empirical work in cognitive psychology, and Buddhist theoretical literature.

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Excerpt: Epigraphs

- We say: 'I didn't see; my attention was elsewhere. I didn't hear; my attention was elsewhere.' For it is through the attention that one sees and hears. Therefore, even when someone touches us on the back, we perceive it through the attention. — Brhadāranyaka Upanishad (c. 7th century BCE.)
- And what is the proximate cause for knowledge, for seeing things as they really are? It should be said: attention. —Sam'yutta Nikāya (c. 3rd century BCE.)
- Attention is the centring of consciousness evenly and correctly on a single object; placing is what is meant. Its function is to eliminate distractors. —Buddhaghosa, The Path of Purification
- The function of consciousness must be to link us attentively to the physical world that contains us ...Attention ultimately functions as a sort of life-blood for a whole range of mental phenomena; or perhaps better expressed, as a kind of psychic space ... A system of experience constitutes a continuous ongoing phenomenon which is a sort of circle or centre of awareness. This awareness is the Attention. —Brian O'Shaughnessy, *Consciousness and the World*
- Attention provides a window for consciousness through which we become aware of a small subset of real bindings among a throng of illusory phantom objects. —Anne Treisman, 'Consciousness and Perceptual Binding' in A. Cleeremans and C. Frith eds., *The Unity of Consciousness, Binding, Integration, and Disassociation*
- We should not pretend to find a detached self in all our experiencing and acting ... we should discard the idea that mindedness implies the presence of a detached self. —John McDowell, 'The Myth of the Mind as Detached' in Joseph Schear ed., *Mind, Reason and Being-in-the World*
- There is no inner self which does the looking towards or looking away. —Buddhaghosa, *The Dispeller of Delusion* (c. 450 CE)
- When I run after a streetcar, when I look at the time, when I am absorbed in contemplating a portrait, there is no I ... I am then plunged into the world of attractive and repellant qualities—but me, I have disappeared. —Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*
- Attention with effort is all that any case of volition implies. —William James, *Principles of Psychology*

- Shame is my empathetic awareness of the other's attention ...leading to decreased self-esteem. —Dan Zahavi, *Self and Other*

This book is an exploration of the reorientations that take place when attention is given priority in the analysis of mind. Attention, I will argue, has an explanatory role in understanding the nature of mental action in general and of specific mental actions such as intending, remembering, introspecting, and empathizing. It has a central role in explaining the structure of the phenomenal and of cognitive access, the concept of the intentionality or directedness of the mental, the unity of consciousness, and the epistemology of perception. And attention is also key to an account of the nature of persons and their identity, to the distinction between oneself and others, and to the moral psychology that rests upon it.

I claim that what explains the nature of our consciously active involvement with the world, our freedom from passivity, is attention. This leads me first to reject two ideas in the philosophy of action, agent causalism and the causal theory of action, one very much out of vogue and the other very much in. What I will call the 'Authorship View' of self detaches the self from experience and action; it is the main target of Buddhist 'no-self' (anatta) polemic, more so even than notions of self as permanent substance or substratum. The argument is perhaps straightforward: being the centre of an organized arena of experience and action is a property not of a real but at best of a virtual entity, which as such cannot have any causal powers; so the self cannot be an agent. It cannot be an inactive witness either, because witnessing is meta-cognitive attention and attention is a mental action. The causal theory of action, that an event is an action just in case it is caused by a rationalizing intention which is itself the result of an agent's motivating beliefs and desires, may provide a sufficient condition for action but cannot constitute a necessary one—not, at least, if one wants to leave room for the idea that much of what happens in the

mind is mental action and not mere happening. That is particularly true of attention, considered as a fundamental kind of mental action, and it is unfortunate that the influence of the causal theory of action continues in cognitive psychology's enduring attachment to an endogenous/exogenous distinction in theories of attention.

Conscious attention, I will argue, performs two distinct roles in experience, a role of placing and a role of focusing, roles which match a distinction between selection and access endorsed in influential recent theories of attention. The intentionality of conscious experience rests on two sorts of attentional action, a focusing-at and a placing-on, the first leading to experience a perspectival categorical content and the second structuring its phenomenal character. Placing should be thought of more like opening a window for consciousness than as shining a spotlight, and focusing has to do with accessing the properties of whatever the window opens onto. A window is an aperture whose boundaries are defined by what is excluded—in this case, distractors. The claim that attention performs two constitutive roles in perceptual experience is motivated by a need to respect two apparently competing insights about experience, one having to do with its epistemic role in supplying reasons for our beliefs about the world around us, the other to do with the phenomenology of openness to the world. Attention is the glue that binds our sensate, active, and rational natures, that in virtue of which we both find ourselves absorbed by a world of solicitations and also what enables us to access objective features of the entities whose presence solicits us.

The recognition that attention performs these two roles enables me to argue that the epistemology of attention is such that attention provides an immediate improvement to justification, as long as there are no defeaters, and also that when suitably expert attention is sufficient for knowledge. I will argue that attentional justification is an undervalued epistemic principle, and relate it with a view known as 'Dogmatism' in the epistemology of perception. There is, I will agree, cognitive penetration of

attention by beliefs and interests, as well as by past actions, but it is restricted in scope. So attention improves justification, and sometimes, when attention is trained or cultivated, the improvement is such as to deliver knowledge.

A puzzle about attention with a long history will need to be addressed, the puzzle that attention can be captured by events or features and in such cases does not appear to be required for conscious experience. One might argue that there is still conscious attention in these cases, though of a global sort; but the view I defend is rather that attention has a subliminal as well as a conscious form. Subliminally, attention is the mode of activity of cognitive modules which are responsible for the orienting towards and processing of stimuli, and their deliverance into awareness, as well as for crossmodal integration. A close relationship between attention and working memory is revealed, attention having a large part to play in the gate-keeping, maintaining, and modulating of information in working memory. Attentional orienting is an action with two aspects, a cognitive aspect in the instruction to select a sense modality, and a contribution to consciousness through the embodied intentionality that is a matter of being 'in touch with', alive or present to, engaged by, the environment. So orienting has a constitutive role in a first sort of reaching out which consists in being present to the world. It will be important to separate the role of attention within a philosophy of conscious thought from its role within a philosophy of cognitive science, between attention considered as a contributor to conscious experience and attention considered as an activation of cognitive modules.

It is a fundamental feature of the account to be developed here that there are many varieties of conscious attention. A basic (that is to say, irreducible) kind of attention is intending, when one sets oneself to act, a straining or exertion that fills the 'psychic space' with resolution. Other basic kinds of attention are introspection, a distinctive manner of attending to the world and not quasi-perceptual awareness of one's inner life, and

mindful attention, a kind of rehearsing or retentive attention. Attention, moreover, is that in virtue of which one does not merely live in the present but also travels mentally into the past and is situated in a social world with others. So another basic variety of attention is past-directed and auto-noetic: it is placed on past events whose properties are retrieved in an act of simulated reliving. In episodic memory, the reliving of experience from one's personal past, one attends to the past in a particular way, but there is no reduction of the phenomenology of temporal experience to a representation of self as in the past.

Attention can also be placed on others, and this, too, is a basic variety of attention. Now it is you on whom my attention is placed, and what I access in focusing on you are your mental states. I do not experience them directly; rather, your movements provide focal attention with a causal channel: they 'intimate' your thoughts to me. It is analogous to listening to another, itself a kind of attention. So empathy, one's awareness of another in their otherness, is an attentional state, a fact that is phenomenologically evident if one reflects on what it is like oneself to be that other on whom another's attention falls. To conceive of a being as other is to conceive of it as the centre of an arena of presence and action in which one may oneself be located, but not at the centre. While phenomenologists have claimed that empathy is a perceptual skill, I will argue instead that empathy is a distinct kind of attention, attention through embodied comportment to the feelings, commitments, and wishes of others as others.

I will draw on the distinction between self and other that is made available by empathetic attention in order to construct an account of persons. Persons are not merely causally connected chains of psycho-physical events, nor are they physical objects that happen to instantiate mental properties: they are loci of value and significance. The boundaries of a person are defined by what is excluded as alien, and so the notion of a person is apophatic rather than forensic. Emotions like shame evidently presuppose that there is such a distinction,

for shame is an empathetic access to another's attention on one, and a resultant diminishing of self-esteem.

There is no need to introduce any more robust distinction between self and other than the one implied by a conception of persons as beings with a characteristic capacity for attention. In particular, there is no need to conceive of the distinction as having its basis in a phenomenology of interiority or in an authorial conception of self. There is nothing that could be described as the invariant core of a human being, such as a set of fixed character traits, but one effect of attending is to make some elements more central, at least for a short period. Neither should we think of the narrative identity of a person as requiring one to stand in a relation of sympathy for one's past and future condition: it is enough that one does not feel alienated from them. So the conception of human beings as endowed with the capacity for attention provides an alternative both to strident individualism and to impersonal holism. Attention precedes self in the explanation of what it is to be human, and if there is anything defensible in the concept of self, for example as the expression of a subjectivity that is at once experiential and normative, then it itself must be understood in terms of its relationship to attention. So attention, not self, is what has explanatory priority, and the misapplication of the concept self is as the concept of a detached author, the simple origin of willed directives, a concept that forces us to understand the mind in terms of a dichotomy between free voluntary actions and purely passive happenings.

Such, in outline, is the position I describe and defend here. In doing so I will draw extensively on the ideas and arguments of a Theravada Buddhist philosopher, Buddhaghosa, living in Sri Lanka and writing in Pali around the fifth century CE. A hugely important figure in the history of philosophy, his ideas would influence conceptions of the human throughout South and Southeast Asia for a millennium and a half, and they continue to do so today. Their philosophical significance, moreover, is global in reach. For Attentionalism, as we call the

stance which lends attention centrality in explanatory projects in philosophy, encourages us to rethink many central concepts in the philosophy of mind from an attention-theoretic perspective. Two large bodies of data about attention are available to an aspiring Attentionalist: first, the rich experimental studies of contemporary cognitive psychology; and, second, the information which emerged as a result of meticulous Buddhist introspective observation of the human mind's structure and functioning in the first 1,000 years after the Buddha lived. I will seek to draw these two bodies of evidence together, to study the philosophical implications of their interaction, and thus to form a better appreciation of the reach and limits of the project. An attention-theoretic approach brings important new options to the table in contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science, providing new directions to recent work on the pervasiveness of the mental, embodied cognition, cognitive phenomenology, intersubjectivity, personal identity, and the experience of time.

Michael Dummett recently predicted that 'the best point of contact between philosophers of divergent traditions surely lies in the philosophy of mind'. Philosophy of mind is indeed a transcultural undertaking: the search for a fundamental theory of mind must never limit itself to the intuitions and linguistic practices of any one community of thinkers but should be ready to learn from diverse cultures of investigation into the nature of mind and mind's involvement in world. The Buddhist thinkers whose ideas are examined here had an enormous interest in getting the story right about the mind, and for that reason if no other we should take very seriously what they had to say. One ought not ask ancient texts to bear the weight of greater expectations than they can sustain, but with discretion and sensitivity they can be a source of profound philosophical insight. <>

Buddhaghosa's masterpiece, The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)

has long been available in a masterful translation of Bhikkhu Ñāóamoli Here are links to a couple gratis pdf versions:

[The Path of Purification \(Visuddhimagga\) translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Ñāóamoli](#)

[The Path of Purification \(Visuddhimagga\) translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Ñāóamoli](#)

<>

[Religion as a Philosophical Matter: Concerns about Truth, Name, and Habitation](#) by Lars Albinus [De Gruyter Open, 9783110468663] Open Source

Philosophy of religion, Interwar philosophy, world-relation

The book works out new perspectives for a philosophy of religion that aims beyond the internal questions of rationality within a theological tradition, on the one hand, and the outer criticism of religion from naturalistic quarters, on the other. Instead it places itself within a wider philosophical view in line with groundbreaking thoughts about culture and a basic human 'conditionality' among interwar philosophers such as Ernst Cassirer, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Walter Benjamin, and Martin Heidegger. The book also offers a concrete interpretation of examples of religious phenomena displaying a human world-relation that centers on issues of 'truth', 'name', and 'habitation'. Finally, lines are drawn to Jean-Luc Nancy's current rethinking of Christianity.

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Excerpt: During the interwar period of the former century, thoughts were developed which seem to have had a lasting impact on Western philosophy. The aim of this book is to integrate some of these thoughts in a renewed understanding of religion. The particular endeavor is led by two interrelated theses: First, I claim that crucial, but generally overlooked, relations between religion, philosophy, and science come to light when we take a closer look at our human inclination to construe the world as a home and make it true by way of naming it. Secondly, I claim that philosophy unfolds within frames of thinking which are, on the one hand, constituted by historical limitations and, on the other, by unalterable conditions of human existence. Taken together these claims imply both that historically different forms of truth, naming, and habitation, nevertheless share a profound similarity when it comes down to being world-relations and also that only the tension between a diachronic and a synchronic view can bring about this perspective.

The kind of world-relation that most fundamentally sets human beings apart from other animals is language. In terms of consciousness, the realization of mortality is also essentially human. Religion in all forms is perhaps the most obvious expression of this. A religious consciousness, however, can be many things. At the root, I think it eludes a philosophical conceptualization. In order to access religion as a human phenomenon which is neither too close nor too far away, I argue that we will have to comprehend it from a premise we already share with it, namely, the premise of being a world-relation. Accordingly, my endeavor to gain a philosophical perspective on religion will focus on the kind of language which is charged with responses by intellectual beings to the condition of mortality. However, it is crucial to keep the historical differences of these responses in mind. What I hope to lay out in the present work is, in other words, variable, yet interrelated concerns with being-in-the-world as symbolically reflected in

the human form of life. Within this frame of orientation, the present work is, first of all, a philosophical attempt at rethinking religion.

That being said, the book does not present a program and has not dropped its anchor in an immediate objectification of religion as one phenomenon among others. Fundamentally, I would say that such an investigation doesn't need philosophy in the first place, but are actually better off with theories of various kinds. Instead of regarding religion as something that can be investigated, either from inside as theological self-reflection, or from the outside as a disowned form of life, I intend to investigate it in the borderland between 'inside' and 'outside', or being and non-being, which is a place where philosophy generally feels at home, I guess. Thus, it is my ambition throughout this study to proceed in ways in which religion, philosophy and science can each change their appearance between objectified phenomena and assumed points of view depending on the argument.

It is my contention that philosophy cannot think religion without thinking about itself as thinking, and therefore arguments concerning the critical limits of a philosophical investigation will take up quite some space in the present work. In brief, I regard philosophy as a conceptual investigation the instrument of which is already conceptual. It is, therefore, bound by a certain circularity which it should not expect to transcend but rather reflect upon. This is what makes it philosophy in the first place. I recognize, of course, a self-transcending tendency of language, not only in the paradoxical sense that what it refers to by its own means is something different from itself, but also in the fantasizing sense of pointing towards 'essences' or some 'ineffable reality' beyond the sensible world. The kind of philosophical reflection subscribed to in this book makes a point of speaking from within a linguistic immanence, even though this immanence cannot conceive of its own givenness. Far from denying that it is, therefore, in a sense returned to a sense of transcendence, the point is to acknowledge – and stay away from – the

conceptual void, or transcendence, of this condition. However, the very consciousness of the boundary of conceptuality invites us to at least imagine the possibility of excess, and thus calls for an interaction with myth and religion, where ‘beginnings’ and ‘essences’ take up the names of divine beings, inhabiting an invisible world. However, if human reflection is, by definition, turned against its own limitation (reflecting ‘on the limit’, to borrow an expression from Foucault), the conceptuality of this reflection may actually be the very point of interest (not to say intersection) between religion and philosophy. The French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy articulates a similar thought by stating that “what touches me out of an elsewhere that I can consider indifferently as ‘in’ me or ‘outside’ me, as within this world or outside it, because I am touching the limit”. Yet, on philosophy’s part it means: being conscious of not overstepping constraints of conceptuality, to reflect on “the linguistic being of things” (Das sprachliche Wesen der Dinge), as Walter Benjamin has expressed it, and this should not be seen as a self-imposed directive as much as a precaution to secure a defensible conception of meaning.

The emergence of these constraints of conceptuality, their creative origin – or perhaps we should say: the outer side of their world-encompassing network – can neither be conceived by religion nor by philosophy or science. How should the latter, for instance, be able to grasp the opening up of human cognition other than through the means of language preconceived in it? That it may indeed be possible to point out pre-linguistic forms of cognition does not change the fact that this empirically certified knowledge is only thinkable through the medium of language. And it would be a profound mistake to take such knowledge to imply that we have actually transgressed the boundaries of what language allows us to think. The same constriction, philosophically speaking, applies to religion, or what is thought, claimed or done from a religious point of view. The coming-to-be of language remains in the dark, and confronting this darkness thoughts may unfold that

brings modern philosophy back into the neighborhood of religion. Whereas science, crudely speaking, tends to trivialize the constrictions of language (insofar as science chastises itself by holding an instrumental conception of language), philosophy is in general (from a pragmatic to an analytic approach) inclined to view the very givenness of language as significant and charging. Looking beyond – or farther back than – the shared conceptuality of theology and philosophy, one may say that myth, in a way, incorporates the very emergence of language, yet without demonstrating any conception of this. Inasmuch as religion is understood in the sense of a developing, yet inchoate, estrangement from myth (an understanding which, at least, flourish in academic literature), we may associate ‘the religious’ with a dawning awareness of language as an insufficient means of reaching out for the holy (including, from a modern point of view, its own origin). In this sense, religion is born from a rupture that stems from recognizing a rift in being (as, for instance, in the proclamation of the disparity between the creator and his creation). The ultimate reality withdraws from language resulting in a perception of religious acts, gestures, and utterances, as being merely symbolic. Religion and philosophy therefore come across each other at the brink of an abyss, the darkness of transcendence, engaged with the attempt to conceive of that which cannot be fathomed. As Jean-Luc Nancy puts it: “Myth and the abyss are the postulations or figurations inscribed by philosophy, from the very beginning, as its own limits”. Yet, in religion this transcendence is kept and guarded as being otherworldly or invisibly present, whereas in philosophy, at least within the confines of secularized disenchantment, transcendence is acknowledged according to the immanent limits of language alone and, therefore, approached, not as transcendence, but as a concept of transcendence.

Let me phrase this line of thought by citing, once more, Jean-Luc Nancy, who asks the unanswerable question: “Where does [language] come from?” In lieu of an answer, as it were, he writes:

From the nonplace that opens in the midst of world and beginning with which things open, shift, and happen, things constantly replay this coming, this approach, and this shifting, this trembling in which everything comes about: the world, life, sense, the thing, all of them fortuitous, uncertain, vibrating, unsteady.

The aim of the present book is to approach religion while embracing this unsteadiness at the heart of the conditions of signification. Religion may, consequently, slip in and out of the picture, inasmuch as it represents a similar opening up of things. This is, at least, how Nancy views Christianity, namely as a proclaimed utopia (nonplace) opening in the midst of the world.⁴ Thus, in a sense, to approach religion is to approach the limits of language. The philosophical routes opened up by this recognition, especially during the interwar period of the former century, shall determine the direction of the present attempt to find new orientations within a philosophy of religion. It is hardly disputable to claim that contemporary philosophy still unfolds in the aftermath of innovations from this period – following, or reflecting, the fall of traditional metaphysics. What I want to focus on in this respect is how it changed the way of thinking about religion. I will not let the intervening appearance of post-secular conditions defer me from assimilating insights which may be still be intrinsically, not to say historically, valid. Innovations in philosophy take time to mature, and even if they may never reach beyond a certain historical horizon, I am not sure that the horizon within which Heidegger, Benjamin, and Wittgenstein were thinking, has come to an end just because we live in a time when the social phenomenon of religion, stretching from faith to fanaticism, seems to be waxing rather than waning on a world-wide scale. The cost of alienation, the struggle for power and identity, in a globalized society is not, by itself, an argument for regarding religion in a completely new light, though it goes without saying that as political proclamations, religious traditions are deeply involved in these trends. However, as a discipline, philosophy is

obliged to know better than to let mere appearance decide the agenda for reflection. I am not so sure, for that matter, that we have finished absorbing the revolutions of late modernity and the kind of thinking that evolved along with it, despite the perplexing speed of perceptible changes in today's world. It is thus my contention that important aspects of religion, not least in regard of its current state, may still be seen in light of thoughts that developed at the beginning of the former century.

'Philosophy of religion' is traditionally concerned with criteria of rational validity – or propositional justification – of religious belief, and the discipline is therefore often associated with a theological discourse (in an 'analytic' as well as in a 'continental' context). Yet, in our world of multifarious candidates to truth, other tasks are queuing up for a philosophical reflection on religion. For one thing, the general study of religion, which does not commit itself to any confession but that of interpretative science, is just as much in need of philosophy as theology is. Although we do not normally associate philosophy of religion with comparative studies of religion, there is no argument for not doing so in the future. If the expected implications of theological philosophy stand in the way, one might respond that, strictly speaking, a philosophy of religion which deserves that name is a philosophy of religion, not a philosophy of truth-conditions internal to religion.

But of course, much depends on our definition of religion, and even the smallest hint at this matter will quickly draw us into a most heated debate. I shall not avoid the issue, but merely postpone it as a question to be dealt with in due course and at a proper length. Let it suffice to say, as an introductory remark, that I ineluctably find myself surrounded, as it were, by a worldview in which 'religion' appears as a comparative phenomenon. As a compartment within this cultural 'building' or 'enclosure', which is my worldview, as it were, there

is also theology, even as an academic discipline (although in some in situational contexts more committed to the critical standards of science than in others). It goes without saying that theologians share the same cultural worldview as the rest of society; their beliefs and interests are as varied as everybody else's. As a discipline, however, theology takes a certain noncomparative interest in assessing the truth and value of its own tradition. In other words, one might say that theology is tradition conceived in thought. For the general study of religion, no such agenda seems pertinent.

A die-hard metaphysical implication in the study of religion is to regard religious phenomena of whatever kind (from the most familiar to the most exotic) as formed by cultural conditions to which the scientific outlook itself belongs in a more critically enlightened stage. In light of this general humanist stance one might wonder why philosophy of religion is not primarily occupied with religion as a second order phenomenon rather than with a first order set of beliefs in a transcendent reality, as is predominantly the case. It goes without saying that it has to do with the discipline's theological tradition, but inasmuch as philosophy is not committed to tradition over and against its commitment to critical thinking, including a contestation of that which is unthinkingly repeated, I shall, in the present work, advocate for a philosophy of religion that places religion on the phenomenological side of things, not because there is no need for a theological philosophy (or a hermeneutics of religious utterances), but because in today's world such an agenda cannot, or should not, stand alone. In this respect, I refer to 'religion' as a comparative concept comprising a set of largely identifiable phenomena (second order), and 'theories of religion' (third order) as explicatory engagements with these phenomena. I surrender to this 'objectification' for practical reasons only, claiming no philosophical insight to go along with it, let alone follow from it. I rather regard the phenomenological specification as a conceptual maneuver the necessity of which is purely formal, yet at a deeper level already part

of the complex about to be reconsidered. Hence, if 'religion', in this book, is pushed away from the confines of theological reflection, it is also lured away from the general study of religion, inasmuch as it returns as a kind of bedfellow, strange and familiar at the same time, to the philosophical investigation. For the same reason, it should be obvious that I do not want to repudiate the merits of a more traditional PhR (and the orders of classification developed on these premises); my aim is merely to lend thought to a general tendency in recent years, namely the attempt, from various quarters, to integrate philosophy in the general study of religion.' More specifically, I opt for a communication between philosophy and the study of religion, where 'religion' is, at any rate, a label for something that has lost its holistic meaning in a Western society. My point here is that the historical development of 'religion' as a term has brought with it a conceptual divergence, a distinction between religious and non-religious phenomena, which does not necessarily apply to former historical stages. It does seem mandatory, however, to work from a concept that conveys something universally identifiable, at least in a preliminary sense. Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to speak meaningfully about religion in a global as well as historical perspective. In other words, we cannot avoid the need for a universal taxonomy. We may bear in mind, however, that this is only valid for operational reasons, and we should not overlook the possibility, therefore, that, below the surface, as it were, this 'something' which appears neat and definable in one context may change its meaning – or turn into something else – in another. I am not referring to implicit essences behind varying appearances, but I claim that a certain configuration of attitudes, acts and thoughts, may be recognizable in different contexts beyond the exact terms of their expression. What we may be inclined to call 'religion' in one social setting may rather be identified as 'politics', 'science', or 'philosophy' in another. What the thing called 'religion' was earlier, and what it is now, in a society – or reality – that it no longer comprises, may be two different things,\$ and then again, may

also have something in common which, all else being equal, still deserves the common (non-essential) predicate (of 'religion').

Obviously, in ancient societies, even in Roman times, from whence we have adopted the term, the thing called 'religion' had not yet become 'religion' in the comprehensive sense of the modern predicate (which is, however, no problem as long as we take care to distinguish between phenomenon and concept). What we may have recognized since the dawn of modernity as various semantic and pragmatic characteristics of religion – the thing – are properties we have come to define owing to the advent of alternative ways of thinking. I would not want to deny, though, that it is always possible for the human spirit to depart individually from the dominant ways of thinking and acting in a given period, and consequently the possibility of making distinctions (as between commitment and non-commitment, faith and non-faith) have, in principle, always been optional. Yet, in the broad historical perspective, the concept of 'religion' is a recent invention which betrays an enlightened strategy of demarcation. Let it be said at once, however, that I find it wrong-headed to take this condition to imply that the term denotes nothing but artificial boundaries around an empty core. There may be no 'thing' independent of our categorizations, but there may be no 'nothing' either. We have to stand guard against a radical nominalism that invites us down the unfortunate path of ontological constructionism (not to be confused with epistemic constructionism). Actually, it seems to be a frequent mistake to think that if concepts are coined and developed in the impure matrix of strategic formation, they must stand in an arbitrary relation to what they are supposed to designate. This is a logical mistake inasmuch as the conclusion implies the opposite as its premise. We can only claim that words and things don't match if we have an epistemic access to the relation between them, and if this 'access' is given up as a matter of principle, it is like throwing the baby out with the bathwater. In point of fact, the objective is a different one.

In order to take the strategic formation of concepts seriously into account, we need criteria for assessing in what ways they may relatively misconstrue the objects they represent. Even if there is no one-to-one criterion for an adequate representation, inasmuch as any representation will always be aspectual, there may still be representations which can be criticized for representing their own representing activity rather than the represented phenomena. I sincerely believe we should harvest the best of insights from Bachelard, Foucault, Kuhn, and constructionist theories in general, without buying into the relativism that lurks in their wake. Religion is a human construct (whatever kind of reality it may concern), doubly constructed by being dubbed 'religion', and triply constructed by whatever definition our theories may entitle us to use for it. The name of the game is construction; our social reality is a constructed reality. Money and tax and debt are what we make them out to be, but they are real nonetheless. In the case of these 'entities', however, the constituents are intrinsically well defined, and I venture to say that it makes them significantly different from religion (the thing). If, at any rate, it is possible to speak of similar constituents of religion, they belong to a reverse order; their reality is post factum. Where the specific means of economic transactions in society are instigated by strict rules, religion does not depend on such measurements and regulations (as neither does art, partying, bodily exercise, etc.).

Rigid rules of confession may, of course, be regarded as compulsory, as in the development of new movements and departures from a parent tradition, but if we should speak of a religious community only when all the rules were followed all the time, then we would speak of none. In fact, a religious community thrives as much from its sinners as from its saints. To be a member of a religious community is not necessarily 'to play it right' but rather to have the parameters set already for 'playing' as well as for 'violating the game'. Importantly, not all of these parameters might be explicit. Some social facts are constituted by

explicit rules, others are not. And we might not want to narrow our view down by counting religion only among the former. Adopting John Searle's concepts (1969) of constitutive and regulative rules, I am inclined to say that whereas social and linguistic phenomena such as bills, promises, claims, etc., are made up by the former, a phenomenon such as religion is rather characteristic of the latter (as is eating, mating, dancing, etc.). I grant that the operational use of a strict taxonomy, designed to verbalize these rules, may work regardless of their open-ended character, as long as we keep in mind that they inform our concept of 'religion'. Yet, a stipulative definition also carries the risk of confusing 'a model of' with 'a model for', as Geertz has shown. However crucial it is not to mistake regulative rules for constitutive ones, a sliding from the one to the other may often go unnoticed. It is worth pointing out, at any rate, that it is only in the unlikely event of coming up with criteria for defining religion which are both necessary and sufficient, that we are, in fact, entitled to explain the actual phenomenon as a conglomerate of constitutive rules. Such conceptual venture is unproblematic when we refer to chess and other institutionalized games and sports, and though, of course, spiritual movements could, in principle, be formed in much the same way, the life of long-standing traditions seems to follow a deeper track and attain a much vaguer character. Thus, a compartmentalization of religion as an isolable, exhaustively defined set of beliefs and practices flies in the face of what we observe. I shall return to this matter, which indeed cries out for further differentiations, and stay content for now with a preliminary appeal to concerning ourselves with religion as a human construct with layers upon layers of dynamic social interaction.

If religion can be regarded as an open-ended social 'game' the roots of which run deeper than what can be ascribed to acknowledged commitments of belief and behavior, it also means that there is no necessary coincidence between what religion means in the self-interpretation of the adherents and what it means – and entails – in the

horizon of a historical, philosophical and scientific approach. I regard William Cantwell Smith's assertion that "No statement about Islamic faith is true that Muslims cannot accept" as profoundly mistaken. As crucial as it is that we do not sever the bond between the extrinsic and the intrinsic level of meaning, we should not conflate the two. It is a matter of balance – and dialectics – between a hermeneutical and analytic approach, and much of what I have to say in this book pertains to this issue.

Yet, a short comment of the concept of *sui generis* as pertaining to the study of religion might be in place already at this point. It was used, for instance, by William James in his famous [Varieties of Religious Experience](#). The passage runs:

[A]ny object that is infinitely important to us and awakens our devotion feels to us also as if it must be *sui generis* and unique. Probably a crab would be filled with a sense of personal outrage if it could hear us class it without ado or apology as a crustacean, and thus dispose of it. "I am no such thing," it would say; I am MYSELF, MYSELF alone.

The crab's protest is understandable, since from the perspective of the individual it is not just a crustacean, though from a general point of view it is. In accordance with a constructed table of characteristics, this is what a crab can be said to be. But tables are tables, and crabs are crabs, each and every one of which is unique in existence and not merely an example of crustacean properties. Religions are both unique and categorically common (i.e., as an instance of 'religion') in the same sense, though different from crabs by being a cultural phenomenon with all the interactive complexity that goes with it. If the concept of religion *sui generis* (literally: of its own kind) is taken to imply that religion (the thing) transcends any kind of classification and has to be lived to be understood, no science or philosophy will be able to take hold of it. If it rather means that regardless of whatever aspect of religion we reduce to other, more fundamental elements, we are still left with a center or a composite, we can

justifiably call 'religion', I see no reason why *sui generis* should not be used as a concept for this, and I do not take James' point, which I fully endorse, to speak against it. What it does speak against, however, is the opinion that what belongs to the core of someone's self-image is nothing but what that someone accepts it to be. That we may allow for constituents in our interpretation of ourselves, which are not immediately accessible to self-consciousness, forms a premise for the following inquiry.

Thus, in the following chapter, I shall aim to work out operational concepts for dealing with points of contact between philosophy, religion, and the general study of religion, aiming for a philosophical platform which remains self-consciously in charge, but hopefully without being too reductive.

Proceeding from this premise, I set out in chapter 3 to sketch a picture of religion-as-a-social-phenomenon, which steals itself to a position behind the back of a religious self-understanding while acknowledging, at the same time, that such position is already itself socially embedded. However, rather than asserting an unconditional truth about religion, I shall use the socio-philosophical approach to point to certain aspects of religious discourse in the attempt to clarify how and why such type of discourse works effectively in various contexts. Though I do, in this respect, draw heavily on Searle's concepts of 'institutional facts' and 'social ontology', I make every effort, at the same time, to drive out the ghost of a self-conserved consciousness, summoned in his philosophy of mind and still indirectly haunting his view of social construction.

Turning to questions of 'truth' and 'reference' in chapter 4, I argue against what I find to be unwarranted ascriptions of truth-conditions to the language and practice of religion. My main point is that we should take care not to put too much weight on a concept of truth that is formed within a secular horizon of empirical meaning-criteria. This leads me from an over-burdened focus on referentiality in

Wolterstorff's and Soskice's philosophy of religion to the more sophisticated theory of truth in Davidson's semantic holism. Yet, I try to balance important points in his semantic view of meaning with the pragmatic notion of truth as espoused, for instance, by Habermas, Rorty, Brandom and Wittgenstein, albeit with crucially different implications. In light of my own settling with the pragmatic stance of the later Wittgenstein, I proceed to consider how the concept of truth has been used in various philosophical ventures, including those of Walter Benjamin and Martin Heidegger.

From the basic notion of 'truth' as a concept whose meaning is delineated by its use, including a translatable religious concept of 'truth', I set out in chapter 5 to widen the perspective by unfolding Benjamin's concept of 'pure language', the magical qualities of which relate human beings to the world through names, most conspicuously the name of God. This exposition is packed with a discussion about the difference between the linguistic perspective in Benjamin, on the one hand, and the transcendental concepts of spontaneity of symbolic expression in Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of myth, on the other. Striving to avoid unfortunate speculations about some mental reality, I conclude that religion is, fundamentally, a matter of name-giving, and that concept of truth attains its primary religious meaning from being associated with the expressive (or creative) power of the name rather than with general statements about reality. In the wider scope of things, I try to show how this suggestion is in line with a conception of a human form of life that dawns, variably but comparably, in the developing philosophies of Benjamin and Wittgenstein as a reaction to a spiritual occultism of subjective consciousness.

In chapter 6 I engage in a short discussion about differences and similarities between 'myth' and 'religion' as a stepping stone for locating both in the attempt by humans, at all times, to make a home in the world, or to make the world a home, an endeavor that characteristically takes places in light of the beyond. Drawing on the previous

chapters, I claim that the role of 'naming' and 'truth' are of pivotal importance in this respect.

Additionally, I venture into early as well as late phases of Heidegger's thinking in order to relate the ways in which it opens 'Being' (from 'factic life-experience' through 'Dasein' to 'Sein') to the ways in which religion 'opens the world in the midst of the world itself' (borrowing the wordings from Jean-Luc Nancy). However, following Heidegger's style of thinking, I find it increasingly difficult to distinguish the kind of opening, he comes to conceive through language (Sprache), from the kind of opening that is created by religion. Far from claiming that Heidegger succumbs to a religious form of thinking, I retreat from the abyss of 'being thought' so as to regain a foothold, along with Wittgenstein and Benjamin, in the social and historical conditions of 'thinking and speaking about'. Yet, I acknowledge that my own subsequent attempt at characterizing a religious home-making is substantially inspired by the later Heidegger, and that the present investigation is already building a new abode for itself, as it were, not least by considering the religious home-making replaced by the disorientation of modern life. Clearly, the kind of thinking that engages me is a way of being within 'the outside' and outside of 'the within' at one and the same time. We all think and write from the height of our own being. Yet, philosophy would not be able to breathe if it did not believe itself able to make a conceptual difference. The power of philosophy, as Gilles Deleuze once said, "is measured by the concepts it creates, or whose meaning it alters". In this sense, a philosophical investigation may be said to participate in something (philosophy itself included) which is, at the same time, kept at a distance. Therefore, a philosophy of religion necessarily keeps religion at bay, however familiar a religious way of thinking and acting may seem in the process.

Thus in the final chapter 7, I go along with Jean-Luc Nancy in order to think religion from the 'inside', as it were, which means, to think both with and against it.

Apart from the general force of Nancy's main argument, namely, that Christianity has from the very beginning entered a process of self-deconstruction, I find it intriguing that his thinking also seems to capture the crucial elements of religion as a truth-making, name-giving, and world-habituating human practice. While he is painstakingly aware of the living present, the current situation of being part of secularized Christianity, it is in large parts philosophical perspectives from the interwar period that seems to reemerge in his thinking. Speaking with Heidegger, the predicament of Dasein is that Nothingness (Nichtigkeit) lies at the heart Being, and Nancy's contention that religion 'fills in the Nothing' follows up on this thought by way of thinking religion. In a way, this short statement by Nancy says it all. However, in order to let it be heard as anything but a kind of Sartrean reference to emptiness or redundancy, a certain journey through religious ways of life has to be made.

Having outlined the field of investigation this journey is now at hand. However, setting out to cross various religious and philosophical territories requires that we first take a closer look on how 'philosophy' and 'the study of religion' have interacted as yet. <>

[The Oxford Encyclopedia of Religion in America](#) edited by John Corrigan [Oxford University Press, 9780190456160]

This encyclopedia consists of a groundbreaking collection of over 110 detailed scholarly articles that address a wide range of topics in American religious history and culture, all written by experts in their fields. It is not an amalgam of articles on the traditionally invoked topics that have directed thinking about religion in America. Rather, it is organized in a way that utilizes the most recent categories of scholarly research to identify the crucial themes, events, people, places, and ideas that have constituted the rich history of religion in America. It is arranged in five sections: Space, Religious Ideas, Race and Ethnicity, Public Life, and

Empire. In each section, a range of articles address the religious lives of Americans and the institutions, theologies, and social forces that have influenced those lives and given shape to a broad cultural landscape of religion in America.

The articles in each section draw upon scholarship from an assortment of fields. As a result, The Oxford Encyclopedia of Religion in America is fully interdisciplinary in its approach to religion in America. It is informative about cutting-edge debates not only in the fields of religion and history, but in sociology, geography, philosophy, ethnic studies, literature, and a number of other fields as well. The articles are interconnected in various ways. There are common themes as defined by the section headings, such as space, race, and religious ideas. There are also mutually reinforcing articles on specific topics such as a particular denomination, a distinctive intellectual tradition, gender, class, economics, and immigration. The encyclopedia accordingly is best engaged as a tool that can be read both through and across the categories that organize it. It offers multiple insightful takes on a range of topics and represents the history and culture of religion in America in ways that will both resonate with and challenge the perspectives of readers.

Editorial Appraisal

This hefty one volume series of essays are grouped thematically around five topics: 1. Space, 2. Religious Ideas, 3. Race and Ethnicity, 4. Public Life, and 5. Empire. These themes also provide the constraints as what is also weak or missing this work. Strengths are obvious by a perusal of the entre topics. It reflects recent themes in scholarship not previously recognized. The two excerpts display coverage of online and cyberspace religion in America.

Entries:

African American Islam
 African Americans and Religion
 Agency, Voluntarism, and Predestination in American Religion
 Alternative Religious Movements and Race in America

American Foreign Mission Movement, c. 1800–1860
 American Foreign Mission Movement, c. 1870–1920s
 American Narratives of Sin and Salvation
 American Protestant Foreign Missions after World War II
 American Religious Empire and the Caribbean
 America's Interactions with Islam and Judaism in North Africa
 Apocalypticism in U.S. History
 Architecture, the Built Environment, and Religion in America
 Asian American Religions
 Atheism in America
 Bibles and Tracts in Print Culture in America
 The Black Atlantic and the African Diaspora
 Christian Fundamentalism in America
 Christianity in Hawai'i
 Civil Religion in America
 Civil Rights Movements and Religion in America
 Class and Religion in America
 The Cold War and American Religion
 Commerce, Consumerism, and Christianity in America
 Culture, Entertainment, and Religion in America
 Cyberspace and Religion in America
 Denomination in American Public Life
 Ecology and Religious Environmentalism in the United States
 The Eruv as Contested Jewish Space in North America
 Evangelism, Mission, and Crusade in American Religion
 Feeling of Emptiness in American Religions
 Film and Religion in America
 Film Regulation and the Church in America
 Freemasonry's Sacred Space in America
 Gender, Marriage, and Sexual Purity in American Religious History
 Gender and Public Religion in America
 Healing and Religion in the United States
 Hinduism in America
 Hispanics and Religion in America
 The Idea of Black Religion

Ideas of the Afterlife in American Religion
 Imperialism, Mission, and Global Power
 Relations in East Asian Religions in the
 United States
 Interracialism and American Christianity
 Islam and the Middle East in the American
 Imagination
 The Judeo-Christian and Abrahamic
 Traditions in America
 Law, the U.S. Supreme Court, and Religion
 Liberalism in American Religious History
 Liberation Theologies in America
 The Marketplace and Religion in America
 Martyrdom and Religion in North America
 Material Culture and Embodiment in
 American Religion
 Memorialization and Religion in America
 Moderation in American Religion
 Mormonism
 Mormonism and Deseret
 Museums, Expositions, and Religion in
 North America since the 19th Century
 Music and Religion in American Public Life
 National Elections and Religion in America
 Native American Religions
 Native Americans, Law, and Religion in
 America
 Nativism and Religion in America
 Natural Space and Religion in North
 America
 Nature and Religion in America
 Online Media and Religion in America
 Peace Movements and Religion in the
 United States
 Place and Spirituality in the Pacific
 Northwest
 Popular Culture and Religion in America
 Primitivism in America
 Print Media and Religion in America
 The Prosperity Gospel in America
 Public Art and Religion in America
 Race, Class, Religion, and American
 Citizenship
 Race, Culture, and Religion in the American
 South
 Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Religion in
 America
 Race, Immigration, Ethnicity, and Religion in
 America
 Race, Sectionalism, and Religion in
 America
 Race, the Arts, and Religion in America
 Race, the Law, and Religion in America
 Race and American Judaism
 Race and Catholicism in American History
 Race and Protestantism in America
 Race and Religion in the United States
 Race and Religion in U.S. Public Life
 Religion, Anti-Catholicism, and the
 Mexican-American War
 Religion, Charity, and Philanthropy in
 America
 Religion, Modernity, and Assimilation in
 America
 Religion and Native American Assimilation,
 Resistance, and Survival
 Religious Ceremonies in American Public
 Life
 Religious Parades and Processions in
 America
 Religious Pilgrimages in the United States
 The Religious Right in America
 Revivals, Awakenings, and Conversion in
 American Protestantism
 Science and Religion in America
 Secularism, Pluralism, and Publics in
 America
 Settler Colonialism and U.S. Home Missions
 Social Christianity in America
 Social Progressivism and Religion in
 America
 Space, Architecture, and American
 Religious Diversity
 Space and Church–State Controversies in
 America
 Spatial Approaches to American Religious
 Studies
 Spatial Constructions of the American
 Secular
 Spatial Politics and American Religious
 Pluralism
 Spatial Strategies of American
 Megachurches
 Sports and Religion in America
 Tourism to Sacred Places in America: A
 Spatial Analysis
 Urban Space and Religion in the United
 States
 U.S. Foreign Policy and Religion

U.S. Foreign Relations and American Religious Liberalism
 U.S.–Mexico Borderlands and Religion
 War and Religion in American History
 Workplace and Religion in America
 Zionism in America

Excerpt: Cyberspace and Religion in America: Conceptualizing Cyberspace
 Coined by science fiction writer William Gibson in his now classic [Neuromancer](#) in the early 1980s, “cyberspace” serves as a metaphor to describe broadly conceived notions of online interaction—whatever that activity may entail and however it is mediated technologically. As they did with technologies ranging from the printing press to broadcast television, religious adherents were quick to take advantage of the Internet. The invention of the World Wide Web in 1989 and the introduction of text-based electronic bulletin board systems (BBSs) allowed for increased communication among believers who would almost certainly never meet in real life—and who might otherwise never have known of each other’s existence. Confronted with an expanded pool of conversation partners and potential debate opponents, many of these users formed “virtual communities,” with personal ties, in-group dedication, and social durability as persistent as many offline groups. Since then, rapid and dramatic advances in computer technology, broadband capability, and Internet penetration have led, for example, to live-streamed worship services and religious rituals that bring adherents together in ways scarcely imaginable just a few decades ago. In some cases, these efforts mirror the televangelism of the 1970s and 1980s: they afford believers the opportunity to be part of—if not necessarily participate in—a communal religious life from which they are physically separate. In other instances, live-stream video has challenged the very notion of a central religious plant and enabled the creation of subcongregations that are connected to the parent church only through the shared experience of a simulcast live-stream. A megachurch in southern Ontario, for instance, live-streams its weekly services from a central campus to an extended

network of satellite congregations—complete with interactive elements made available through social media and videoconferencing. Some of these satellites are small, meeting in family homes and numbering no more than a dozen members, while others are much larger, taking place in movie theaters and attracting hundreds of worshippers to each location. No matter where they happen to be, though, every person experiences the same aspects of the service in real time. It is important to remember, however, that although this phenomenon is mediated technologically, adherents still gather in a physical location, and the basic aspect of broadcasting the worship service differs little from the televangelism experience. Communication between the parent and offspring congregations may be facilitated through Internet technology, but this is not “religion on the Internet.”

Seeking to parse “religion in cyberspace,” scholars must not only consider content and activity that are mediated electronically, but also those that occur in the context of the digital environment itself. In the language of cyberspace, the virtual is believed in some way to replace or to augment the physical. The possibility of a virtual pilgrimage, for example, where from the comfort of their own homes “people can simulate a sacred journey,” offers the potential for a religious experience different from simply watching a video of someone else’s trip. Many participants in modern Pagan social media groups insist that their online activity is equivalent—or even superior—to that experienced in offline covens and ritual working groups. Soon after the World Wide Web’s appearance, religious practitioners began experimenting with forms of practice and ritual online: Christians lit “virtual candles” on rudimentary graphical interfaces; Hindu puja were performed online according to fee structures only slightly different from those in the physical world. For some traditions such practices raised theological questions of ritual efficacy—that is, whether a ritual performed online carries the same meaning as one performed offline.

To begin, it is important to distinguish between “place” and “space” as they define differences

between religion in the physical world and in online environments. Although these terms have often been used synonymously, simply raising the question of whether a virtual experience is “real” renders the notion of space more fluid and place more problematic. In [To Take Place](#), his theory of religious ritual, historian Jonathan Z. Smith contends that “place directs attention,” that is, “there are no substantive categories, but rather situational ones. Sacrality is, above all, a category of emplacement.” For millennia, we have marked off certain places as “sacred”: roadside shrines and sacred wells; cemeteries, graveyards, and burial grounds; cathedrals, mosques, temples, and ritual environs of all types have been set apart as places that are, in some way, ontologically different from the ordinary landscape of everyday life.

Conversely, computer-mediated environments become chiefly domains of communication and imagination, information spaces to which believers often grant a less well-defined status of “sacred.” When “place becomes space” the discussion must be parsed in more precise fashion. In terms of computer-mediated environments, place becomes primarily a marker of physical location, while space denotes the venues of online interaction. If, as Smith says, physical “place directs attention,” then virtual “space enables communication.”

The emergence of cyberspace and the expanded religious imaginings it encouraged force scholars to ask new questions about the relationship between religious belief and these categories of emplacement/displacement. One such question is where attention is directed in cyberspace, when the “place” itself has been displaced to a computer screen. Taking a virtual tour of Montréal’s Notre Dame Cathedral, for example, is not the same as walking into its magnificent sanctuary. Another key question is how attention is directed when these displacements are rendered either in text-only or as rudimentary two-dimensional images. Mousing over the icon of an aarti lamp and moving it around the photograph of an altar is not the same experience as a Hindu puja within a physical temple. Understanding religion in its relation to

cyberspace, then, requires asking what distinguishes religious behaviors and practices in one domain from those in the other. Imagining oneself into a modern Pagan ritual based on a text-only discussion thread is a different experience than meeting with one’s coven under a gibbous moon in the woods outside of town.

Offline Place versus Virtual Space

Two early attempts to theorize computer-mediated religious behavior were sociologist Brenda Brasher’s [Give Me That Online Religion](#) and communications consultant Jennifer Cobb’s [Cybergrace: The Search for God in the Digital World](#). “Online religion is the most portentous development for the future of religion to come out of the twentieth century,” Brasher begins, continuing that “using a computer for online religious activity could become the dominant form of religion and religious experience in the next century.” Indeed, she declares, as more and more aspects of religious practice move from the physical world to what sociologist Alpha Possamai-Inesedy calls “the digital social,” cyberspace participation “widens the social foundation of religious life” and “erodes the basis from which religion contributes to the destructive dynamics of xenophobia.” Echoing Brasher’s enthusiasm, Cobb declared that “the reality of cyberspace transcends the dualism represented by the objectified mind and matter,” concluding that the World Wide Web “has the potential for opening us to a new way of experiencing the world.” From a practitioner’s perspective, meanwhile, modern Pagan Lisa McSherry contends that, by “going online, we immerse ourselves in a nonlinear environment, one that places us in a reality where we control our movements, while being transported to places unseen and unimagined.”

Despite the lack of conceptual clarity in each of these examples, such comments suggest that any discussion of “religion in cyberspace” must consider nuanced and expanded notions of “space” as an environment where communication takes place and the potential for community exists. They implicitly ask whether the reality of place—a physical

location in which religious activity is enacted—will continue to be salient in the lives of believers, or will it be gradually displaced by online activity. Put simply, as a function of religious belief and behavior in a world increasingly connected through digital networks, the crucial question is whether place still matters or religion will eventually become about space. The answer, put simply, is “both,” though in the early 21st century it still appears far more the former than the latter.

The Continuing Salience of Offline Place

The hyperbole that marks Brasher, Cobb, and McSherry’s observations was not unusual among early attempts both to understand and to propagate religious behavior online. However, a number of sociological and psychological reasons suggest that, for the foreseeable future at least, material location and physical co-presence will continue to be not only the most important, but also the predominant mode of religious participation and experience. Some of these reasons arise from the circumscribed nature of computer-mediated communication itself, while others are functions of religious consciousness, the evolution of spiritual practice, and the role of religion in social life. They include: (a) the lack of accessibility to digital technology in many regions of the world; (b) the problem of distraction and virtual overload; (c) emergent social reaction against computer-mediated communication; (d) the inescapable reality of embodiment; (e) the durability and historical significance of physical religious structures; (f) the human need for face-to-face social contact and interaction; and (g) theological resistance grounded in religious tradition and ritual efficacy. It is important to note that these are not discrete categories but mutually interpenetrating pressures that help shape—and limit—the nature of religion in cyberspace. Many of these aspects of the relationship between online and offline activity pivot on the simple fact that “cyberspace” is not a physical, three-dimensional space—the environment in which human cultures and religions have developed over millennia. Indeed, the advent of “religion in cyberspace” has served to underscore

the taken-for-granted importance of physical emplacement in religious practice, and, perhaps, helped to intensify scholarly attention to it.

First is the issue of the social penetration of Internet technology and the ongoing reality of what is commonly called the “digital divide.” Internet Live Stats defines user as “an individual who has access to the Internet at home.” At the turn of the millennium such users accounted for less than half-a-million people, or less than 1 percent of the world population. Since then, although that number has grown to about 3 1/2 billion, or roughly 40 percent of the world’s population, the upward trend has flattened slightly, and the majority of humankind still live behind some manner of “digital divide.” This means a fundamental lack of access to technology that billions of others take for granted. Not surprisingly, most of those without, or with only limited and unreliable Internet access are located in the developing world, and often in countries with high rates of religious devotion and participation. In 2015, for example, Malaysia, which is home to the world’s largest Muslim population, had an Internet penetration rate below 30 percent, about the same as India and Bangladesh. In Pakistan it is below 20 percent. In many such places, the question of whether religion online will ever replace or even challenge the dominance of religion “in real life” is all but moot. The opportunity simply does not exist. Even in countries with more significant Internet penetration, online access is not always consistent or reliable. Rural areas, for example, often experience less stable coverage and slower connectivity than urban communities. Regardless of location, users of all types are affected by service interruption caused by factors ranging from abnormally high-volume Web traffic to extended severe weather to Internet provider problems.

Second, in countries with substantial Internet penetration and large-scale mobile broadband coverage, the psychological problem of distraction and virtual overload militates against the abandonment of the physical for the virtual. Whether it is embodied in a gothic cathedral set on

top of a hill or a small shrine dedicated to a local deity, one of the most important aspects of physical emplacement as a function of religious practice is that it is set apart. Sacred places are made so by virtue of their separation from the more mundane aspects of daily life. The fact of this separateness is what allows “place to direct attention.” Implicit in the concept of emplacement is the reality of movement and preparation as functions of ritual attention. When a young Muslim prepares for salat at a local mosque, her attention becomes refocused through the transition to a distinct physical space: she removes her shoes and washes in ritual ablution before entering the prayer area. Once inside, she lays out her prayer rug, carefully aligning it toward Mecca. As she kneels and the prayer begins, all that is behind her falls away, and Allah is all that lays before her. Together, these actions ground the attention toward which the physical place of worship directs her. It is difficult to imagine this same concentrated focus or spatial transition in computer-mediated communication. A “prayer app” on one’s smartphone or tablet, for instance, might be able to indicate the appropriate direction (i.e., toward Mecca), but it must compete for both screen space and user attention with everything else contained on the device: email, newsfeeds, social media alerts, and calendar reminders. There is no place online that can be “set apart” in the same way as a physical location dedicated to religious practice.

Third, in response to increasing Internet penetration and the perceived lack of personal interaction it encourages, a variety of reactions have emerged against what many see as the negative social consequences of increased Internet communication. These occur in two broad ways: a bottom-up approach that highlights user-directed attempts to limit online activity, and a top-down tactic that sees various levels of government intervention in Internet access. Where significant Internet penetration and widely available fixed and mobile broadband services exist, reaction against the “wired society” expresses concern about the impersonality of computer-mediated communication, the emergence

of various addictive behaviors related to online activity, and to fears about the rise of a computer-mediated surveillance state. In areas where computer technology is all but ubiquitous, grassroots movements encourage users to limit or otherwise control their online activity. Drawing on the tradition of Sabbath observance, for example, the Jewish organization, Reboot, promotes a National Day of Unplugging. Users around the world sign a pledge to refrain from any electronically mediated communication for a twenty-four-hour period. The intention is that by withdrawing focus from the computer-mediated domain of WiFi access and app upgrades, more attention can be devoted to the real world of family and friends. Instead of simply communicating, the Unplugging movement encourages participants to connect with each other and with those around them. Although this is not a large movement, in the broader context of worldwide Internet usage, it demonstrates some of the measures taken to limit online activity in favor of face-to-face communication. Many developing countries, on the other hand—those where Internet penetration is low, but religious participation is high—experience a top-down approach to online control. Here, users are faced with varying degrees of state-sponsored surveillance and censorship of Internet activity. In these areas, even if believers might want to shift some of their religious activity online, religious and political circumstances often render that difficult, if not impossible.

A fourth limitation on electronically mediated religion is the inescapable fact of our embodiment. For millennia, religious experience has been mediated through the body. Only relatively recently in hominin history has it been abstracted to the intellectual level that many adherents take for granted today. For billions of believers around the world, however, religious experience remains an embodied experience. Short of full virtual reality—technology that so perfectly mimics the physical world that the brain can no longer distinguish between them—it is simply impossible to feel the heat of a Native American sweat lodge, to

experience the crush of Muslim pilgrims circumambulating the Kaaba, or to sink into the depth of stillness at a Buddhist sesshin. Assuming that it would be permitted, watching high mass live-streamed from Notre Dame can in no way replicate the full sensory experience of being in the sanctuary. Computer-mediated communication can transmit only pale imitations of sight and sound, and nothing of the smell of incense, the feel of sharing of a hymnal with a fellow communicant, the physical ebb and flow of the service as the congregation rises for the gospel or kneels in prayer, the taste of the Host on one's tongue at the culmination of the service. Few Roman Catholics would mistake one experience for the other, and fewer still would take seriously the suggestion that one had "just been to mass at Notre Dame" on the basis of watching it on their desktop computer, laptop, or mobile device.

Fifth, and following from this, it is difficult to overstate the social, psychological, historical, and theological importance of "brick-and-mortar" religious structures. These provide a physical place for adherents to gather in ritual practice, community mourning, and public celebration—i.e., the physical location for the "collective effervescence" that Emile Durkheim considered essential to the religious experience—and they serve as a preeminent site of cultural memory and the touchstone of generational religious socialization. Even discounting the reality of the digital divide, consider the ekstasis of a Pentecostal worship service or the possession experience of Vodoun practitioners or followers of Candomblé. Each of these occurs explicitly within the context of the physically gathered community and cannot be replicated in the online environment. As well, around the world and in a number of different traditions, rites of passage are regularly celebrated in religious sanctuaries that hold significant meaning either within the faith itself or to a particular family. To one day be sealed (i.e., married) in a Mormon Temple is the dream of many young Latter-day Saints. Celebrating an infant daughter's baptism or a son's bris will often bring

new parents to the sacred places where their families have worshipped for generations. Even for those with limited institutional affiliation, bidding farewell to a loved one often takes them back to the church, temple, synagogue, mosque, or gurdwara they remember from their youth.

Sixth, there is the enduring human need for face-to-face social contact and interaction, demands that simply cannot be met in entirely digital ways. While an electronic mailing list, a Twitter feed, Facebook post, or a message sent on some other social media platform could inform congregants of a special event—a wedding or a funeral, for example—none of those could provide the venue for the proceedings. Recall that even for a megachurch that live-streams its services to a number of satellite sites, these groups still gather together in physical co-presence—a reality that remains paramount for congregational life. It is difficult to imagine any rite of passage, perennial ritual, or religious activity around which the believing community regularly meets supplanted by its virtual doppelgänger. As Durkheim wrote, "The very act of congregating is an exceptionally powerful stimulant," the fact of participating with other believers makes the experience more vibrant, more real. Indeed, it is the sine qua non of the experience. Commemorating the Last Supper on Maunday Thursday, stripping the sanctuary on Good Friday, then gathering together in celebration of the resurrection on Easter Sunday are religious practices that are deeply and indelibly rooted in Christian group behavior and cohesion. These practices reinforce one's place within the denominational group; they solidify faith-bonds with others who have taken the journey; they help transmit the doctrine and teachings of the faith from one generation to the next; they underpin and strengthen theological and doctrinal convictions about the efficacy and sacrality of the ritual itself.

Finally, doctrinal concerns reinforce the importance of physical emplacement and co-presence. Specifically, theological considerations of—and objections to—religion in cyberspace question the institutional validity and spiritual efficacy of online

ritual and devotional practice. These practices range from actions which are *prima facie* impossible to those that blend “virtuality” and “reality,” combining notions of space and place. Traditions that require some manner of sacrifice, for example, would be unable to execute the ritual in a digital environment. Even if attempts were made, significant theological discussion would emerge over whether the ritual had been performed “properly,” which is to say, efficaciously. Although an Orthodox Jewish family may live the majority of their lives as digitally connected as anyone they know, computer-mediated Shabbos observance would not only be impossible, it would directly contradict both the theological underpinning and the practical precepts of the ritual. Hoping to provide a modicum of spiritual respite in the daily life of believers, a Roman Catholic monastery may live-stream images of the Host from its sanctuary, but church authorities are clear that viewing the image on one’s computer screen should not be considered the same as sitting before the monstrance in adoration. The digital images are not meant to “replace visiting Jesus in Church,” wrote Brother John of the Monks of Adoration in 2005, a short-lived monastic order based in Venice, Florida, that was among the first to experiment with live-streaming the Adoration of the Host. “It is for those times when you cannot visit him in church,” Brother Craig added. “Seeing our Tabernacle or the Holy Eucharist is not the same as praying before the Tabernacle at church. There is a certain power that emanates from the Holy Eucharist.” Indeed, this example highlights another aspect of the “brick-and-mortar” problem for online environments: the ephemerality of digital presence. Just a few years after Brother John made those comments, the Monks of Adoration website was shut down.

The Emerging Significance of Cyberspace

Since some religious communities in the United States—the Amish, for example, and Old Order Mennonites—eschew as a matter of theological principle much of the technology used by the outside world, for them the issue of religion in

cyberspace is all but moot. These relatively few groups notwithstanding, though, and bearing in mind the ongoing reality of the digital divide, it is safe to say that most religious traditions have embraced some form of computer-mediated communication or online presence. This can be as simple as an institutional website or social media page conveying basic information about the tradition, practices, and congregational worship schedules. It can be a more elaborate digital presence that provides detailed and comprehensive information for adherents and tries to connect believers in ways they might never have imagined. Finally, attempts have been made to create religious traditions that exist either in whole, or in significant part, in the online environment. This is the search for a true “religion in cyberspace.” While, for the reasons discussed above, it is unlikely that any of these efforts will supplant the emplacement of religion in the physical world, all of them point to the emerging significance of electronically mediated religious spaces, instances in which physical place does give way to cyberspace. These we can consider an increasingly complex set of displacements, and include: (a) the basic shifting of religious information and organizational activity from the physical world to the digital; (b) the emergence of religious ritual and practice in the online environment; (c) the creation of virtual communities and the possibility of a cyberspatial religion; (d) the dislocation of conversation through multiplatform social media; and (e) the advent of augmented reality and the possibility of virtual emplacement.

In terms of “religion and cyberspace,” one of the initial theoretical distinctions was made by sociologist Christopher Helland between what he called religion-online and online-religion. “Rather than use the Internet as a medium to more freely explore their faith,” Helland wrote of religion-online, “many established religions continue their institutional structure on-line.” That is, information about particular churches, temples, or mosques, denominational directories and demographics, and secondary databases containing information about

a range of traditions began to populate the nascent cyberworld. Rather than consulting the telephone book, Internet users began looking for service times and contact information on an organization's website. On business cards, below the religious leader's telephone number, a new symbol appeared: @, as in, RevSoandSo@BigReligion.com. Rather than going to the library to learn about this religion or that, users could browse the entries on such sites as Religious Tolerance.org and the Religious Movements Homepage.

More important than these basic data, however, especially for smaller, easily marginalized religious groups, was the simple fact of presence in digital space. Their technological disconnection from physical place provided visibility in the religious marketplace they would not otherwise enjoy, while occluding their small size and limited influence in that marketplace. "An important function of publishing material on the Internet," wrote sociologist Sara Horsfall in her survey of religious use of the Internet prior to 2000, "is legitimization. Small groups can easily be dismissed by others as inconsequential because of the few number of people in any one place."

Religious groups that could not afford traditional "brick-and-mortar" physical sites, or whose lifestyle made such sites impossible or undesirable, could establish a presence in cyberspace with relative ease. The important point, as Horsfall notes, is that "their presence on the Internet is unrelated to the number of people associated with them." In cyberspace, nobody would know that a religion has only a few dozen members scattered across a handful of states. "If the Web site is sophisticated, extensive, and interesting, the group's existence can be legitimated in virtual space in a way that it never would be otherwise." But for the World Wide Web, for example, few people would have heard of Heaven's Gate prior to their 1997 group suicide. This is not to say that all "cyberspaces" are equal, however, or that the disconnection from physical location places all religious voices on a level playing field. Poorly constructed or

inadequately maintained websites may see a flurry of initial visitors, but will fail to draw more frequent and reliable traffic. Controversial religious movements may see search engine results that privilege dedicated countermovement webpages, rather than the organization's own websites.

Far more interesting for researchers than simply the information groups choose to share in religion-online is Helland's other category: online-religion. By this he meant people actually using the Web to explore, expand, and, most importantly, practice their faith life. "Individuals are interacting with the religious belief systems presented on the Internet," he wrote. "They are contributing personal beliefs and receiving personal feedback. It is a dialectical process; the beliefs are developing and altering, adapting and fluctuating in the direction the participants wish to take them." That is, believers began to pray online and to share their experiences of prayer. They experimented with rudimentary rituals in cyberspace, considering some successful, others not. They engaged in evangelism and apologetics, and they began to form communities dedicated to the kind of conversation sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann consider central to the social construction of reality. In the last few years of its existence, for example, while Heaven's Gate supported itself in part through professional Web design, group members created their own cyberspace presence, posted their religious manifesto online, and participated in numerous electronic discussion forums in an effort to acquire new recruits. While their poor "netizenship" and fringe message ultimately made these efforts unsuccessful, they did provoke a new form of "cult panic" over use of the Internet as a proselytization space.

Researchers soon realized, though, that while Helland's binary offered a useful beginning, it posited theoretical endpoints on a range of computer-mediated communication. Bounded at one end by simple email or the act of ordering a religious book online—the electronic version of a mail-order catalogue—this continuum is marked at the other by the practice of one's faith entirely and

exclusively via the Internet—the search for an authentic “cyber-religion.” The reality, however, is that a significant portion of religion in cyberspace occurs somewhere between those endpoints, shifting back-and-forth between the ideal types of religion-online and online-religion. Adherents did begin moving aspects of their religious activity online, inevitably reflecting in the computer-mediated environment devotional acts and ritual practice occurring in the physical world. With the click of a mouse, Hindu devotees could move a small aarti lamp around a graphical altar on their desktop. Pointing at the image of a bell sounded a chime at an online Buddhist temple. Typing onto a small scroll, then dragging-and-dropping the icon to a tiny brazier, Christians and Jews alike could watch their prayers “rise like incense” as digital flames created virtual smoke. Modern Pagan desktops quickly became crowded with icons of gods and goddesses, candles, cauldrons, and clipart bric-a-brac. For many believers, although these online devotional acts were a novel bit of religious practice, they were meaningful only because of their clear connection to offline referents.

Other believers, however, began to reconceptualize the very nature of that interaction. Indeed, this sense of dimensionlessness, immateriality, and the seemingly limitless expanse of cyberspace led some modern Pagans to imagine less an analogical relationship between the physical and the virtual than a real one.

“Cyberspace is a technological doorway to the astral plane,” wrote Lisa McSherry, and “once we enter Cyberspace, we are no longer in the physical plane; we literally stand in a place between the worlds, one with heightened potential to be as sacred as any circle cast on the ground.”

Connecting the physical fact of their computers with the virtual disposition of digital space, other modern Pagans argue that online activity reproduces in the technology itself the very magical energy they believe animates the universe. Writing for fellow Pagans looking to practice their craft in online spaces, Wiccan priestesses Patricia Telesco

and Sirona Knight proclaimed that “computers are like demigods in a box. They run on energy, store vast amounts of knowledge, and seem to have persnickety tendencies all their own. This demigod has a quintessential servant: the Internet.” Declaring the Internet “one of the most far-reaching innovations affecting our culture today both spiritually and substantially,” modern Pagans became one of the first family of spiritual traditions to experiment with online religious communities, designed not only to replicate, but in many cases to replace their offline counterparts. Because so few modern Pagan groups had physical locations set apart in the same way as more conventional faith organizations, it was easier for these groups to conceptualize and explore cyberspace presence as a viable religious option. This was particularly significant for believers who were isolated by physical location, by lack of local group support, or who practiced their craft in solitude. Wiccans and Witches who were either fearful of “coming out of the broom closet” or had no local coven available began to form online working groups shortly after the popular advent of the World Wide Web.

Whether a cyberspatial community takes the form of an online Bible chatroom or a Wiccan ritual working group, the salient reality is that place becomes less relevant than time. Although communities based on common values and interests, and maintained through shared communication, have existed for centuries, the time between those communications often rendered the sense of fellowship tenuous at best. Letters simply took a long time to get from one place to another, and even longer to circulate among a group. With the advent of the World Wide Web, and for the first time in history, any number of religious believers anywhere in the world could communicate with each other in all but real time. As long as one could get online, physical place no longer mattered; it is “collapsed” into the reality of cyberspace.

Moreover, it quickly became clear that, in many cases, these discussion groups began to consider themselves online “communities,” participation in which was at least as important to members as their

religious interactions offline. In other words, online interactions explicitly facilitated the formation of translocal religious communities.

While this represented an exciting sociological development, researchers were quick to question whether online communication, even that which occurred sequentially, in near real time, and which maintained substantial demographic durability, constituted anything like a “real community,” which is to say, one that exists in physical proximity. A problem for any form of translocal community, the emergence of dedicated cyberspatial religious groups encouraged scholars to reconsider the boundaries, and, by implication, the definition, of what it means to be “in community.” Importing what we might call an “offline bias”—our penchant for interpreting online behavior only in terms of its offline counterpart—many asked whether “the substitution of computer-mediated communication for the face-to-face variety [was] symptomatic more of the triumph of modern alienation than of its circumvention.” As sociologist Douglas Cowan points out, though, “it is important to remember that ‘community’ is hardly a point in conceptual space. It is not the case that something called community either exists or it doesn’t, blinking into being when a sufficient number of characteristics are present and disappearing the moment it falls below some theoretical threshold of viability.” Put differently, and this would be an issue for any form of translocalism, even if they are physically displaced and never meet in real life, a group of online discussion participants that develop a sufficiently durable and meaningful relationship that they self-identify as a “community” forces scholars—sociologists and psychologists in particular—to reconsider the nature of what we call “community.”

Prior to the mid-1990s, religious activity online was limited to electronic bulletin boards and discussion forums that were available to relatively few users. Equipment was expensive and often difficult to operate; Internet penetration was low and service unreliable. Web 1.0, which is commonly understood as the earliest stage of the World Wide Web, introduced user-friendly graphical interfaces and

hyperlinked Web pages. While this increased the ease with which users could browse the Web, they could contribute to it only in the most rudimentary ways. Web 2.0 increased the possibility of user-generated content, resulting in innovative strategies for delivering religious material and encouraging expanded interaction of believer-consumers. This phase, though, was still tied largely either to static platforms (desktop computers) and to those with limited mobility (laptops and notebooks). The emergence of social media, epitomized by such services and applications as MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, as well as the development of compact mobile devices and widely available broadband networks, constitutes the fourth displacement. Here, we see the shift away from website-based activity to a more fluid online environment that users access across multiple platforms and devices, to which they contribute much more frequently and freely, and with little or no regard for physical place. In this stage of digital evolution, it is as common to see a believer responding to a YouTube video she has just watched while riding the subway as it is to see someone interacting with any number of social media groups while eating his lunch in an upscale restaurant. As long as the device has sufficient connectivity, physical place has come to matter even less than it did in the years of Web 1.0 and 2.0. This enhanced accessibility of cyberspace has resulted in the displacement of conversation from the physical world to the digital.

“Conversation,” write Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their classic text, [The Social Construction of Reality](#), “is the most important vehicle of reality-maintenance.” In the rush to describe beliefs, doctrines, and ritual practice, though, conversation as a reality-maintaining device for religious believers often goes unnoticed or understudied, if for no other reason than our inability to access face-to-face interactions once the moment has passed. While ephemerality may be one of the hallmarks of information in the digital age—online information can change and disappear very quickly—new sites of conversation,

and the ability to study them, have emerged. Blog posts or YouTube videos can tell scholars something about believer-consumers online, but comment feeds, especially when they are reactive and interactive, reveal these voices in far less guarded ways. For decades, sociologists have pointed to these everyday conversations, these unplanned and, therefore, unscripted interactions, as an important data pool for understanding the “lived religion” aspect of believers’ lives. Two points are worth noting here. First, the technology that allows users to comment on events or posts in real time via social media, and interact with the comments of others, also maintains a record of these conversations through digital archiving. Second, because these conversational moments often occur outside of established faith locations—a seat on the bus instead of a church pew, on the street rather than in a worship service—they are often far more open than we might expect in more conventional religious environments. Social media displacement from both the structured discourse of the sacred place and the physical limitation of Web 1.0 and 2.0 technology has enabled more expanded and spontaneous participation in the religious conversation ongoing in cyberspace.

Finally, scholars of religion in cyberspace must consider the issue of augmented reality and the possibility of virtual emplacement. Here we broach a topic dominated far more by questions than by answers. Given the speed and the nature of technological changes since the 1990s, and therefore the improbability of accurate prediction or prognosis, we can do little more in this part of the discussion than indicate ongoing topics for investigation.

Without necessarily considering the transhumanist vision of “uploading”—the wholesale transferal of human consciousness to a spatially amorphous and infinitely rebootable computer environment—think of wearable computer technology. The ill-fated Apple glasses may be among the most rudimentary examples of this, but the notion of virtual reality is now far from metaphorical. What happens when we no longer simply put on VR goggles and

earphones—per the Oculus Rift or the Vive—but enter a computer-generated world by virtue of a reality-augmenting version of a motion-capture suit? And at what point does what we might call a “haptic suit”—a technological second skin that transmits all the stimuli our brains have evolved to associate with the “real world”—cease to be reality-augmenting and become reality-creating? When users “skin-in,” to coin a phrase, they no longer look around and seem to be in a church or a temple. Because sensations are simply the product of signals interpreted by the brain, every one of their senses tells them that they are there. They feel the hardness of the wooden pew; they smell the cologne of the man next to them; their eyes water and their noses prickle at the incense. With this level of displacement, the question of “religion and cyberspace” will demand even further conceptualization.

Issues such as these will also continue to present problems and questions for religious communities about the validity of virtual practice, especially when the technology exists for a truly shared virtuality—groups of believers “skinning-in” to the same electronically mediated environment. This becomes particularly salient when we consider, for example, believers who, for a variety of reasons, cannot complete mandated religious observance. If a Muslim family “skins-in” to a Hajj, religious authorities may find it increasingly problematic to deny the acceptability of ritual fulfillment. Or consider the case of a paraplegic, unable to move from her wheelchair. A haptic suit and a shared virtual world might allow her to experience the ecstatic nature of Sufi worship or the colorful riot of Holi so completely and realistically that she could not easily be convinced that she had not actually experienced them. Ongoing developments in computing power and AI-generated environments make it risky indeed for scholars of religion and cyberspace to state with confidence that “that could never happen.”

As virtual reality comes to appear less virtual and more real—that is, as the distinction between representation and meta-representation shrinks—it

may become increasingly difficult to distinguish when we are virtually present somewhere from when we are not. This development in turn could problematize the very concept of “virtual reality.” Even now the terms “religion online” and “religion and/in cyberspace” seem almost quaint, outdated in the face of unforeseeably rapid technological advance. In the 1990s, use of the Internet to practice one’s faith was limited by the fact of our embodiment, our emplacement in the physical world, and the rudimentary nature of computer-mediated communication. However much participants might have pretended they are in a grove during a winter solstice festival or in a sanctuary adoring the Host, they remained computer users sitting at a keyboard. The screen may afford an expanded range of experience, but it is still limited in terms of sensation and location. The question, though, is whether this is still true. For now, it probably is, but ongoing advances in cybertechnology could considerably change the meaning of embodiment and emplacement.

Review of the Literature

Early scholarly treatments on religion and cyberspace often took a descriptive approach to the problem. Essays included in Hadden and Cowan’s *Religion on the Internet*, Dawson and Cowan’s *Religion Online*, and Højsgaard and Warburg’s *Religion and Cyberspace* all include valuable initial surveys of the ways in which adherents were using computer-mediated environments. Of particular importance in these collections are essays on Islam, Buddhism, modern Paganism, and the Internet as a site of religious conflict, especially in terms of new religious movements. Later studies took more in-depth approaches to the problem, seeking not only to survey but to theorize religious activity in cyberspace. Some, such as Bunt’s *Islam in the Digital Era*, Campbell’s *Exploring Religious Community Online*, and Cowan’s *Cyberhenge*, considered more traditional online environments, while others have begun to assay religious participation in online gaming and immersion environments. Finally, looking ahead to the future

of virtual reality, scholars have begun to theorize implications for the interface between religion, humankind, and artificial intelligence.

Online Media and Religion in America: Historical Developments in the Intersection of Religion and Communication Technology

Technology has played a key role in religious practice and dissemination methods throughout history. But while early forms of written communication fostered a growth of religion throughout the ancient world, it was Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of movable type in 1450 that produced the first technologically driven changes to these practices and methods. From a purely structural perspective, the printing press allowed copies of the Christian Bible to be produced at a rapid pace and with relative ease. This, in conjunction with the Catholic Church’s reaction to the schism that the growth of Protestantism caused, ushered in the Reformation Era that was characterized by an emphasis on more individualized forms of lived religious practice that did not rely so heavily on a hierarchy of institutional authority. Indeed, the Reformation Era began with Martin Luther publicizing his ninety-seven treatises on the door of Wittenberg Church, but its effects were not truly realized until the Catholic Church issued its collective response in 1545 with the ecumenical Council of Trent. By issuing decrees in response to the Protestant-led cultural critiques against the Church, the Catholics presented themselves as being less willing to embrace modernist tools for religious purposes when such use challenged traditional church structures. This perception also became the roots of future discourse on the perceived fraught relationship between religious groups and communication technology.

After the rise of the printing press, developments in communication technology remained largely static until the invention of the electronic telegraph in the 19th century. The telegraph denotes a key development in the growth of new and emerging

media as for the first time in history, communication could bypass both time and space with the touch of a button and electronic wire transmission of information. The telegraph freed human communication from the constraints of geography while concurrently rendering previous forms of communication technology, such as the Pony Express, largely obsolete. In so doing, the telegraph paved the way for transnational communication and became an early template for the Internet working of the World Wide Web, as it created imbedded telecommunication networks. By mediating peer-to-peer communication through a primitive user interface, the telegraph ushered in the era of global communication on a scale previously unheard of. However, the telegraph was also constrained by its dependence on wired communication and an operator on constant standby, thus limiting its proselytization potential for religious organizations. As a result, the telegraph went largely unnoticed by religious organizations, and methods of religious worship during the 19th century remained much as they had during the previous four centuries following the invention of the printing press—limited to fixed conceptualizations of time and space and the physical presence of a religious leader in a congregation.

The invention of wireless telegraphy (commonly known as the Marconi radio) in the later years of the 19th century considerably advanced the transmission of the human voice and the proselytization potential of Christian messaging as well. While the ability of the telegraph to spread the word of God was limited by the technological limitations of the medium, wireless radio had no such limitations, and religious organizations were quick to capitalize on this new medium to evangelize large numbers of people through live worship broadcasts, a method of dissemination that began during the 1920s and continues to this day. For example, in 1929 the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) decreed that religious radio broadcasting qualified as a public interest and began offering time slots to churches

who wished to purchase air time to disseminate their message to the masses. This had the effect of spreading the Christian message to ever-increasing numbers of listeners, and it was during the dark times of the Depression that Pentecostal preacher Aimee Semple McPherson turned to radio as a platform for reaching the disadvantaged and disenfranchised, offering a voice of support and hope for those struggling in difficult economic times. For preachers such as Semple, radio fostered a level of intimacy in preaching, offering salvation and encouragement in a manner similar to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats," albeit in a considerably more faith-based format. In 1930 Fulton Sheen, Bishop of Rochester, New York, created "The Catholic Hour," a weekly Sunday broadcast that ran for twenty years and followed Semple's format of creating intimacy between speaker and listener through the medium of radio. Others soon followed suit, such as Southern Baptist minister Billy Graham who, by the 1950s, had developed a "crusade" approach to proselytization that combined electronic media (radio) with mass public spectacles, in many ways an early form of what would in later decades become known as a megachurch.

However, while radio evangelism provided a much-needed boost of proselytization and dissemination potential at a crucial time, the medium was limited by its inability to visually simulate sacred space. Though the radio stimulates active listening for the worshipper, its overall effectiveness is considered somewhat limited due to its lack of a visual component. Because of this, growing numbers of Christian organizations throughout America capitalized on the medium of television in the immediate postwar years. This was due in no small part to the ability of television to accurately simulate religious worship environments and transmit these environments directly into the home of the viewer. This type of televangelism continues to this day, albeit now often focused around broadcasting a mediated megachurch format. In this regard, televangelism functions in the vein of a deeply American "self-help" resource, providing

spiritual assistance for navigating a complex world in the form of motivational guides geared toward proselytizing and personal salvation via an easily accessible and appealing format.

However, in order to fully leverage the medium of television to engage an audience, churches must consider how to re-create sacred space in a suitable mediated manner, so that what appears on screen is indistinguishable, or in some way seen as an extension of, its physical counterpart. For example, while traditional churches continued to utilize high art in the form of ornate stained glass to visually present biblical parables and significant historical events to churchgoers, televangelists adopted a similar visual storytelling approach with Broadway-style stage lighting, elevated camera angles, and background music. This resulted in a cinematic approach to worship, one that lessens the divide between speaker and worshipper through simulated intimacy via oral storytelling and the creation of an artificial community via a charismatic speaker. Thus, gathering together to watch a televised broadcast of a pastor becomes little different than gathering together in a physical church environment to commune; the difference lies merely in the context and format.

During the Reformation Era, mass distribution of printed bibles via the technological affordances of the printing press granted individual worshippers increased levels of agency and autonomy in their lived religious practice, an aspect of Christianity not afforded at the time by the Catholic Church. As noted, radio evangelism enabled Christian preachers to spread the Gospel to ever-increasing numbers of people during the mass-broadcast era of the immediate postwar years. Proponents suggested the ease of access to the Bible via visual televised preaching would help bring back into the religious fold large numbers of worshippers who had fallen by the wayside. However, the revivalist movements of radio and TV evangelism in America were not without their ethical considerations and issues, many of which would be seen again with the rise of the Internet and digital religion. Many of these issues involve the perception that visual, electronic

media contributed to a selective “watering down” of religious messaging so as to aid in audience consumption.

A key concern about the nature of radio and the practices of televangelism lay in their reliance on disembodied listenership and viewership rather than physical community. This, in conjunction with the lack of a physically present religious leader beyond the image seen on screen and the direct accountability of the audience to religious authority figures, produced a deep divide among religious groups concerned about the authenticity of the “electronic church.” This concern is still voiced today by critics of online churches, who see mediated communication and gathering as an inauthentic form of religious community. The understanding of what equals presence or community within a corporeal congregation is paramount to many religious groups’ theological understandings of worship. Indeed, Christian authority is often predicated on the symbolic virtue of priests and pastors functioning as physical conduits to the Divine. However, increased levels of mediation in worship due to religious use of radio and television for mass dissemination of religious teaching and preaching have arguably resulted in a change from a rational textual-based or oral experiential presentation of such religious messages, to presentations geared toward mass consumption rather than theological depth. In light of this change, scholars and theologians alike have expressed concerns regarding the efficacy of mass-broadcast religion; in this regard, criticisms leveled against mediated Christianity today are in many ways a re-hash of historical issues experienced by religious organizations decades ago.

However, while radio and televangelism broadcasts are still found through America, their influence is being mitigated by religious organizations that have turned to the Internet as the key technology for carrying the Christian message to even greater numbers of people. The electronic church has given way to a new online version. The result has been the rise of what some scholars refer to as “digital religion,” a form of

religion that is constituted through emerging forms of digital media and imprinted with unique traits of digital cultures.

Religion Online and Online Religion

The rise of digital religion is characterized by the growth and intersection of two interrelated fields of influence, religion online and online religion. Some early forms of religion found on the Internet sought to adapt to the basic attributes offered by webpage design and message board style communication in order to create new forms of religious communities, such as those appearing in 1980s, like the net.religion discuss forum on USENET or the Ecunet, an ecumenical email community (<http://www.ecunet.org>). However, it was not until the 1990s Dot Com era that religious practice online emerged in a prominent manner. Computer professionals and hobbyists with religious interests began to experiment with ways of drawing people together as worshippers in “cyberchurches” or engaging Internet users in collective discussions of faith and spirituality. These new forms of religiosity online were largely user driven and thus free of traditional institutional or hierarchical constraints. This is significant as this became first step toward the notion of digital religion, which seeks to bridge the divide between online and offline religious spheres.

The various manifestations of religious use of the Internet are characterized by scholars as occurring in a number of distinct phases. Beginning in the 1990s, scholars began to focus on the transference of religious rituals and behaviors from offline to online, and in time, the scope of this research transitioned into more in-depth investigations of how practices of ritual, community, and authority were shaped and informed by the Internet. It is here that a line of demarcation must be drawn between religion online and online religion, for while the two share certain structural elements, they differ in context and scope. Religion online is characterized by the presentation of religion in controlled online environments such as “Ask a Rabbi” message boards and early HTML code websites. Online religion, conversely, is typically

much more fluid in context and scope and is characterized by a much more participatory approach. Online communities with a visual user interface—such as Second Life, the Presbyterian-led First Church of Cyberspace, or the now defunct Church of Fools experiment—serve as contemporary illustrations of this distinction. However, scholars like Christopher Helland (Dalhousie University) who noted this distinction early on have since reevaluated such claims, noting that today most expressions of religion online represent the purposeful import and adaptation of offline religious practices and traditions to an online context. Further, contemporary expressions of religion online are numerous and include online worship in digital cathedrals and temples, the enacting of theology through Internet memes, and the use of social media as a space to advocate and debate popular conceptions about religion. Focus placed on how people use digital technologies and spaces to live out their religious beliefs points to trends noted within the sociology of religion that contemporary culture often favors “lived religion” focused on everyday beliefs and practices, over the privileging of official dogmas and expressions of institutional religion. This has raised interesting question about how religious rituals, community, and authority are understood in the age of the Internet in way that often differs from the deeply rooted traditions and historical context from which they have emerged.

Digital Religion

The study of the intersection of religious communication and secular communication technology has been described by a number of different labels over the last three decades, including “cyber-religion,” “virtual religion,” and most recently, “digital religion.” Studies in cyber-religion typically involved investigations into how religious practice and discourse were being reconceptualized and reimagined through Internet culture. Contemporary research such as the Barna Research Group’s Cyberchurch Report (2001) examined trends in digital religious culture and estimated that at the time of the report’s

publication, nearly 10 percent of American adults and 12 percent of American teenagers relied on the Internet for the fulfillment of religious and spiritual needs, indicating early predictions of the emergence of a new form of religiosity were startlingly accurate. In time, cyber-research grew into studies in “virtual religion” in which scholars focused their attention on simulated religious environments such as the aforementioned Second Life and Church of Fools, as well as other MUD and MOO platforms. The rise in popularity of virtual religion denoted early attempts to connect online and offline religious contexts, and by the mid-2000s the online virtual religious sphere had grown to such an extent that scholars began to view these spaces not simply as mere simulations of their offline counterparts, but in fact as extensions of physical sacred space.

During the past decade, scholarship in the field of Media, Religion, and Culture has grown to focus on digital religion, which can be defined as the technological and cultural third space evoked when discussing how online and offline religious spheres of influence become blended and integrated. Digital religion is quantifiably different from concepts of cyber and virtual religion, in that it recognizes the existence of a blended culture in which offline lived religious practice informs online religious ritual in a reciprocal relationship across a variety of digital platforms. For example, while cyber and virtual religion offline religious practice informed online ritual, a digitally religious space allows for mediated interplay between the two in which an action in one sphere brings about a reciprocal action in the other under the umbrella of a networked or “digital” religion.

The rise of digital religion studies also emphasizes the fact that investigating the intersection of religion with digital media requires a return to considering the previously noted long-standing historical issues occurring in the relationship of religion with communication technologies. This means that questions regarding the authenticity of mediated religious rituals, issues of facilitating community through technology, and issues

regarding the role of institutional authority in a media environment again come to the fore. These issues have been central within digital religion studies and have been explored in four distinct waves, each of which builds upon the other. The first wave, which took place in the 1990s, utilized a broad approach to investigate the phenomenon of early digital religious practice and the possibilities for dissemination presented to religious institutions. A second wave occurred in the early 2000s, during which researchers began to look more deeply at the growing phenomenon of digital religious practice and what role the Internet played in the religious experiences of modern Christians. A third wave emerging in the late 2000s focused on how online and offline religious expressions intersect and connect to one another, for example, how religious organizations manage and negotiate digital media practices and opportunities within their offline communities. Wave four highlights a refinement of the development of methodological approaches to the study of digital religion with emphasis placed on the creation of new categories and interpretations for understanding the construction of ritual, community, and authority in contemporary digital culture. Given the propensity for human innovation in the field of communication, the role that media will play in the future of religion in America is certain to be as sweeping as it has been throughout history. Within these research paradigms, or waves, several key issues have been important areas of critical reflection, shaping the development of religious practice in this new digital electronic age. The themes of religious ritual, community, and authority will be discussed.

Ritual

Early on, Internet users began to experiment with how different platforms could be used for religious practices. For example, discussion through new groups and message board systems led to experiments in early forms of digital community. As the Internet developed in scope and new forms of digital media from websites to social media platforms emerged, experimentation with these

media for religious purposes grew as well. This led to Internet users seeking to import and translate traditional religious practices or rituals into these digital spaces—for example, prayer, proselytization, religious education, and the construction worship practices. The appearance of simulated (virtual) world environments such as Second Life added yet another layer of complexity and unique opportunities within this growing digital religious landscape, including, for example, virtual environments designed solely for the re-creation of key rituals—like religious pilgrimages such as Second Life’s virtual Hajj to Mecca, which allows non-Muslims to experience and learn about this Holy Pilgrimage in a hands-on way that would be otherwise inaccessible to them in the offline world. However, importing established forms of religious ritual into the virtual realm creates many debates and fosters many challenges for traditional institutional gatekeepers and authority figures. Virtual rituals are typically enacted by groups or clusters of worshippers who, by virtue of digital media, enact a form of individual ritual that, while engaging to the user, is often viewed by traditional religious authority figures as being less than legitimate.

The legitimacy of digital religious ritual has been a contentious issue for theologians and scholars alike. Given that religious authority is used to dictate the appropriate use and ordering of symbols representing the sacred in ritual, the absence of authority in a digital environment poses potential issues of engagement for worshippers and the uninitiated. This in turn leads to divisions between religious groups, some of which directly oppose digital ritual, leaving others to embrace it. Studies have demonstrated that a determining factor in the authenticity of a digital ritual is how a religious community views the nature of these rituals, specifically, whether they are deemed to be “virtual” and inauthentic or “real” and authentic. This perceived authenticity of digital

ritual by religious communities, while not entirely bridging the divide between those who support and oppose digital religious ritual, nevertheless

does lend credence to the notion that virtual religious spaces and the rituals enacted within them should not be quantified in terms of sacred and profane but rather in how useful and meaningful these “clusters” of digital worshippers find the experience. By focusing on the meaning of ritual in a digital context, researchers can begin to understand how worshippers leverage media to enact highly individualized forms of lived religious practice. Thus, the changing nature of ritual in digital religion demonstrates the role of contemporary media in facilitating religious change.

Community

As with notions of ritual in mediated spaces, the concept and role of community in digital religion has also undergone structural developments that often parallel developments in communication technology. For example, prior to the advent of electronic media, conceptions of religious community were largely constrained to fixed locations in time and space. However, the advent and subsequent adoption of radio and television by religious organizations altered the nature of community by removing the need for the corporeal presence of worshippers during religious services. In a digitally religious space, the nature of community is further altered as worshippers can choose from a variety of media platforms with which to access religious materials. For example, worshippers can follow along with church services on their smartphones and tablets, or they can participate in virtual rituals by controlling avatars in digital environments such as Second Life. In this regard, while a digitally religious community shares many of the disembodied characteristics of radio and television communities, digitally religious communities are considerably more fragmented and dispersed.

As a result, the extent to which a group of individuals who commune online can in fact be considered a true “community” is a source of great debate among scholars and theologians. For traditional religious authority figures, the Internet has upended previous notions of what constitutes a

religious community due to its ability to re-shape and re-facilitate the way worshippers congregate and enact ritual. Early online religious communities were initially formed when the Internet was still in its infancy, and as the Internet evolved so too did the structure of these communities. As increased levels of mediation ushered in new dimensions of ritual and self, religious communities have become increasingly privatized while the geographical and familial ties that previously bound people together are increasingly challenged by the growth of online communities.

Because of the creation of these new dimensions, the Internet and other forms of social media have fostered a transition away from tightly bounded social communities toward much more loosely defined social associations of varying levels of affiliation and commitment. Individuals can choose at will from a multitude of churches with multiple services available for viewing online. Similarly, they can also choose from multiple groups to converse and convene with, and should a group not be to their liking, they can easily remove themselves and find another. Thus, by virtue of a mass availability of prerecorded sermons online from a variety of sources and an influx of dissemination through social media, worshippers are no longer constrained by the need to be physically present in church at fixed points in time.

In this regard, digitally religious communities have come to be defined not simply by where they gather but by how they gather. The integration of digital media into religious environments has blurred the lines between on-and offline practice and caused the notion of “church” to evolve from a fixed geographical location into a network hub of interconnectivity as part of a larger global network society. This has resulted in religious communities being viewed not solely as places of worship, but as places to connect with other like-minded individuals to create meaningful, memorable experiences. This occurs not simply in physical gatherings but also in online gatherings that serve as extensions of offline communities and structures. As a result, digital religion fosters a new paradigm

of interconnectivity, one that challenges traditional notions of gathering and togetherness while concurrently adding considerable agency to the individual worshipper. In effect then, the challenges that digitally religious communities pose to traditional, hierarchical forms of religion serve as modern-day counterparts to historical issues seen with developments in radio and televangelist practices. Evaluating these digital communities in a contemporary American context involves focusing not simply on institutional responses to the changing nature of religious communities, but more importantly, on the motivations of the worshippers who create them.

Authority

Religious authority refers to those factors which guide, mediate, or control a particular religious group or context. It can be manifested in different forms, including religious roles or hierarchy, structures, ideologies, and generated from the teaching found within sacred texts. For example, in the era of the electronic church, the televangelist served as a religious leader for a broad and often nebulous electronic congregation and was often seen to be the equivalent of, or in competition with, the local church pastor. In the era of digital media many new religious authorities have emerged such as forum moderators, bloggers, and webmasters provide instruction and guidance to new digital congregations. These online innovators often take on these new positions of religious influence due to their technological skills and prominence, rather than traditional qualifications such as institutional vetting or theological training. Furthermore, these new religious leaders present challenges to institutional authority within established offline religious contexts, as their presence and influence online redefines traditional notions of religious authority. As a result, religious leaders are forced to take a reflexive approach to online environments, learning the skills and language the digital generation is already familiar with.

Traditionally, religious authority is an asymmetrical relationship between speaker and audience; trust and legitimacy are given to the speaker by a

congregation and through the leadership of this hierarchy, worshippers are guided into meaningful relationships with one another and with God. In a digital religious context however, authority is not based on hierarchies but on peer-to-peer networks that extend fellowship among believers, creating multiple opportunities for engagement. In practice, this plays out as authority based on peer endorsement rather than institutional expertise, as worshippers rely on symmetrical social media relationships to enact meaning making rather than on traditional pastoral authority figures and asymmetrical power relations. But without the oversight of religious authority figures, there is concern among church leaders and theologians that misinterpretation of core religious messages will result as the untrained serve as interpreters of church teaching. This historical issue is seen to be heightened in the era of new media and religion that easily allows alternative religious teachers to surface online thanks to blogs and social media that facilitate broad religious discourse beyond the oversight of official gatekeepers. For example, during the Reformation Era fears and tensions abounded that worshippers were incorrectly interpreting biblical passages and parables as they read religious texts alone, without the learned dissemination of the priesthood and its imbedded power structures. These tensions extend into the digitally religious context as the growing disconnect between worshippers and authority figures causes church leaders to struggle in their efforts to bridge the divide between traditional methods of liturgy and new media freedom.

Similarly, this shift away from congregational power structures and into “algorithmic authority” leads to the creation of new logics of religious authority. These include a logic of disjuncture and displacement as traditional church authority figures become disconnected and displaced from their congregations as a result of increased mediation; a logic of continuity, in which the relationship between church authority and media is increasingly characterized by interconnectedness and the removal of church hierarchies and complementarity,

in which religious practices offline are shaped and framed by online practice; and a logic of dialectics and paradox, in which the tensions of on- and offline religious practice are blended and reconceptualized as a digital religion, in turn creating a paradox in which mediation both degrades traditional church authority structures and concurrently creates new interpersonal relations and networks of great value to religious institutions. As was seen with historical issues of religious authority caused by developments in communication technology, new media logics created by the intersection of faith and digital media are being met with renewed vigor by religious organizations that are rapidly learning the language of the digital landscape. Thus, changes accrued to religious authority in America by digital media demonstrate reflexivity by religious organizations throughout the country that engage with present trends while concurrently looking to the past for inspiration and grounding.

Digital Religion in Practice: Case Studies

Issues around how media impact the understanding and practice of religious ritual, community, and authority are not new. Indeed, as noted earlier, the era of the electronic church and televangelism raised many similar questions about how mediating religious worship and practice challenges the traditional notions of these areas. At the same time, the state of digital media in the 21st century presents unique challenges in these areas, as the entry barrier to those who can create alternative forms of religious gathering and practice is lowered from the elite to everyday people due to the ease and accessibility of digital technology in American culture. As discussed, the intersection of digital media and religious practice is becoming common as Internet users can readily experiment with creating alternative religious spaces for dialogue and practice outside traditional religious institutions and oversight. Due to this ability, scholars have given much attention to mapping the expansion of the religious landscape into the digital realm, and how this is generating new knowledge and ways of understanding.

Studies in the field of digital religion have largely focused on discussing the manner in which religious organizations view, adopt, or avoid media and in so doing, have shied away from a more systematic approach to understanding the nuances of the relationship and intersection of religion and media. This attitude is evident in the varied and nuanced approach of contemporary studies of digital religious communities in practice; what is lacking is a concrete guide or framework for how such communities operate. In order to solidify how research has been conducted on religious community engagement with, and integration of, digital technologies, as well as the challenges raised, we offer two brief examples of this type of investigation. By outlining studies of two nondenominational, multisite evangelical churches and reflecting on their technological choices and the challenges these create, we illuminate the key issues that religious ritual, community, and authority raise regarding how religion is negotiated in the digital era.

Northland Church's Internet Campus

First we explore the ministry of the Internet campus of Northland: A Church Distributed, an American multisite church based in central Florida. In the 1990s Northland adopted a paradigm described as a "church distributed," arranging the church around their congregation and its partner ministries, rather than around the physical church building. Facilitating this multisite model required technology playing an important role in linking the main church campus to three separate campuses in neighboring towns using live two-way video connections. Over time, Northland extended their video links to connect with a congregation formed in a correctional facility and a network of "house churches" around the world using the Internet and a Roku channel, and in 2007, interactive web streaming of the five services held at the parent site along with a Facebook stream and iPhone app for members to connect. The web stream became known as the Internet campus, complete with a web pastor who was live at each service to offer technical help and spiritual counsel to congregants

watching the service livestream via Northland's website and interacting in the service campus chat room.

This multisite model, which is heavily dependent computer-networked and broadcast technologies, strongly shapes the worship rituals of the church, as well as how religious community and authority are defined and practiced. The liturgy and structure of the church services are highly choreographed and controlled so that they fit into set times; local sites know exactly when the music and sermon portions will be broadcast and how to integrate any site-live activities or announcements into the structured format. For the Internet campus this also means carefully shaping the online worship experience of certain offline protocols, such as designing the chat screen as a 3-inch by 3-inch screen, which limits the amount of text that can appear to about 7–10 short lines, and draws Internet participants' attention to viewing the service screen rather than the interactive opportunities offered. Efforts are also made to connect those in the parent congregation to those attending at other local or online sites, in order to help those at the other sites to feel part of the Northland community.

At the beginning of each service pastoral staff at the Longwood site welcome all site attendees, acknowledging names of specific sites, house churches, and even individuals viewing the service online, through names provided by the Internet campus or other site pastors. Northland staff often invite online and offline attendees to participate in specific service rituals, such as praying together or corporate repeat-after-me affirmations. Similarly, the Internet pastor encourages online members to engage in the televised meet-and-greet time by using the chat tool and to share online prayer requests at the end of the service. Strategic design decisions are related to technology and service architecture and the site minister's ability to create a seamless link between online and offline spaces. Digital technology thus becomes an essential tool for shaping the worship environment and constructing a bridge between the sites, as webcast viewing is framed as a shared worship experience,

thus creating a sense of continuity and community for members, whatever context they find themselves in. Research on the Northland community has revealed that those attending Northland via the Internet campus express a strong sense of positive connection and affinity to the Northland community, seeing their site as merely an extension of the larger congregation.

However, this integration into the very fabric of how the church community is constructed and worship is conducted is not without its challenges, most notably in the area of religious authority. While service leaders and pastors of the main campus and other offline sites are required to have seminar training and credentials, this is not the case for those who “pastor” the Internet campus or house churches. Internet campus pastors are appointed on the basis of their technical knowledge and problem-solving skills, and while a majority of their time is spent maintaining the website, monitoring the chat room, and providing technical assistance to attendees, they also provide in this context spiritual support and counsel for which they have received no formal training or vetting of their skills. Similarly, anyone can create a Northland house church, which requires only two or more people to be present together viewing the Internet or Roku channel feed. There is no formal oversight for these entities or their leaders, which can nonetheless be officially registered on the Northland site and be designated an extension of the Northland congregation. This creates a system whereby the traditional leaders are granting authority and legitimacy for individuals to pastor online, based on their individual access to technology and skills, which would not be acceptable qualifications for leadership in their offline congregations. This shows how churches focused on building and maintaining technologically facilitated worship environments can inadvertently create competing standards and social structures within their ministries. Thus, technological decision making within church context can have ecclesiological implications for religious groups. Increasingly, scholars of digital religion stress that studying such technology use in religious

congregations requires a two-pronged approach that combines the sociological analysis of the media environment with theological reflection on tech-cultured religious environments.

Coastal Church: Community through Connectivity

Second, we examine the operation and structure of Coastal Church, a multisite, nondenominational Protestant church located in Vancouver, British Columbia, with approximately 2000 members. This example demonstrates the global impact of digital religion and its American-based roots. Coastal's liturgical model is centered around a primary location in the city's downtown core that serves as a network hub and is connected to several secondary locations distributed among Vancouver's adjoining boroughs. In contrast to megachurches, a multisite approach allows for a significant increase in pastoral influence and control over a congregation, as by utilizing multiple smaller churches rather than a single large location, congregation members are able to feel intimately connected to a church community and its authority figures. Sermons at Coastal are recorded in high-definition video at the central location, typically on Saturday evenings and, following digital editing in an inhouse audiovisual suite, are broadcast to secondary locations the following morning. During sermons introduced with the physical presence of a pastor, community members are encouraged to actively participate by following along through proprietary smartphone bible apps such as the YouVersion and to tweet or post on Facebook and Instagram, as well as share their experiences with other congregation members through SMS and MMS messaging. This approach is utilized by Coastal's pastoral and production team to foster community in a growing demographic that is divided along geographical lines. Congregation members are also strongly encouraged to join “Life Groups” or small bible study groups led by senior team members and to enroll in study courses held routinely in homes throughout the city. By encouraging active participation with religious materials through mass broadcasting and interpersonal peer-to-peer communication in small

groups, Coastal's pastoral team ensures a consistency of religious message transmission throughout its congregation, as well the creation of deep, meaningful intrapersonal experiences throughout the church.

However, interviews conducted with Coastal congregation members revealed concerns regarding the authenticity of the digitally mediated religious experience. While the encouragement of active participation during sermons was appreciated, interviewees consistently expressed disdain and mistrust for the authenticity of prerecorded sermons broadcast to Coastal's satellite locations. Similarly, while Coastal's pastoral team and group leaders praised the use of supplementary religious materials such as bible apps, podcasts, and Vimeo-style video messaging available online for downloading, congregation members consistently reported feelings of distraction and a banality directed toward Coastal's heavily mediated ritual experience. For example, while interviewees praised the use of supplementary materials as religious study aids and cited their enthusiasm for listening to podcasts while in transit to and from work or school or watching video sermons as a family while at home, they were quick to point out that an overreliance on these materials can be detrimental due to the convenience factor the materials provide and their role in fostering an overall shallowness of worship experience.

As figures of institutional authority, Coastal's pastoral team demonstrated a conscious awareness of these issues and objections. Interviews conducted with administrative figures at Coastal revealed a reflexive understanding of the need to rely on digital media for connecting with a modern congregation. However, Coastal's authority figures also demonstrated an understanding that media should not be used as a substitute for regular participation in Life Groups and off-site group activities geared toward community building. Life Groups, by virtue of the physical presence of a junior pastor or group leader, serve as a focal point where church community and authority

intersect, and this intersection extends into other community endeavors such as participation in ministries and community engagement courses. This approach allows Coastal's administrators to enact a measure of hierarchical control over members of Coastal's congregation at risk of an improper or shallow understanding of the deeper meaning of the scriptures as a result of an overly mediated experience with religious materials. In this regard, mediated weekly services at Coastal serve as an entrance or gate to a much larger and more theologically oriented religious community that exists outside the walls of the church that is reflective of current scholarship centered on the ongoing practice of digital religion throughout North America.

Conclusions and Future Developments

Within the context of digital religion, the previously mentioned case studies are demonstrative of a purpose-built approach to liturgy that combines theological tradition with new media awareness, highlighting the need for churches to take a reflexive approach to worship and maintain a conscious awareness of the difficulties that new media pose to religious authority, ritual, and community. As America's religious landscape changes, this need becomes all the more crucial. In 2015 the Pew Research Center released a longitudinal study of America's changing religious landscape. Working with a representative sample of more than 35,000 Americans, the study noted a distinct decline in the number of Americans who identify as Christian. From 2007 to 2014, the number of Christians dropped by nearly eight percentage points. Over the same period, the number of Americans who identify as nonreligious increased by more than six percentage points. This is significant, because the Pew study indicates that Christianity, while still the largest religion in America overall, is nevertheless experiencing an overall decline.

But by transitioning from more traditional approaches to worship into a more nuanced and mediated approach, religious authority figures and organizations are working to bring back into the

fold many Christians who have stepped away from church over time. The Pew study on America's changing religious landscape indicates that this mediated approach to worship is effective, for while Christianity is still seeing an overall decline throughout America, there is a slight increase in the number of Americans who identify with nondenominational, evangelical Protestant-style churches such as those studied by Campbell (2016) and Bajan (2015). In this regard, the liturgical approach utilized by churches such as Coastal and Northland can be quantified as an emerging model highlighting growing trends in communicative practice. As these trends continue, media is appropriated and shaped according to the unique needs of religious organizations throughout the country. These organizations, while not tied to any specific denomination, are nevertheless part of a growing trend in Christianity to adapt and evolve with the times. In so doing, Christianity today follows a path, deeply rooted in history, of adopting communication technologies to meet the unique needs of a changing demographic and to communicate with this demographic in a manner reflective of a modern communication landscape.

Review of the Literature

Contemporary approaches to the study of digital religion are largely an outgrowth of developments in understanding how and why humans use digital media. Academic research on the then-phenomenon of digital religion began in the 1990s when Christians began forming online communities. These early communities were largely constrained to basic message board use due to the limitations of the Internet at the time. However, the emergence of digital ritual within these communities saw scholars such as Heidi A. Campbell, Stig Hjarvard, Pauline Hope Cheong, and Stewart M. Hoover (among others) investigate how religious organizations appropriate media from the secular world and shape these media in accordance with their own needs and values.

These needs and values are unique to each religious community and as digital media grew in complexity and scope to include wireless Internet

connections, smartphones and tablets, a paradigm shift occurred. This paradigm shift can be seen the changing views of digital media by religious authority figures. For example, prior to the emergence of social media in the mid-2000s, digital media was primarily viewed by religious organizations as a supplementary resource or learning aid for preexisting religious community members. However, with the emergence of HDTV streaming audio and video and the ability of digital devices to access large amounts of online information with the touch of a button, religious authority figures began to view these media not simply as supplementary resources but as a tool for proselytization that can reach many more "seekers" than ever before and in a mutually beneficial manner. During this time, scholarship on digital religion underwent a paradigm shift while new theoretical approaches were developed to keep pace with rapid developments in digital media and religious communication and proselytization techniques.

In terms of theoretical approaches to the study of digital religion, contemporary academic scholarship is largely in agreement. Technological determinism, with its narrowly focused view of media as a catalyst for social change is viewed as problematic by digital religion scholars as a deterministic view toward media largely ignores the complex negotiation processes that occur in the adoption and subsequent shaping of media by religious organizations. As a response to these limitations and the ever-changing digital religious landscape, a religious social shaping of technology (RSST) approach was developed. RSST employs a four-tiered framework for understanding the nuances of digital mediation adoption by religious organizations and is both focused and sufficiently broad enough to account for interorganizational differences.

The first step in RSST involves an examination of a religious group's historical orientation toward media. For example, more traditional groups such as ultra-Orthodox Jews have a largely negative view toward media while more modernist sects tend

to view media in a positive light. Next, an examination of a religious group's core beliefs and values are examined. This allows researchers to understand how the unique identities of religious groups influence their responses toward and beliefs are media. The third step in RSST involves an examination of the negotiation process undertaken by religious groups and authority figures and their responses toward media and media development. This negotiation process is unique to each religious group or organization, and its underlying system of values will determine whether an emerging media form will be accepted or rejected outright. The final step in RSST involves communal framing in which emerging media, when adopted by religious group leaders, must be presented to a religious community in such a way that group members view media as not only beneficial but in accordance with the core values of the community. For scholars seeking to understand digitally religious communities, employing an RSST framework involves a combination of ethnography, participant observation, and in-depth qualitative interviews. <>

[Political Theology of the Earth: Our Planetary Emergency and the Struggle for a New Public](#) by Catherine Keller [Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics, and Culture, Columbia University Press, 9780231189903]

Amid melting glaciers, rising waters, and spreading droughts, Earth has ceased to tolerate our pretense of mastery over it. But how can we confront climate change when political crises keep exploding in the present? Noted ecotheologian and feminist philosopher of religion Catherine Keller reads the feedback loop of political and ecological depredation as secularized apocalypse. Carl Schmitt's political theology of the sovereign exception sheds light on present ideological warfare; racial, ethnic, economic, and sexual conflict; and hubristic anthropocentrism. If the politics of exceptionalism are theological in origin, she asks, should we not enlist the world's religious communities as part of the resistance?

Keller calls for dissolving the opposition between the religious and the secular in favor of a broad planetary movement for social and ecological justice. When we are confronted by populist, authoritarian right wings founded on white male Christian supremacism, we can counter with a messianically charged, often unspoken theology of the now-moment, calling for a complex new public. Such a political theology of the earth activates the world's entangled populations, joined in solidarity and committed to revolutionary solutions to the entwined crises of the Anthropocene.

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Excerpt: Once upon a time we had ... time.

Whatever the story of our individual mortalities, there extended out from all of us, from us all together, the space of a shared time, the time of a shared space. The sharing was rent with contradiction: we reached no consensus on the layout of the future. We could ignore the space of its temporal bodies and squint away the alpha and the omega of its ages. Our calculations collided, our opposed futures warred and left hope drugged or in ruins. But still there stretched before us—if we were not fundamentalists of The End—at least a time to rebuild. There would be time enough for the space of a more marvelous togetherness: New Heaven and Earth, utopic horizon, seventh generation, endless rhythm, eternal return, r/evolutionary leap, fitful progress, sci-fi tomorrow. Or so the stories go. We had time.

And now we seem to have lost it.

Time, our time, the time of human civilization, appears to be running out. The science of climate has been unhysterically, relentlessly, increasingly

signaling: not that time will run out but that if we stay on present course ... So it had seemed, at least before the acceleration expressed in the 2016 U.S. election, we had a fighting chance of changing course within the narrow window of time that climate change allots. After the political shift,

however, the window seemed to be slamming shut. Not on all of life, not on the earth, not necessarily even on our species. But on historic human civilization as it flows into its future. Yet it is precisely so-called civilization that had brought us to this moment of self-contradiction, at which point we would be too busy responding politically to immediate threats to vulnerable human populations—of black lives, of immigrant, uninsured, or sexually abused lives—to mind the matter of the earth.

How could we answer new threats by and to the political process itself and, at the same time, attend to the inhuman elements of water, atmosphere, land, warmth, to the global economics of extraction, not to mention, say, to the endangered elephants? Even if we insist—as many of us will have continued to do—that social justice and ecological viability come inextricably entangled?

Am I writing, then, to proclaim the window shut? To perform just the sort of self-fulfilling prophecy of The End that tempts the left with paralysis? Conveniently for the right, we would thus shut ourselves down. Succumbing to a reasonable hopelessness, a critically plausible nihilism, we become one—in effect—with reactionary denialism.

Kairos and Contraction

So, no, I wouldn't bother to write, nor you, I wager, to read, if the window had closed. But it does seem to be closing. No way around it: the time is short. Really then I seem to be just quoting a text favored by the apocalyptic Christian right: "The appointed time is short" (1 Cor. 7:29). The apostle Paul, however, surely did not mean by "short" two thousand years or so. Nor can he here be read as making an appointment with ecological catastrophe

(unlike his neighbor in the Second Testament, John of Patmos, who can be).

I did however make an appointment with Paul. This was odd, given that I had hardly outgrown the entrenched, twentieth-century feminist theological habit of opposing liberating/ Jewish/prophetic gospel to sexist/heterosexist/supercessionist epistle. Given the apostle's indispensable appropriation by every form of Christian right-wing or mainline orthodoxy, it took the disarming enchantment with Paul of a growing assemblage of continental political thinkers—mostly not-Christian, atheist, or more or less Marxist—to cut through my encrusted suspicion.

And, lo, what did I find but that the trustworthy New Revised Standard Version's translation ("The appointed time is short") misleads on two counts. The Greek word translated "short" is far more complicated, more inviting, indeed more political: *sunestalemnos* means "gathered together," "contracted." It was not from a biblical scholar but from the political philosopher Giorgio Agamben, in his meditation on Paul, *The Time That Remains*, that I got this clue. Also the "appointed" of "appointed time" translates better as "remaining." Agamben does not note that the predicate in his titular citation seems to be syntactically misplaced, that the phrase may be more accurately translated simply as "the time is contracted."

In other words, Paul is not (on this Agamben is clear) announcing some predetermined end of the time line or programming an upcoming appointment with Christ at the Second Coming. Biblical scholars argue that a significant shift in Paul's thinking has taken place since his earlier letter to the Thessalonians, where he may well have expected an imminent End.

The Corinthian word for "time" is not the standard *chronos*. According to another Paul, the original meaning of *kairos*, "the right time, the time in which something can be done ... must be contrasted with *chronos*, measured time or clock time. The former is qualitative, the latter quantitative." In contrast to the chronological continuum of calculable time, Paul

Tillich thus surfaced for theology, "in the context of religious socialism," the eventive moment of kairos.⁴ The kairos signifies a breakthrough into, not out of, concrete history. For classical rhetoric and Stoicism (in which the apostle was well versed), the temporality of kairos had named the opportune or critical moment, "a passing instant when an opening appears which must be driven through with force if success is to be achieved." It was first used of arrows but also of the weaving loom's shuttle (the speed of which I witnessed as a child in Greece). In the immediate wake of apartheid, the kairos documents of South Africa swiftly initiated, for the sake of justice rather than vengeance, a political practice of messianic eventiveness.

In Agamben's analysis, "kairos is a contracted and abridged chronos." This captures an intensification through which, as we shall see, he channels the political messianism of Walter Benjamin. Not far from the politics of religious socialism, Benjamin's early twentieth-century "now-time" (Jetztzeit) has become key to the current conversations in political theology with which this book is imbricated.⁵ The notion of abridgment can be misread as shrinkage—again, as mere lack of time. Yet for Paul "the kairos is filled full." As the biblical scholar L. L. Welborn puts it in his highly contracted Pauline commentary, "the kairos arrests and suspends chronos." Agamben twists the kairos differently, avoiding a dualism of secular immanence and extratemporal transcendence: "Messianic time is that part of secular time which undergoes an entirely transformative contraction."

The empty continuity of chronotime is interrupted by a messianic contraction, in a decisive "now" growing from the radical gospel teaching of the "kingdom of God"—that is, of a politicospiritually charged transformation, immanent to the event of the kairos. So then Paul's point will not have been to menace the community at Corinth with the end of the world. The letter says just three verses later: "For the present schema of this world is passing away ..." Schema means "form," "order," "schematism"—suggestive both the theory of a worldview and of politico-economic shapes of power. What was to

end is a human construction of the world, not "the world" itself. And, he adds, precisely to dispel the paralyzing affect of doom in the face of real crisis: "I want you to be free of anxieties" (2 Cor. 7:32).

I want that too.

Without Exception

In that spirit and in this time, we contemplate together a political theology of the Earth. In this Anthropocene moment of mounting crisis, the schema of the world—not the earth itself but the schematism of a civilization based on eleven thousand years of Holocene climate stability—does seem to be passing away. Schemes within schemes—"ancient schemes" of religion within politics now come buried within modern schemes of politics trapped in economic schemes, and wrapped within the planetary scene of climate change. There, human scheming seems to be finding the limit not of its impact but of its control. And so of its calculable chronos.

The texture of the crisis may bear little resemblance to that which was anticipated by Paul, nor is it likely that his letters will deliver us the answer. However, the intertextuality that has mounted largely outside of theology proper as "political theology," and which circulates now almost irresistibly back through the apostle's epistles, may help us to see through the schematism of our world. It has, even in theology, made at least preliminary contact with the nonhuman life contracted together with the human. By self-questioning, may we answer to the multifarious lives of the earth? Lives endlessly, provocatively, human come entangled in the unfathomable immensity of the nonhuman: the creatures all—derently and without exception—gathered, contracted together with each other. Each therefore is gathered within the earth, as part of it and so precisely as it. Even if, as imagined in some anthropocene technodreams, we can be put en masse on a spaceship and separated from the planet, we would remain earthlings.

The earth names the space of this political theology, then, not as a flat surface or a hard ball

"on" which we live. The earth will not smooth down to that globe taken so for granted in the spirit of sovereignty and oblivion. It is not yielding submissively to the religio-politico-economic schematisms of what we may call anthropic exceptionalism. Earth names not matter beneath us, not a space lying static beneath time, but the teeming sphere of our collectivity. It pulses with the polyrhythmic temporalities of a planet embedded in a cosmos itself multiple and vibrant beyond our imagining. As Nicholas of Cusa, apparently the first within the Christian world to teach the infinity of the cosmos, also recognized, that cosmic All contracts itself to each creature: "the universe is contracted in each actually existing thing." And, we add, with the help of a more current cosmological schema, such a contraction of the cosmic environment to the particular creature takes place in the now-time of each event of becoming, each "actual occasion or "drop of experience." We will consider later how every microcosmic space-time happening, excepting no creature human or other, takes on social, and therefore in a certain sense political, significance. How would then the eventiveness of every becoming pertain to the kairos-event of crisis and novelty?

And we will wonder, in view of the earth crisis that the anthropos embodies, if any kairos can arrest and suspend the chronos of planetary doom—enough, at any rate, to trigger the realization of another possibility. Surely not, we suspect, if we await some messiah, as great exception to our condition, to come do it for us. And yet what we—the collective of human earthlings, in this instance—are doing for ourselves has just about run us out of time.

But not quite. And, after all, deadlines, I've found, can from time to time spur surprising actualizations.

This Political Theology

To read together our collective earth moment, we will spiral in this insistently condensed exercise through an account of the political, of the earth, and of theology. These three chapters that make up Political Theology of the Earth link political

philosophy with ecology and theology in order not just to theorize, but to agonize and to mobilize. Without anxiety.

The political signifies the social schematism of a contraction: it is the gathering and being gathered together of humans, beyond tribal cohesion, in the polis, civis, the urban units of civilization. And, as Wayne Meeks' First Urban Christians classically demonstrated, the movement that came to be called Christianity has, since its rapid urbanization by Paul, always been political. Its ancient antecedents, largely imperial, along with its Jewish origins, often counter-imperial, were always already political in their theisms. Gradually, Christianity would disperse its shifting theopolitics across its known cosmos, indeed its cosmopolis. Its materialization have been as schematically diverse and internally conflicted as its civilization.

In our time, the world, the schema of our coexistence, is rapidly being degraded by its urban elites into a planet of slums and dumps. Inside or out of whichever ambiguously vibrant metropolis, no heirs of either testament—indeed of any spiritual tradition, whether cosmopolitan or indigenous—can responsibly ignore the material schematism of economics and ecologies now so densely contracted in the polis. The biblical chain of urban signifiers hangs heavy, just beneath attention, on the Western political imaginary: Babel, New Jerusalem, Whore of Babylon, City of God, City of Man, City on the Hill ...

If religion has never been apolitical, still, even as political, it is never simply identical with politics—that is, with the structures of the state, and so with institutions that religious practice may shape, sanctify, question, or protest. Theology names a religion's theoretical practice (that theo does double work). So then theology is not politics, but it is always already political.

At the same time, but by an inverse theorization, politics is always already theological. And here we cannot avoid the practice of what across many disciplines is called political theology. Nor do we evade its pivotal, problematic text, Political

Theology (1921), the short volume by the legal theorist Carl Schmitt, whose central postulate states itself clearly: "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts." This is a shocking hyperbole for any who consider "the secular" to be purely the creation of modernity.

The alternative to ahistorically presuming secularism's creation from nothing might then be to recognize the secular as the secularized. Factoring temporal process into secularity itself surely makes sense. After all, the very word *saeculum* signifies a "time," an age or epoch, indeed a schema. Schmitt, analyzing how political concepts "were transferred from theology to the theory of the state," is focusing on the modern concept of sovereignty. Thus resounds the privileged example of the transition of sovereignty into modernity: "The omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver." Schmitt offers the juridical analysis of Political Theology precisely not as a work of theology but of sociology. The hidden theory of the *deus omnipotens* in modern politics is thus exposed by a secular social theory.

It is Schmitt's deployment of the phrase political theology that has fueled the recent outburst of political theologies across multiple disciplines—most of them avowedly secular, most of them not theology. Schmitt did not invent the phrase. He deploys it in mockery of a mockery. It had been the premier anarchist of the nineteenth century, Mikhail Bakunin, who coined it in ridicule of fellow revolutionaries who were partially motivated politically by their Christian faith or Jewish practice. Religion, for Bakunin, was itself the original sin. He wrote "The Political Theology of Mazzini and the International" (1871) in order to expose and deride the lingering God of that leading Italian revolution. Without much discussion of Bakunin, Schmitt's Political Theology nonetheless concludes on "the odd paradox whereby Bakunin, the greatest anarchist of the nineteenth century, had to become in theory the theologian of the antitheological and in practice the dictator of the anti-dictatorship." Schmitt's ironic

deployment of Bakunin's inversely ironic phrase may tip the present project into a perversely tripling irony, performing the theological antitheology to the nontheologian Schmitt's own antidote—his dictatorial theology of omnipotence as the boost to sovereign power.

We may hope to elude dictating yet another round of antidictatorship. But I see no way out of the satirical chain reaction. This means that the present text may no more escape the logic of Schmitt's postulate than do the plethora of theorists on the postmodern left, largely atheist, who oppose Schmitt's counterrevolutionary politics yet take with utmost seriousness his political theology. From Agamben to Žižek—the chain reaction won't stop—they happen also to be the non-Christian fans of Christ's fan Paul. They engage Schmitt, but do not constitute an ideological fan club. Since most of these new proponents of political theology are no more theologians than was Schmitt, the present author (undisguisably a theologian) has let this book take its present name.

Indeed, if political theology did primarily designate a room in the house of theology, it would be at the present moment of little use to theology itself. Under various other names, the inherently political animus of progressive religion has long, at least since the Social Gospel movement among Euro-American and Afro-American theologians of the late nineteenth century, sought zones of resonance and intensifications of solidarity with expressly secular social movements. In its defining disputes with orthodoxy, this interactivity builds upon the interdisciplinarity of the entire modern history of liberal theology. Given the statistical shrinkage of the mainline base for such liberal/progressive religious traditions (yes, our time is contracting), it seems politically futile for these forms of Christianity just to keep proclaiming our own modern or postmodern or postsecular relevance. But might we welcome the recognition by political theorists of a largely hidden theology always at play, for good or ill, within the political? Not that such recognition will somehow shore up the cultural prestige of theology and the mighty

fortress of its God. But it does open a vein of vivid transdisciplinarity in which theology itself may offer politically useful trans-codings between the religious and the secular. Of course, then, that political recognition will be complicated by the difference between theologies and therefore between the forms of their political secularization.

Theology here articulates what unconditionally matters. Within its Abrahamic materializations, it takes up the schematism of "God" but recognizes that theos as one way of naming the unconditional condition of all that is. It therefore invites the practice of "comparative theology," which embraces nonconversionist interactivity across the whole spectrum, East/West/ North/South, of religious/spiritual practices. Without the help of theologically deft forms of religious and cultural pluralism, attentive to the multiplicity of materialization, layers of contradiction, and modes of hiddenness of theology itself, the very notion of political theology remains a Schmittian mockery.

If political theology as such has not developed until quite recently as a branch of theology, it almost did. The phrase had been resolutely reclaimed by theologians of the post-Holocaust German left starting half a century ago. In a movement of European solidarity with the fresh voices of liberation theology in the global South, Johannes Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, and Dorothee Sölle emancipated the phrase from the Nazi collusion with which Schmitt had tainted it. John B. Cobb Jr. built on their work in *Process Theology as Political Theology* (1982). The work of each of these four theologians remains greatly influential, but the phrase did not quite take off in theological circles. It seems that political theology had felt too Eurocentrically generic to catch on among progressive Christian thinkers for the rest of the century. At least in the United States, the phrase perhaps threatened to dilute the bursting particularism of liberation, Black, female, gay, lesbian identities. It seemed too prematurely universal in its humanity. And for ecotheology, it signaled too anthropocentric a polis. These were not so much disputes as failures of resonance.

Now, in a different time, political theology returns to theologians largely by way of our inextricable involvement in philosophy and in social activism as well as in recent political theory. This does not mean one has recourse to political theology in order at last to transcend the identity politics of the religious (or any other) left. I hope rather to think together with any who work to gather a de-essentialized, dense—indeed contracted—entanglement of our differences. It takes constructive theological form in what Moltmann has in the present century, mindful of growing grounds for pessimism, called "the solidarity of hope." Those philosophers of religion who offer now a "radical political theology," poised between the death of God and an indeterminate future, may invite a less sanguine solidarity, but they set forth the "insurrectionist manifesto" of a radicalized democratic pos-sibility. The alternative then will speak or unspeak its theos as needed. Inasmuch as it provokes a vigorous alternative to the Schmittian concept of sovereignty, it will insist, as Jeffrey Robbins writes in the name of a radical democracy, "upon the immanence of our common life together and the generative power that comes from our modes of cooperation, both already present and still to come." For "this is a project that is theopolitical as well." And, within ecotheology, attention not just to the capitalist drivers of climate change but to their political schematism has led Michael Northcott, for one, to an intensive engagement of Schmitt and thus—in an extraordinary collation of political theology with ecotheology—to an answering "revolutionary messianism."

The point is not, I repetitiously underscore, that theology is only recently waxing political. There is little historic theological thought that does not locate itself in some aftercurrent not just of Paul's urbanity but of Augustine's "two cities." Nor has it just now turned progressive, as the late nineteenth-century Social Gospel movement demonstrates, nor only recently learned to theorize the multiplicity of urgent social issues. Ecofeminist and ecowomanist theologies of relation, along with the philosophical

theology of process, have for nearly half a century constructed transdisciplinary intersections between the political, the ecological, and the discourse of the ultimate. They have done so with respect for the secular boundaries of religious discourse—in part because they share much with secular critique of religious, as in mainly Christian, overreach.

Just as a convenient example, I persisted in theology partly because of early exposure to the work of Paul Tillich, his war-intensified *kairos*, his God who does not "exist but is the ground of existence," "Being Itself," and his inspiration of Mary Daly's verb version, "Be-ing." At almost that same mid-seventies moment, I came into the force field of a Christian deployment of Whitehead's philosophy of process, its take-down of omnipotence, its radical relationalism fomenting John Cobb's early warnings about the global ecology and its "religion of economism" that has the world in its grip. Cobb taught that the founders of the great ways—Moses, Socrates, Confucius, Laotzu, Jesus, Mohammed—were secularizers *avant la lettre*, turning their communities beyond "religion" and toward their social world. He distinguished this "secularity," tuned to the challenge of social justice in the *saeculum*, the age and its politics, from "secularism," which is itself just another religion. These strong influences combined and recombined, in me and in many, with the exploding *kairos* of sex, gender, race, class, and species politics. But the wider influence of process connectivity was limited. If sometimes still playing a zero-sum game with each other, the plural identities of liberation found deconstructive destabilization and so fresh interdisciplinary refraction through poststructuralism in the later decades of the last century. And the pluralism of Whiteheadian thought, now entangled in a Deleuzian rhizome and a fierce ecosocial planetarity, does not cease to seek out fresh publics secular, religious, and spiritually indeterminate.

These prophetic traditions of progressive theology are not one. And this brief account offers only a personal contraction of the dramatic shift in the texts of theology from the late 1960s on. But one

might generalize to say that these theologically yoked ecosocial justice experiments have without exception offered their thought back to their respective religious legacies. One may say also that they have done so in the spirit of an autocritique that means to mobilize activist transformation within those traditions. So, for instance and concretely, the struggle to overcome entrenched habits of masculinist and heterosexual normativity continues amidst multiple religious institutions. As do waves of insistence, against liberal complacency, upon renewed work against racism within and beyond our own institutions. Always, however, the prophetic movements have aimed beyond religion—as, for example, the liberation theologians and their transformative, base Christian communities of Latin America accepted extreme risk as the cost of challenging the U.S.-backed dictatorships in the 1980s.

In its explicit embrace of the social justice ethos and its creation ecology, theology is only recently picking up the dropped discourse of political theology, with its Schmittian baggage. I see no problem with this delay. This emergent discourse will not deliver redemption, only some timely transdisciplinary insight into delays that destroy. The postponement that has become acute since more or less the first Earth Day of 1980 is now subject to the new delay—the one that requires a language of "aspirational fascism," or "authoritarian populism," with its avenging racism deployable against both citizens and migrants, its climate denialism directed against the earth itself. This double politicoecological deferral of justice speeds us toward planetary catastrophe: we are at once stalled out on hope and rushed toward the end. The double-talk of "fake news" greases the rails of progress toward doom.

In this double-time the deep intersections of injustice and unsustainability expose themselves, as this book argues, in an extravagant exceptionalism. Its absolute investment in the extractivism and exterminism that pump the global economy works in tandem with the American exceptionalism that lets us (U.S.) use or abuse the global at "our" sovereign

will. If that will has recently embodied itself in a persona volatile to the point of derangement, is it more than a pumped-up rearrangement of a long-term socioeconomic schema? It effects new unification through really old racial, sexual, and class resentment. Yet—and this may prove fortunate or catastrophic—there appears to be as much instability as there is strength to the schemes, conflictually national and global, joining the political to the economic.

Any certitude of analysis seems now certainly dishonest. Certainty itself exercises a sovereign simplification by which it unifies its knowledge and so its world. Its very modern world: after all, "knowledge is power"—by which Bacon meant a certain kind of knowledge, i.e., certainty. Certainty allows the conquest of the other, which it simplifies as object. At the same time, the sheer multiplicity of interconnected threats belies any monocausal simplification—whether political, sexual, racial, economic, ecological, or religious. The unconditional itself does not deliver certainty. Uncertainty, however, does diminish responsibility; it multiplies possibilities for response.

Darkening Hope

There is an indiscernibility between the darkness of what we cannot know and the darkness of what we do not want to know. A shadow formed of two darkensses: that which exceeds our capacities to think and that which feels ethically unthinkable. Theology, as it turns out, has an ancient practice for liberating insight from certitude, for thinking at the edges of the unthinkable. Called negative theology, or apophasis—"unsaying"—it is born in antiquity as a negation of any name, dogma, or knowledge of the divine, however true and nonnegotiable it may seem. The unconditional twists always into the unsayable. Apophatic theology operates as a practice at once theoretical and spiritual, a means of mystical insight.

Such negation of any finite certainty as to the Infinite now takes on the shades of another negativity, that of an ethical critique, which shades readily into pessimism (as, for instance, the

brilliantly tuned darkness of "Afro-pessimism"). The mystically unthinkable links up to the ethically unthinkable; the apophatic abyss morphs into the ecopolitical horror. So the darkness shadows any hope for a viable future. But rendered theologically, that "cloud of the impossible" (after which I named a book, in tribute to a much older cloud) embraces its own multiplying negations. Uncertainty undoes all optimism. But it may, for that very reason and in our circumstances, enable a "hope in the dark."

So we might insist that, as theology itself reenters the fray of political theology, it do so in mindfulness of its cloud. I had threaded theology to a political ecology of "apophatic entanglement." Such theology keeps exposing the creaturely vulnerabilities of our inescapable, indeed our nonexceptional, interdependence, relations themselves multiplying and deepening unpredictably into the unknowable. At one cosmic angle the unknown darkens into metaphors of divinity. Yet the unknowable at an earth tilt shades into the unbearable, even as populations of human and other creatures lie exposed to unthinkable but quite probable depredations and demise at the planetary scale.

A political theology of the earth casts always and mindfully this shadow of many darkensses. Therefore it can sometimes appear as a "negative political theology." It will let us practice a systemic mistrust of certainties, however well intending. Only so can it tender courage for the thinking of the unthinkable, epistemic and ethical. Recognizing the opaque lining of any certainty, we think not less but better. We find clues in dark places.

So in this book we will reconsider Schmitt's concept of a sovereignty decided "in the exception." We may find thereby a clue to a whole current schematism of exceptionalisms. And it is precisely Schmitt's implication in the fascism of his time that lends a certain insider insight, a glimpse into the shadowy inside of the different but not unrelated proclivity of this, of our, time. When is that? As I write it is time passing through its proto-fascist

farce of the bully sovereign. I hope by the time you are reading this—the time of books has a slowness—the possibility of fascism has receded. In any case, the precarity of our democracy will not have. In this political peril, the U.S. is in fact hardly exceptional, but joined by numerous other nations suffering differing but related temptations to a white-supremacist authoritarianism. And the high probability of coming great waves of climate migrants, millions upon millions fleeing the waves of flooding coastlines, or the heatwaves of spreading drought, added to and intensifying migrations forced by war, threatens to bring out the worst in host democracies. It will also, here and there, provoke the best, and in reaction, worse worst, and perhaps, better again, who knows .. .

But where that chain ends is in apophatic ellipsis. In other words, responsible ecosocial predictions may brace themselves with sound science and unfake facts. But they do not follow a teleology of hope or of doom. And, as theology, this political theology does not perform the Messiah or announce her coming. Indeed "the messianic thwarts the teleological unfolding of time (the Messiah will never appear in time)." That is Judith Butler thinking with Walter Benjamin. The pretensions of a predictable chronos fail us. They do not come in time. But neither is this Jewish messiah timeless, enthroned beyond time itself. The messianic, perhaps then even Paul's messiah, called ho Christos, is always "coming"—never captured in a final revelation of gore and glory.

If the moment of crisis is to open at its edge, its eschatos, as kairos, it seems that a specter of "messianicity" (Derrida) starts to materialize within it. A historically worn yet inexhaustible possibility shoots—like the shuttle of the loom—through the tangles of impossibility. It might make up in creativity what it lacks in power. Who knows?

Precapitulation

This political theology of the earth will weave its way through a threefold argument by way of a schematism of three chapters: on the political, on the earth, on the theology that here gathers them.

Chapter 1, "The Political: Sovereign Exception or Collective Inception" takes on the locus classicus of political theology as such, Schmitt's politics of friend vs. foe. Its unifying antagonism is answered by both William Connolly's and Chantal Mouffe's notions of "agonism." Such antagonism is hard to miss

in current politics of we vs. they. If, for Schmitt, sovereignty is established "in the exception," the emergency that displays the exceptional power of the leader, it lives from the secularization of a theology of omnipotence. We consider Kelly Brown Douglas' genealogy of white exceptionalism, correlating it to multiple registers of exceptionalism trending toward planetary emergency. The now-time leads through its dense Jewish/Pauline intertextuality toward an alternative theology for the political present.

The planetary time of crisis registers as climate change. Any responsible politics now faces—or denies in plain sight—the effects of a theologically sanctified anthropic exceptionalism. So chapter 2, "The Earth: Climate of Closure, Matter of Disclosure," pursues its time-sensitive matter (the data always worse by the time of publication) with counter-apocalyptic intent. A poem of the great African American ecopoet Ed Roberson—"To See the Earth Before the End of the World"—will guide us. Reflecting on the meltings and the floodings, the droughts and the fires, the immigrations and the inequities already materializing in the Anthropocene, Donna Haraway and Karen Barad invite us on some energizing loops through the nonhuman.

If the chance of an ecosocial inception depends upon a shift of political theology, we must then actually reconsider the matter of theos. For, after all, theology itself seems to be failing right along with democracy and ecology. Chapter 3, "Theology: `Unknow Better Now,'" meditates on a theological unknowing, apophatic theology, in relation to the standard certitudes of a theology of Christian exceptionalism. Process theology poses here the metaphors of a constructive alternative in which sovereign omnipotence gives way to a depth

of creative indeterminacy. There an amorously struggling alternative, a secularreligious political potentiality, begins to materialize.

As we get free of anxiety, the kairos fills fuller. Its becoming now, in a textured density of intersecting relations, does not determine a future. It overflows the present as possibility. Possibility, that is, for different (possible) futures. If that kairos stirs hope, it works against the chronic hopes of supernatural salvation, secular progress, or any other chronology of optimism.

What does it work for? For the now-time cannot open as the mere reaction of an against. How shall we name its dark chance, barely pronounceable as hope? The potential for ... how do we find words that don't say too little justice, sustainability, an ecosocial public, social democracy? Or too much: a coalition intersectionally dense and vast enough to interrupt the death spiral of climate change and the politics of a capitalism that, in its globalism of growth, is fomenting endless raging, racist, heteromasculinist disappointment. Such coalescence energizes not just resistance but an insistence of that assemblage upon political alternatives? Falling short of fulfillment, such mattering experiments, however local in space and fragile in time, foster a just and sustainable enough common life. Common to the point of the "undercommons," darkly bound together in the promiscuous solidarities of difference—in the precarity of our conditions, this work matters unconditionally.

Too much and still not nearly enough. Too little and still: a beginning. <>

[Interpretations of Jihad in South Asia: An Intellectual History](#) by Tariq Rahman [DE GRUYTER, 9783110550276]

In the wake of radical Islamist terrorist attacks described as jihad worldwide and in South Asia, it is imperative that there should be a book-length study of this idea in this part of the world. The focus of the study is the idea of jihad with its changing interpretations mostly those available in exegetical literature of key figures in South Asia. The

hermeneutic devices used to understand the meaning of the Quranic verses and the Prophetic traditions relating to jihad will be the focus of this study. The main thrust of the study is to understand how interpretations of jihad vary. It is seen as being both defensive and aggressive by traditionalists; only defensive and mainly about moral improvement by progressive Muslims; and being insurrectionist, aggressive, eternal and justifying violence against civilians by radical Islamists. One purpose of the book is to understand how the radical interpretation came to South Asia. The book also explains how theories about jihad are influenced by the political and social circumstances of the period and how these insights feed into practice legitimizing militant movements called jihad for that period.

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Excerpt: Since the attacks of September 11, 2011 (popularly referred to as 9/11), the term 'jihad' has become a household word. After every attack on targets in the Western world, be it the underground of London, Madrid, or Paris, or the 2016 March attacks in Brussels, Muslims, as well as people in the West who want good relations with them, insist that jihad means the quest for moral improvement and that, if one kind of jihad (the lesser one) does mean fighting, it is only in selfdefence which is an internationally recognised right of all nations and peoples. Their antagonists dismiss these claims, arguing that jihad in practice as well as theory actually refers to aggressive warfare against non-Muslims. Among Muslims too, in an ironic twist, there are supporters of that argument. Indeed, Islamist militants have written tracts calling for unending war against the West (whom they call 'crusaders') and their supporters, i. e. rulers of Muslim countries. These are no mere theoretical concerns; these are matters of life and death. Hence, not only out of intellectual curiosity but also for practical reasons of policy-making, it is imperative that the interpretations of jihad should be understood for the world as a whole and, particularly, for flashpoints in it. And one of these

flashpoints, incidentally one in which the author happens to live, is Pakistan. Pakistan has been at the centre of violent jihādī activities for more than a decade. Afghanistan has been fighting a series of wars, which have been called jihad, for thirty years, and India has been the brunt of attacks by groups claiming to be jihādī in the last few years.

Giving precise definitions of the various interpretations of Islam is a difficult undertaking. However, some guidelines for the usage of terms which will appear in this work are necessary. Here the term radical Islamists is used for people or groups who believe it is justified to use violence to create an Islamic state or fight 'Western' powers which, in their perception, exploit Muslims or prevent Islam from gaining political ascendancy over the world. The terms jihādīs and Islamist militants are used interchangeably for groups actually using violent means as opposed to merely approving of such use. Other studies, generally by political scientists, often use the term, Islamism, for the terms given above. Islamism is defined by Volpi in his introduction to 'political Islam' as 'the political dynamics generated by the activities of those people who believe that Islam as a body of faith has something crucial to say about how society should be organized, and who seek to implement this idea as a matter of priority'. Political Islam may not always lead to violence but sometimes it does. Hence the need for precise terms such as the ones used above for groups choosing to apply their ideas to change the world by violence in the name of Islam. Other terms used at places in this study are salafism and Wahhābism (or Wahabism as it is called in the popular press). The first is based on following the way of life of the pious early Muslims. The second is based on the thought of the 18th century religious reformer Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703 — 91) who preached a return to 'original' Islam since innovations— like mysticism and asking for the intercession of saints or worshipping at their tombs— he said, were akin to idolatry. Those who interpret the canonical sources literally are often labelled in the press as

fundamentalists but this usage is disputed by Muslims. Labels like neo fundamentalists and moderate Islamists are also used in the literature but remain imprecise and will, therefore, be avoided in this study. It is, however, wise to remember that these categories are neither immutable nor hermetic.¹ Not only strict practitioners of the faith and radical Islamists shade into one another, but, in fact, all groups do. Indeed, it is true to say that 'actual Islamist groups do not necessarily fall neatly into either of these ideal-type categories'. Moreover, 'movements frequently change their identity over time, becoming more radicalized or more "mainstream"'. But our interest is in the ideas of those who believe in initiating wars, attacks, and armed insurrections with reference to 'Islamic referents—terms, symbols and events taken from the Islamic tradition'.⁴ And this is because some of this kind of thought has influenced Pakistan in recent years. While we are not concerned with finding the causes or cures of radical Islamist thought or militancy, we are interested in tracing out the intellectual history of this interpretation in South Asia. For the purposes of this study, the term South Asia refers primarily to the Urdu-using part of what used to be British India and is also called the Subcontinent. Urdu is used for formal writing of the works, mainly exegeses of the Qur'an that we shall be dealing with from the Khyber Pass in present-day Pakistan up to the urban areas of Bengal as well as in the former states of Hyderabad, Rampur, and Bhopal. However, while we shall touch in passing upon the last three areas, our focus will be on the Muslim societies of north India and Pakistan. Essentially it boils down to the question of how jihad came to be interpreted in this manner. This is the central question of this book. But before answering this question let us give a brief introduction to what is available in the canonical sources, the Qur'an and the hadith (pl. ahadith), about war. Our major objective is to highlight interpretations of texts which are used by radical Islamists to justify their actions.

There are references to war and fighting in 183 verses of the Qur'an. The ones used for analysis in this book (given in Table 1) are given in English translation in Annexure B. The relevant gist of the other Quranic verses mentioned in the text is given parenthetically in the form of brief abstracts. The number given above varies in other counts because some verses which seem to describe historical events dealing with war or conflict are added by some while not by others. The word which is mostly used for warfare is qitāl (78 occurrences). It is derived from the root -q.t.l- which is translated both as fighting and killing. This number is disputed by others since, for instance, Asma Afsaruddin counts fifty-four 'lexemes from the third verbal form of the root qtl'. The Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an, however, counts only forty-four occurrences from the -qtl-root. This is mainly because one can count only lexemes relating to war as it relates to Islam and Muslims or to anyone. Moreover, one can count the occurrences of the lexemes in verses relating to fighting or all verses. I count words derived from the root -q.t.l- referring to all meanings of it: you fight/kill; you are fought with/killed; killing/fighting, and so on. However, words used from the same root in verses not relating to fighting have not been counted. The word jihad, from the root -j.h.d- which is translated as effort and endeavour' (27 occurrences), does not necessarily refer to fighting. Indeed, five occurrences of the word refer to oaths, leaving us with thirty-six. 'Only ten out of the thirty-six' references to jihad signify or are 'unequivocally interpreted as signifying warfare'. Thus, there are instances when the term Jihad has been used for peaceful struggle in the Qur'an (see Annexure A). For instance, the following verse of Sarah al-Furqān (Q. 25) mentions only struggle (jihad) but not fighting (qitāl).

So do not believe in the infidels but 'undertake a Great Struggle against them' (jāhidhum bihi jihādan kabirā) (25: 52).

Here the imperative—as explained by most exegetes—is to struggle against the infidels with

the Qur'an, which is called the 'great struggle' here.

However, at places it is clear that this struggle will involve the loss of both wealth and life. In such cases the words used are 'wa jahadū bi amwālīhim wa anfusihim' which means 'struggle with your wealth and selves' (9 instances). This has generally been interpreted traditionally as the kind of effort which involves donating one's wealth and enrolling among the fighters. Some of the verses using this word are obviously from a context of ongoing warfare. For instance, al-Saff (Q. 61) instructs Muslims to 'strive for God with their wealth and lives' (61: 11); al-Tawbah (Q.9), which is about the war of Tabuk, mentions God's appreciation of those who leave their homes and 'struggle with their lives and wealth' (9: 20). And 9: 41, about the same war, begins with 'go forth heavy or light' (infirū khifāfan wa thiqālan), and goes on to advocate striving with lives and property (see Annexure A). Fazlur Rahman (1919 — 1988), an American academic scholar of Islam of Pakistani origin, points out that the term jihad changes meaning from Mecca to Medina. In the former it refers to 'a strong-willed resistance to the pressures of fitnah and retaliation in case of violence'. In Medina, however, 'it is often equivalent to qitāl or to active war'. Besides, as Michael Bonner brings out, the words ribāt, ghazwā, and barb have also been used. Ribāt refers to the 'pious activity, often related to warfare' as well as a fortified garrison in the face of the enemy. 'Ghazw, ghazwa and ghaza' come from offensive warfare or raids on the enemy; barb simply means war and not necessarily one fought for religious reasons. So, out of the terms used for sacred war, the one normally used is that of jihad while it might more appropriately be qitāl. After all, as Patricia Crone points out, all classical schools of law do identify such war with reference to al-Baqarah (Q. 2)— 'prescribed for you is fighting, though it be hateful to you' (2: 216). Here the word used is qitāl, not

jihad. Indeed, she continues, 'it is a bit of a mystery that jihad came to be the technical term for holy war'.

Besides establishing the frequency of occurrence of derivatives of jihad and qitāl, the verses referring to war have been placed in separate categories in a chart given in Annexure A. These are: orders (for war as well as peace, exemption from war and so on); values (praise for the fighters), regulations (for distribution of booty etc), history (the wars of the Jews under Moses, the battles of the Muslims with the Quraish), and prognostication (that of the domination of Muslims subject to their piety).

The Islamist militants who are fighting today in Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan and India are Sunnis, not Shi'as (Shiites). Thus, we need to be concerned only with the Sunni interpretations of jihad for the purposes of this study. Although all Muslims consider the Qur'an and the hadith as the canonical sources of Islam, both are interpreted to yield discrepant meanings through hermeneutical methods which will be described in the following chapter.

Based on the two foundational sources mentioned above, there are books of jurisprudence which lay down recommended practices towards the treatment of prisoners of war, collection of poll tax (jizyah) from non-Muslims vanquished in war, and so on. For instance, 'Ali ibn Tāhir al-Sulamī al-Nahwi's Kitāb aljihād is meant to incite his listeners to undertake jihad as this was the period of the Crusades. These traditional sources of law pertaining to jihad, and most importantly, treatises written on the subject in India, will be dealt with in detail in chapter 3.

Let us now turn to how jihad is understood in scholarly literature at present. Books upon books and articles upon articles have been written on this issue.' Having already referred to Bonner's comprehensive history of the evolution of jihad in history, let us look at another book of the same kind, namely Richard Bonney's comprehensive

historical introduction to it. This book traces out how events called 'jihad' played out in modern history all over the world. The last section presents secondary sources aiming at rehabilitating Islam as a religion which can coexist with other belief-systems.' Reuven Firestone makes the point that there were several passages from the foundational texts which a given faction 'would refer to' for 'support of its views'. But then the transition from a pre-Islamic (tribal) worldview to an Islamic one occurred and ideological, rather than kinship-based, fighting emerged as the desiderated norm for sacred war." Lewis blames the 'failure of modernity', by which he means bad living standards in the Muslim world, for the rise of radical Islamist thought. He then goes on to pin the blame on the Saudi 'Wahabi' ideology which 'offers a set of themes, slogans, and symbols that are profoundly familiar and therefore effective in mobilizing support and in formulating a critique of what is wrong and a program for putting it right'. Cook explains the concept of jihad in the canonical sources of Islam—Qur'an, hadith, and Fiqh (body of law derived from the canonical sources of Islam. Jurisprudence)—concluding that during the first several centuries of Islam 'the interpretation of Jihad was unabashedly aggressive and expansive'. Patricia Crone, in her magisterial work on political thought in medieval Islam, also points out that, among Sunnis at least, 'Muslims were legally obliged to wage holy war against dār al barb [the land of war] until it ceased to exist or the world came to an end'. However, she also adds that Muslims were, in theory, supposed to fight only for faith and not for conquest or material gain. This, of course, did not really happen since the conquered people were not forced to convert to Islam. In other words, according to her, it was imperialism after all but one 'linked to a religious mission civilisatrice rather than the satisfaction of Arab chauvinism'. This, she adds, was more like British and French 'white man's burden' theory rather than Charlemagne's 'forced conversion of the Saxons'. But Crone's basic hypothesis is that, like other Near Eastern people, the Arabs 'understood their

religion in a particularist vein' hence Arab imperialism came to be clothed in terms of ideological universalism'. But this conclusion would be contested by Muslims as well as 'apologist' Western scholars.

Kepel presents a history of modern Islam in the broad context of international relations and the rise and ultimate failure of fundamentalist Islam. His main argument is that terrorism is more a consequence of the failure of Islamists to take over any major state and establish their rule there. In short, it is a sign of defeat rather than triumph. This is also Olivier Roy's argument, i. e. that political Islam 'has lost its original impetus'. Others explain militant actions by individual leaders such as Osama bin Laden (1957—2011), or groups and organisations such as al-Qaeda or ISIS as political Islam, Islamism or Jihadism²⁶. One of the early attempts at this kind of explanations is Jason Burke's *Al-Qaeda*. His main argument is that there is a narrative about the sufferings of Muslims as a group from the aggressive and exploitative policies of the 'West', again taken as a hegemonic whole, which is supported by the rulers of Muslim countries who are stooges of the 'West'. Using religious vocabulary promoted by militant intellectuals, the 'West' is called the Crusader and the Muslim rulers who support Western policies are perceived as infidel oppressors for whom the word *tāghūt*—which has several meanings but which is normally used for a tyrant who rebels against God's laws—is used. Angry young rebels seeking an explanation for their own frustrations, resenting the lifestyle of their rulers, or exposed to the images of Muslims facing violence in Chechnya, Bosnia, Palestine, Kashmir, and Myanmar, find bin Laden's idea of a conspiracy against Muslims very convincing. Burke gives examples of Dīdār, a Kurdish would-be suicide bomber, who read 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Azzām's (1941-1989) works in a local mosque which made him feel that he should die for the cause of Islam. Likewise, Al-Owl-ālī, a young Saudi, had also read 'Azzām and the militant magazine *al-Jihad*, before he decided to

offer his services to al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Moreover, when in a training camp there, he kept on receiving fatwās (religious edicts: pl. fatāwā) which called for violence.²⁹ Siddique Khan, the British man of Pakistani origin who planned and carried out the London bombings, explained his violent actions with reference to a global war between Islam and the West in which 'violent resistance' is 'an obligation on all believers and "collateral damage" in the form of death of innocents is thus acceptable.' This, as we shall see, is one of the major interpretations of jīhad by Islamist militants. Bergen goes into details of al-Qaeda and its founder, Osama bin Laden, providing much useful data from his statements. And the historian Faisal Devji, again referring to international jīhad, provides insights into the way ideas of jīhad interact with the actions of organizations and individuals. John Kelsay's book, *Arguing the Just War in Islam*, in keeping with its title, gives a history of what has been the intellectual pedigree of the 'just war' beginning with medieval jurists but giving most space to the Islamists and modern scholars, both Sunni and Shī'ā, who argue that a legitimate response to the 'West' is the kind of asymmetrical war which the world is witnessing.

Among modern Muslim authors there is, for instance, Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī (b. 1926) whose treatise on jīhad in Arabic, *Fiqh al-jīhad*, published in 2009, has been ably summarised in English in a book edited by the Tunisian scholar, Raschid al-Ghannoushi (Rashid al-Ghannūshī) (b. 1941).

Qaradāwī's book is important because of its wide circulation in the Muslim world. It is best summarised here in the form of the author's counter-arguments against the pro-jīhad arguments of the radical Islamists. The latter use nine pro-jīhad arguments summed up under five heads: (a) verses of the Qur'an from al-Baqarah (Q. 2) and al-Anfal (Q. 8), i. e. (2: 193; 8: 39) and, above all, the 'sword verse' (9: 5) (the first two command Muslims to keep fighting till fitnah comes to an end and Islam is established, while the last one tells Muslims to kill

the 'polytheists' wherever found (see Annexure B for texts)); (b) Hadith reports according to which the Prophet was sent with a sword and that he was to keep fighting till everyone converted to Islam (see Annexure C for texts); (c) that the wars of the Prophet and his Companions were offensive ones and not defensive ones; (d) that disbelief is sufficient reason for aggression; (e) that all political systems must be subjugated by Muslims to enable people to choose Islam freely.

Qaradāwī's counter-arguments are: (a) that it is fitnah that is 'turning Muslims back from their religion', not 'disbelief', which is the reason for war, so that the first two verses restrict fighting once Muslims are no longer persecuted, while for 9: 5, it does not abrogate the peaceful verses but is itself specific to the Arab polytheists who no longer exist; (b) that the ahādīth in question are weak and in conflict with the Qur'an; (c) that the Prophet never initiated hostilities against those who had entered into treaties with him (as for the Companions, they fought to protect the embryonic Islamic state through preemptive attacks or attacked tyrants to liberate their oppressed people) (d) notwithstanding the views of some medieval exegetes, there are many reasons for suggesting that disbelief is not the reason for war (e. g., the conquered people are allowed to retain their beliefs); (e) such views are only held by the Egyptian radical Islamist thinker Sayyid Qutb (1906 — 1966) and the Pakistani revivalist scholar Abū'l A'ālā Mawdūdī (1903 — 1979) but are obviously erroneous. As such arguments and counter-arguments are much in evidence in South Asia also, Qaradāwī is as relevant here as he is to the rest of the Muslim world.

Qaradāwī distinguishes between a defensive jīhad and one of choice (jīhad al-talab). In contrast to medieval jurists, he argues that the latter is not an obligation. Among other things, he offers a critique of the hermeneutical device of abrogation which allows the radical Islamists to write off the peaceful verses. Among other things, Muhammad Qasim

Zaman, an American Islamic scholar of Pakistani origin, points out that Qaradāwī takes the support of the medieval Islamic scholar Taqī al-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah's (1263 — 1328) work called *Qā'idah mukhtasarah* which asserts that unbelievers are not to be fought with because of their beliefs but because they could be a danger to Muslims. This is significant since Ibn Taymiyyah is normally used by radical Islamists to argue just the opposite.

Another Muslim author whose book on jihad is taken seriously is the Iraqi born American academic, Majid Khaddūrī (1909 — 2007). Khaddūrī agrees with the classical theory that 'inherent in the state's action in waging a jihad is the establishment of Muslim sovereignty, since the supremacy of God's word carries necessarily with it God's political authority'. In this he agrees with contemporary Islamist radicals but also differs from them in that he does not allow individuals to assume leadership in a holy war. This remains a function of the state and that too only for religious purposes. Moreover, while he believes that jihad is perpetual since there will always be unbelievers, this does not mean that there should be 'continuous fighting'. Indeed, when Muslim power declined, jihad was 'no longer compatible with Muslim interests' and so peace agreements were entered into and honoured.

Muslims also write what may be called apologia about jihad. For instance, Mahmoud (Mahmūd) Shaltūt (1893 — 1963), the rector of Al-Azhar, tried to prove that the early wars of Islam were basically defensive as the small Muslim community was transgressed against. Another collection of articles emphasising peace and interpreting the apparently aggressive verses differently is *War and Peace in Islam*.³⁹ In Pakistan there are very few such studies by academics trained on Western lines—Iftikhar Malik's introduction to jihad being one of them—but there are some by traditionally-trained Islamic scholars ('ulamā): Mawdūdī, Ghulām Ahmad Parwēz (1903 — 1985), Mawlānā Wahīduddīn Khan (b.1925), to name a few. One study

in particular needs to be highlighted. It is a monograph by 'Ammār Khān Nāsir (b.1975), a contemporary Pakistani scholar of Islam, who argues that: (a) the classical jurists considered jihad a part of 'doing good and stopping evil' (al-amr bi 'l mā'rūf wa 'l nahi 'an al-munkar). The aim was to invite people to Islam and, if they do not accept the faith, to fight and subjugate them; (b) modernist scholars have interpreted jihad as merely a defensive war necessitated by the aggression directed by the Arab polytheists towards the early Muslim community; (c) the conquests of foreign lands was not meant to go on but was restricted to the Persian Empire and parts of the Byzantine Empire. Indeed, Muslims were supposed to avoid fighting the Turks and the Africans. For (a), the author presents opinions, both for and against, from the classical and later sources. The majority opinion seems to be that this order was only for the Arab polytheists and applied to no other group. However, he does criticise opinions previously held on issues related to such a reading which will be examined in the relevant chapters.

In short, interpretations of jihad range between the desire to live in peace and harmony with the world as well as perpetual strife. The latter can act as the spark which sends young men to missions of death and destruction in the contemporary world. This, ironically, is the kind of action which makes headlines though there are others which, by their very nature of seeking peace, remain unnoticed. Hence, it is necessary to understand how jihad has been interpreted in the modern world. This study, however, confines itself only to South Asia.

The most relevant study for this book is the American academic Asma Afsaruddin's book, *Striving in the Path of God*, appropriately subtitled 'Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought'. Afsaruddin's study tries to understand the changing meanings of jihad through the medieval exegeses of the Qur'an, the hadith, and studies on the subject. She concludes, after an impressive study of the original sources, that the literature about jihad suggests that it has been variously interpreted and

that political circumstances—ongoing battles against the Iranian and Byzantine Empires followed by the crusades—privileged the combative aspects over other connotations. She also refutes the militant interpretations of present-day Islamist radical theoreticians who construe jihad as permanent war against non-Muslims as well as secular Muslim rulers. Her conclusion is that the Qur'an 'advocates only limited, defensive fighting when peaceful overtures and stoic, non-violent resistance have failed and the adversary attacks first. The religious affiliation of the adversary in itself is irrelevant'. The fact that her book is an intellectual history of the evolution of the idea of jihad makes it a model to be followed in the present study.

Scholars of South Asia have, however, written about manifestations of movements which call themselves jihad in their part of the world. Perhaps the work which will appear at first sight to be very close to the present author's endeavour is the Pakistani-American historian Ayesha Jalal's book, *Partisans of Allah*. It starts with the following objective:

This book ... focuses on the development of the idea and practice of Jihad over several centuries and across the space that connects West Asia to South Asia.

This is very close to the objective of providing a history of the idea of jihad in South Asia in this book. However, there are so many differences in the way Jalal has argued her case and the way it has been done in the following pages that these are two very different projects.

First, Jalal has given her preferred interpretation of jihad in the beginning of the book and comes back to it in the end. She says that 'the Qur'an does not lend itself well to the notion of jihad as holy war, and far less to the idea of continuous warfare against infidels, how did this discrepancy between the text and the later, legally based interpretations of the concept arise?'. This study, on the other hand,

studies the way scholars of Islam give interpretations of jihad without attempting to start with one. Second, Jalal has not given any account of the hermeneutical devices used to interpret the Qur'an and the hadith which is the main focus of this study. Thirdly, while Jalal has looked at the history of the concept of jihad in the works of Sayyid Ahmad Khān (1817-1898), Chirāgh 'Ali (1844 — 1895), Abū'l Kalām Azad (1888 — 1958), Mawdū dī, Hafiz Sa'īd (spelled as Hafiz Saeed in English sources) (b. 1948), and so on with reference to sources other than exegeses, this study gives primary importance to Quranic exegeses by these writers. However, Jalal's work is valuable and its historical narrative about events understood as jihad leaves little room for duplication in that direction. Thus, chronological description of such events is reduced to a minimum and often relegated to notes so as to avoid duplicating her work and other similar studies.

Another study which partly overlaps with this one, is Samina Yasmeen's *Jihad and Dawah*. The author carries out a longitudinal analysis of the narratives of Lashkar-e-Tayyabah and Jamat ud Dawah, both under the general leadership and guidance of Hafiz Sa'īd, who has interpreted verses of the Qur'an in order to inspire Pakistanis to fight India for Kashmir. Yasmeen has analysed not only Sa'īd's *Tafsir Sūrah Tawbah*, which has also been done in this book (chapter 9), but also other narratives: pamphlets, magazines, messages, etc. Among other things she points out how narratives evolve in response to historical, social, and other pressures and how they are used to promote jihad. Despite the overlap with a part of one chapter, Yasmeen's work is very different from this study. First, it pays close attention to the printed works of Hafiz Sa'īd's organisations, but does not touch upon those by other Pakistani Islamists. Secondly, it tells us how these narratives evolve from promoting jihad to creating a wider space in Pakistani society by emphasizing patience (sabr), social service, and piety under international and domestic pressures.

The present study, however, mostly analyses Hafiz Sa`id's exegeses with a view to finding out as to what hermeneutical devices he uses to arrive at militant meanings of verses. Lastly, Yasmeen's work is a study of narratives and their role in society whereas this book is a history of the idea of jīhad for the last three hundred years with focus on the Quranic exegeses though not to the exclusion of other interpretations of the concept of jīhad in South Asia.

Likewise Christine Fair's book, sub-titled 'Understanding the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba' what it says—a history of Hafiz Sa`id's organisation with a view to proving that it is supported by the ISI to inflict such punishment on India as would bring it to negotiate on Kashmir. Its title, *In Their Own Words*, refers to some of the publications of Hafiz Sa`id's organisations—books or pamphlets rather than the magazines and other works used by Yasmeen—which refer to reasons for fighting in Kashmir and the imperative not to fight the Pakistani state nor to declare Muslims as heretics (takfir). Fair does not refer to the exegeses of Sa`id or Mas`ūd Azhar (spelled as Masood Azhar in the literature)(b. 1968), the head of the UN-designated terrorist group Jaish-e-Muhammad, which are important concerns of the present study. While the archive which Christine Fair has assembled for this study, especially the biographies of LeT/JUD fighters, is impressive, her tone towards Pakistan is acerbic rather than neutral and the last chapter, contemplating the punishment to be given to Pakistan for using nonstate actors in Kashmir (even hinting at nuclear war), is disturbing for anyone who desires peace in South Asia.

Yet another study of some of the narratives of the Taliban, especially relevant for Pakistan and Afghanistan, is a Pakistani academic Afzal Khan's doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Erfurt in 2016. Khan chooses three texts: Mawdūdī's *Al-jīhad fi al-Islām*; Nūr

(spelled Noor) Muhammad's *Jihad-i of ghānistān*, and Faval Muhammad Yusufzai's *Dā`wat-i jīhad* for analysis. He argues that Mawdūdī places jīhad in the tradition of 'commanding right and forbidding wrong' (*al-amr bi 'l mā'rūf wa 'l nahī 'an al-munkar*). This is explained by Nūr Muhammad Yusufzai in moral terms of right and wrong so that, in the words of Afzal Khan, the moral vision of the Taliban is a kind of 'man standing-guard-over-the-morals' but the tactics to achieve this became anarchic. Afzal Khan's approach is philosophical and he uses lexicology and 'anthropology'—basically interviewing and observation—in his research. His work does not overlap with the concerns of this study though it offers some useful insights into the phenomenon of jīhad. Another recent book-length work, Tariq Hasan's *Colonialism and the Call to Jihad in British India*, purporting to cover some of the areas already covered by Jalal, is based on selective secondary sources and is mostly tendentious and journalistic.

Apart from these studies of jīhad movements in South Asia as a whole, there are also scholarly studies of iconic militant (jīhadi) figures. Foremost among them is Sayyid Ahmad Bar̄lwi (i. e., of the city of Rae Bareilly. The name is also written a Barelvi's) (1786 —1831). Though much has been written about him in the hagiographic mode, there was a lack of objective and rigorous writing. This gap has been filled by Altaf Qadir, a Pakistani academic, who looks at this movement from the point of view of the local people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and provides a detailed and accurate sketch of events. Among the most notable of the scholarly studies on the religious figures of KP—the mullahs, faqirs, and others—who used the concept of jīhad to evoke hostility among the tribesmen against the British, is a book by Sana Haroon. Studies on iconic figures such as

Ubaydullah Sindhi (1872-1944), the Faqir of Ip̄i (1897-1960), the Hājjī of Turangzai (1858-1937),⁵⁵ and others also deserve attention. Although the aim of this study is not to describe the causes or the historical events which go by the name of j̄ihad, they will, nevertheless, be inevitably sketched out in order to understand how the concept itself was interpreted.

Having said that, the idea and practice of interpretation is so central to this book that it has been given a separate chapter to itself which focuses on the hermeneutics of the canonical sources of Islam—the Qur'an and the hadith. However, since the book is sub-titled 'An Intellectual History', this latter concept may be explained here. This is meant to distinguish this study from theology and place it within the discipline of the history of ideas. Whereas a theologian is expected to give an essentially theological interpretation of what j̄ihad is, a historian of this idea may trace out what theologians and other intellectuals have said about it and place it in the context of such larger intellectual frameworks as the impact of modernity, the interaction of political forces, and cultural trends. Such a history deals with the formation of an idea and its evolution over time and relates it to the forces which play upon it to give it the meanings and implications it imbibes over time.

Such a history has its own problems. First, as author of an intellectual history of Islam in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb points out, it 'has itself been under something of a cloud in recent years' because of the impression that it focuses 'on the intellectual elite' and does not take cognizance of 'social and political realities'. Secondly, as Quentin Skinner has pointed out, its very source material—written texts—needs to be interpreted which is by no means a transparent undertaking. As the next chapter will focus in more detail on what Skinner has written about—that texts are interpreted with reference to both the intention to be understood and 'the intention that this intention be understood'—we need not go into detail about this process here.

Thus, the history of ideas as they occur in texts is the history of what they were meant to communicate to audiences which were themselves products of historical forces. It may be, as Skinner warns us, that the history of thought cannot solve our immediate problems, but it can help us in understanding how a term is interpreted and what practical effects this can have on the world. Thus, our different understandings of j̄ihad can help explain the forces which drive human beings into adopting courses of action (such as suicide bombing) which appear inexplicable to observers outside of those webs of meanings.

Generally, the sub-genre of the history of ideas is used for the history of philosophical and scientific ideas—the idea of zero, the idea of numbers, the idea of democracy, the idea of freedom, etc. There are also books like Mikkel Thorup's *An Intellectual History of Terror*⁵⁶ which is relevant for the theme of this study. Thorup calls his work as 'the first attempt at an intellectual history of terror, or rather of our legitimizations and delegitimizations of political violence' carried out by the state (emphasis in the original). He uses ideas such as Michel Foucault's 'geneological history', Quentin Skinner's 'intellectual history', and Reinhart Koselleck's 'conceptual history' in order to understand how ideas which legitimise certain forms of political violence evolve. Similarly, there is an intellectual study of the idea of gratitude. The author contends that his study 'is a history of persons responding to social and political circumstances with the intellectual resources at their disposal'.

In the field of Islamic studies, much has been written on the history of thought, so much so that making a list of important works alone will require volumes. There is, for example, Montgomery Watt's history of the formative period of Islamic thought. Daniel Brown's *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* is another example. It is a history of the idea of Prophetic authority (sunnāh and hadith) in modern Muslim societies. Brown defines it as a 'history of ideas' and places it in the tradition of

'intellectual history' on the grounds that his focus is the 'current of thought that would seem to be new, innovative, holding promise for change'. To do this, he argues, one can 'emphasize individuals, trends, or schools of thought'. He chooses the second alternative since he is concerned 'with the influence of ideas and not just with the ideas themselves'. And, finally, one may look as an example of a paradigmatic work in this field at Qasim Zaman's book called *Islamic Thought in a Radical Age*. The book raises important points such as the intellectual history of internal criticism in the Islamic tradition and how, with the dilution of traditional authority, the Islamists 'share much with the modernists in their intellectual backgrounds and the novelty of many of the positions they advocate'.⁶⁸ This is an important point, touching as it does on the question of the dispersal of authority in modern Islam which is relevant for understanding which activities are called *jihad*, how they are justified, and by whom—questions which constitute important parts of the present study.

This does not mean that the present work gets reduced to a history of people; even their intellectual beings. Rather, it focuses on the idea of *jihad* as interpreted by people in order to understand how the idea has evolved in South Asia. The idea is an important one as it affected society, creating anti-colonial aspirations using the idiom of *jihad*, militant movements, and, in the contemporary context, Islamist militancy. As Fazlur Rahman noted, 'the Islamic concept of *Jihad* was heavily relied upon to arouse the sentiments of the general public against foreign rulers'. But, as we shall see, it could also be used to suppress dissent, create a theocracy, and augment the power of its practitioners.

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the major interpretations of *jihad* in the colonial and contemporary periods in South Asia?
- In what ways have the concepts of *jihad* and terms associated with it (Islamic state, *Dārul Harb* (land of war), *Dārul Islām* (land

of peace), *fitnah* (evil, persecution, oppression), *fasād* (disorder, mischief), *tāgh ūt* (forces or systems rebelling against God; idol; evil forces), *ḥizyah* (poll-tax), etc.) been used by exegetes in particular and others in general to pursue their ideological, political, and other objectives?

- In what way are the traditional Sunni notions of *jihad* different from those of the modernists (apologists, progressives) as well as radical Islamists?

And, finally, what interpretations of *jihad* are appealed to by the theoreticians of militant movements (especially the Al-Qaeda and Pakistani Taliban including the Punjabi Islamist militant groups)? This final question, in fact, is the *raison d'être* of this study.

If militant interpretations have been influenced, partly or fully, by the modern theoreticians of Islamist militancy—Hassan al-Bannāh (1906 — 1949), Mawdūdī, Qutb, 'Abdullah Azzām, Muhammad 'Abd al-Salam Farāj (1954-1982), Ayman al-Zawāhirī (b. 1951), etc.—how have they justified militancy? The answers to these questions constitute an intellectual history of the way the concept of *jihad* has been interpreted in South Asia and elsewhere.

But before answering these questions it should be remembered that in some ways present-day Islamic militancy has precedents in history. These were the wars of the Kharijites, whose ideas as well as practices have been described by scholars, and whose history is given by the famous historian, exegete, and scholar Abu Jā'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī (224/839 — 310/923). The other precedent which comes to the mind is the assassination of establishment figures during Abbaside rule carried out by the followers of Hasan ibn Sabbāh (1050s-1154), to which the Persian historian 'Ala al-Din 'Atā Allāh Malik Juwainī (1226-1283) bears witness and which has been

discussed by contemporary scholars. Since there are some parallels between these militant phenomena and present-day events in the Muslim world, these will be touched upon briefly. However, the contemporary militant movements called jihad are a modern phenomena created, in great part, by the reaction to modernity in general and the international situation in the world as perceived by many Muslims in particular. This is true in the obvious sense that modern conditions—rapid change, dislocation, access to news sharpening grievances against the USA and Israel, a sense of community created by the idiom of a Muslim group spread internationally, the use of technology—did not exist earlier. But whether it is also true in the deeper philosophical sense of reacting to modernity with its grand narratives and a sense of the triumphant, rational West is yet to be established. Similarly, it is also questionable whether the doubt created by post-modern ways of thinking and the fragmentation of the self can be used to explain conservative, Wahhābī and Islamist interpretations as the quest for certainties. It is best that the theory should emerge out of the evidence and not vice versa. Yet, it is tempting to give a brief account of modernity since we will refer to it frequently.

Modernity as a way of thinking entails faith in reason, emphasis upon the natural with epistemology based upon empiricism, belief in progress, and rejection of authority (religious, social, ancestral, etc.). It has been associated with rapid social change involving the use of Western categories of thinking, categorisation and behaviour in non-Western countries especially those which experienced colonisation. It is argued that, instead of modernity, the concept of multiple modernities should be used as it allows us to move away from 'the homogenic and hegemonic vision of modernity imagined in the 1950s'. This is a useful insight only in so far as it is not allowed to relativise the concept of modernity till it loses its value as an analytical concept. Thus, one could concede that the modernities of Britain as well as India were influenced by each other. However, when

Appadurai and Brekenbridge contend that Indian modernity is 'as varied as magic, marriage, or madness', they are manifestly wrong. At the most we can talk of a 'fractured modernity' in India as Sanjay Joshi does in his study of the making of the middle class in north India (Lucknow). This means that some pre-modern elements—Joshi's example is hierarchy masquerading as education—might mix in with modernity. However, when Partha Chatterjee says that our modernity 'is the modernity of the once-colonized', this only explains the ambivalence many South Asians have for Western values, artifacts, institutions, and attitudes. This can explain why Islamists can accept gadgets which empower them: machines, computers, weapons, and means of communication and travel etc., while hating the freedom of people to date each other or, for women, to wear revealing clothes. But, unless we are talking of the ideological change, the worldview, the belief-system, we are not talking of people who have converted to modernity. I would contend that, despite being different in certain peripheral ways, modernity is ontologically the same all over the world. And one of its core values, as Talal Asad (b. 1932) concedes but critiques, is the privatisation of religion. So, modern India and

(to a lesser degree) Pakistan, at least in their

religions, such as Sikhism and Hinduism, suggests

Table 1: The Verses of the Qur'an

- Al Baqrah 2: 190: Repel aggression but in proportion to the offence.
- 2: 191 Fight those who began hostilities since fitnah is worse than war.
- 2: 193 Fight to end fitnah till religion is purely for God.
- Al-Anfāl 8: 39: Fight till fitnah disappears and religion is only for God.
- 8: 61 If the enemy inclines towards peace so should you.
- Al-Tawbah 9: 5: Kill the polytheists wherever you find them (sword verse).
- 9: 29 Fight the people of the Book till they are subdued and pay the poll tax (jizyah) as 'small ones' (sāghirūn) (jizyah verse).
- Al-Mumtahinah 60: 8: You may be kind and just to those who have not been hostile to you

constitutions, uphold this core value and appeal to rationality in their education systems. Of course, the political promise is often compromised and informal education still emphasises the magical—modernity is fractured and mistrusted—but where it exists as an aspiration or in partial reality, it is essentially different from movements militating against it.

Among the movements which militate against it and react to it are those which fall back upon things to which they ascribe iconic value to mark their 'differences' from what they see as the homogenising Western imposition of modernity. As Talal Asad argues, there is no escaping the intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural domination of secularism which is the byproduct of modernity (the same would be true if religion were dominant in a society). Thus, the argument is that people assert their difference through the symbol of religion. However, it is simplistic to accept the secularisation thesis—modernity having secularised the West in toto while South Asia remains 'spiritual'—as Peter van der Veer reminds us. Indeed, modernity also produced evangelical movements in England as it did what Kenneth Jones calls 'socio-religious reform movements' in South Asia. In South Asia, at least, the resurgence of high Islam, as well as other

that the classical claim of early modernity that the process entails secularisation as it did in Western societies needs rethinking. According to Khalid Masud (b. 1939), a Pakistani scholar of Islam, 'Muslim modern trends range from reform to total rejection of either tradition or modernity'. The 'Western modernists' reject the Islamic tradition while the 'Islamic modernists' range from calling for revivalism to reinterpreting Islam so that it conforms to certain humanist values. In a sense, fundamentalism, Islamist radicalism, and militancy too are reactions to the totalising experience of modernity but are not a form of modernity themselves—unless one wants to adjectivise everything as modern. Their major claim is to reject the ideology of modernity in order to go back to classical Islam. However, the cultural and religious authenticity they marshal in defence of their ideologies is not really of the classical period of Islam at all. It is a contemporary construction of their idealised understanding of it.

Another reaction to modernity is acceptance of some of its core values, the values of the Enlightenment (rationalism, egalitarianism, human rights, women's rights, democracy, etc.). Those modernist Muslim thinkers who do so are then faced

with the problem of reconciling them with Islam. This, of course, is done through interpreting the foundational texts in ingenious ways. In short, as Qasim Zaman, in his seminal study of the traditional `ulamā in South Asia, has pointed out, both these trends—modernism and Islamist radicalism—'have been largely rooted in modern, Westernized institutions of education'.

In the case of Muslims who develop group-consciousness, the assertion of an identity is a survival tool against perceived grievances or ideological conquest by 'the West'. Thus, the Muslim diaspora in Western countries as well as self-defining groups (sects, sub-sects, ideologically oriented groups) constitute the imagined community—to use Anderson's idiom, which perceives and confronts other equally imagined groups based upon constructed identities. As these constructions, perceptions, and definitions are based upon interpretations of Islam—in this case the crucial concept of jihad—it would be helpful to understand how South Asian interpreters of this concept have understood it.

This brings us to the question of methodology used for analysing the interpretations relevant for our purposes. Primarily, the Quranic verses used by traditional interpreters, modernists, and radical Islamists in Urdu exegeses (except for Sayyid Qutb's exegesis which has been used in the English translation) to justify their understanding of jihad will be studied.

While the first verse seems to allow only defensive warfare and that too in proportion to the injury, the three subsequent ones mention a concept called fitnah, translated either as persecution or disbelief, which determines the implications of these verses. Two verses, 8: 61 and 60: 8, advocate peaceful and amicable coexistence with non-Muslims both as groups in society and as nation-states. However, two verses, 9: 5 and 29, used very often by Islamist militants to justify their project of eternal warfare with the rest of the world, apparently allow perpetual warfare. Indeed, Osama bin Laden

quoted 9: 5 in his fatwā against Americans, adding to it:

Our youths know that the humiliation suffered by Muslims as a result of the occupation of their sanctuaries cannot be removed except by explosions and jihad

In short, taken at their face value there are verses which imply fighting as well as living in peace. The point is how they are interpreted and which interpretation is privileged by those in power. For instance, the above verse, as interpreted by Afifi al-Akiti, a fellow of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, is not about perpetual war at all. It was, he says, about the Arab polytheists who had broken the treaty of Hudaibiyyah and its order is subject 'to specification' (takhsi) and is not general (`ām). Indeed, it is their interpretations which distinguishes the traditionalist, modernist-progressive, and radical-militants from each other in South Asia and, indeed, in the rest of the world. Thus, the interpretation of these eight verses by the most significant exegetes of South Asia studied in this book will be discussed in relation to the politics and dominant ideologies of the periods of their writing.

While the focus of this book is on the way the concept of jihad is interpreted in the Urdu-using part of South Asia from the eighteenth century onwards, there will inevitably be some references to jihadi movements in India especially during the colonial era and then again in the contemporary period. In this context, the use of Habermas's concept of 'public sphere' by Deitrich Reetz may be useful.

Reetz argues that his study of Islamic groups in India from 1900 to 1947 analyses religious discourse on the assumption that it negotiates 'the hierarchy of values and activist concepts in competition and comparison with other Islamic or religious groups'. In this study then we will analyse one variant of this discourse: that relating to jihad.

The sources of this book are mostly in Urdu and English; not in Arabic. These sources are mostly the various exegeses or commentaries of the Qur'an from the eighteenth century onwards. Only one

early exegesis, that by the famous Islamic scholar of the eighteenth century Shah `Abdul `Aziz (1746 - 1824), is in Persian, but this too is available in the Urdu translation. In any case this exegesis does not cover the verses about j̄ihad or, indeed, those given in Table 1 above. Most of the Indian Islamic scholars—Sayyid Ahmad Khān (1817- 1898) , `Ubaydullāh Sindhi, Mawdūdī, Abū'l Kalām Azad (1888 -1958), Ghulām Ahmad Parwēz, Wahīduddīn Khān, Hafiz Sa`īd, Mas`ūd Azhar—whose works have been used as primary sources to understand how j̄ihad has been interpreted wrote in Urdu. The works of Arab theoreticians such as Sayyid Qutb, Farrāj, `Abdullah `Azzām, and Ayman al-Zawāhirī, are originally in Arabic, but their English or Urdu translations are available and have been used for this study. Besides the exegeses there are other works—essays, sermons, pamphlets, and books—on j̄ihad by South Asian writers in Urdu or English which have also been consulted. As the author is well versed in both Urdu and English, can read Persian with some understanding, and also knows basic Arabic, this study does not suffer from linguistic impediments. It needs to be reiterated that the author does not claim to be trained in either theology or Islamic jurisprudence. Thus, if some readers are looking for a final theological interpretation of j̄ihad by the author, they will be disappointed. In any case, even if such an interpretation had been offered, it would have been no more than yet another, rather than the only, interpretation. Indeed, the point of this study is that there are more than one interpretation of ideas; that all interpretations are subject to change because of external dominant discourses, and, hence, there is no fixed, unchanging intellectual monolith called j̄ihad.

While it is conceded that people do not fight only because they are inspired by theory—indeed they fight for various complicated reasons—this is no reason for not trying to understand the history of such theories which do, after all, acquire a niche in the worldview of so many people. A book on

intellectual history can put together a historical narrative of an idea to which people ostensibly refer in order to justify their actions without going into the question of their deeper, covert psychological motivations.

After this introductory chapter there are ten other chapters including the conclusion. The one which follows (Chapter 2) is on the interpretation of the Qur'an and the hadith. It gives a brief outline of the interpretative devices used by exegetes in explaining the meanings of these canonical sources. These devices may be used to give a meaning of j̄ihad which promotes either war or peace. Chapter 3 is on `Jihad in Transition'. It gives a synoptic account of the political uses of j̄ihad by some of the medieval Muslim rulers of India. More importantly, it examines the state of Islamic learning in India during this period of transition to modernity with a view to understanding how j̄ihad was constructed in the available texts of the period. Chapter 4, entitled `Jihad and The Family of Shah Waliullah', begins with the legacy of the great Islamic scholar, Shāh Waliullah (1703 -1762), pertaining to events which went by the name of j̄ihad in India. In this context, his son Shah `Abdul `Azīz's edicts (fatāwā) on the question of India's Islamic status—whether it is a land of peace or Islam (Dārul Islam) or a land of war (Dārul ljarb) or something in between—is most important since it influenced Muslim politics in India for more than a century. One of the persons influenced by `Aziz who actually led a j̄ihad movement in the presentday KP province of Pakistan was Sayyid Abmad Barēlwī. His influence over a number of resistance movements during colonial rule will be touched upon in passing. Chapter 5, on `Colonial Modernists', is on the modernist interpreters of Islam in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries—Sayyid Abmad Khān, Chirāgh `Alī, Syed Ameer Ali (1849 -1928), etc.—who wrote to counter the colonial view that Islam was an aggressive religion and preached violence. Some of their ideas are still used by modernist Muslims in South Asia to defend Islam against the same

charges now leveled both by Western scholars and militant Islamists. The next chapter (6), entitled 'Jihad as anti-colonial resistance', looks at the ideas of `Ubaydullāh Sindhi, some prominent members of the Deobandi clergy, and Abū'l Kalām Azad. It covers responses ranging from covert attempts at armed resistance to the British to agitational, nationalist politics. Chapter 7, entitled 'The Age of Mawdūdī', describes his ideas of Muslim political dominance, the Islamic state, and jihad as an instrument of power. Mawdūdī's writings on these subjects, with special focus on his exegesis of the Qur'an, will be discussed. The next chapter (8), called 'Radical Imports', provides the link with Islamist militant ideas from the Middle East which establish much of the theoretical basis of the forms of international militancy which is the focus of this book.

This chapter will look at the interpretations of jihad by Qutb, Farrāj, `Azzām, and Zawāhiri. The ideas of these writers, though not the primary focus of this study, will be examined briefly in order to understand their influence on Pakistani militants. Chapter 9 is on Pakistani radical interpreters of jihad—Hafiz Sa`id, Mas`ūd Azhar, Mufti

Shamazai, and others—who have written much on the subject of jihad and inspired young men to fight in Kashmir and Afghanistan. Chapter 10, entitled 'Refuting the radicals', is about the edicts and interpretations offered by present-day South Asian (and other) writers against the views of the Islamist militants. This is an important chapter since, like the modernists, the aim of these writers is to counter the militant view that jihad can be fought by non-state actors without any permission of the government and that it is justified to fight non-Muslim and even Muslim rulers whether there are treaties with the former or not. The last chapter is the 'Conclusion' in which the whole argument of the book will be summed up. One important question discussed here will be as to which interpretative devices are used to give an aggressive or peaceful reading of verses from the canonical sources.

The book has a bibliography divided into sections. The first section is on the original sources (exegeses, translations of the Qur'an, edicts, and manuscript sources, etc.); the second is on secondary sources in English, Urdu, and other languages. This is followed by annexures of the Quranic verses and ahādīth which makes for convenient reading. In the end there is an index to facilitate researchers. <>

[The Bloomsbury Handbook of Literary and Cultural Theory](#) edited by Jeffrey R. Di Leo [Bloomsbury Academic, 9781350012806]

[The Bloomsbury Handbook of Literary and Cultural Theory](#) is the most comprehensive available survey of the state of theory in the 21st century. With chapters written by the world's leading scholars in their field, this book explores the latest thinking in traditional schools such as feminist, Marxist, historicist, psychoanalytic, and postcolonial criticism and new areas of research in ecocriticism, biopolitics, affect studies, posthumanism, materialism, and many other fields.

In addition, the book includes a substantial A-to-Z compendium of key words and important thinkers in contemporary theory, making this an essential resource for scholars of literary and cultural theory at all levels.

Critical Appraisal

The essays are survey wide-ranging, covering definitions and key thinkers and points of development, controversy and in some cases forecasts. However, the succinct dictionary cum glossary provides valuable resource toward standard working definitions of key words and recognition crucial thinkers in the field.

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Excerpt: Theory in the New Millennium by Jeffrey R. Di Leo

Theory is stronger now than it ever was in the twentieth century. The reason for this is not necessarily a deepening or intensification of the work of theory in traditional areas such as literary criticism and critique (though arguments may be made here), but rather a widening or broadening of its reach and domain. This book aims to illustrate this by bringing together original contributions from 230 theorists from across the globe.

Through twenty-seven chapters on topics ranging from theory's engagement with the ancient world (Chapter 1, Early Theory) to a survey of various efforts to challenge some versions of theory

(Chapter 27, Antithcory), a vibrant working portrait of theory in the twenty-first century begins to take shape. While the focus in these chapters is to provide insight into many of the major concerns of twenty-first-century theory and theorists, an effort is also made to acknowledge the shape of twentieth-century theory and earlier for context and inspiration. Chapter contributors were encouraged to not just look backward regarding their topic, but to look forward as well and to entertain the possibilities for theory in the new millennium in their area of concern. They were also asked for a listing of key terms and figures related to their chapter topic. These lists were then culled to form the basis for the three hundred and nine term-and-figure entries that comprise the second half of this book.

Consequently, the three hundred-plus terms and figures in Part 2 of this book complement the chapters in Part 1. The two hundred and fifty-eight entries on some of the key terms utilized by theorists in the new millennium, and the fifty-one entries on central figures in twenty-first-century theory provide a finer grained portrait of theory in the new millennium, one that supplements the chapters in Part I. Most of the term-and-figure entries though are written by a different group of contributors than those who penned the chapters. These briefer entries provide a gallery of micro-pictures of theory in the new millennium to consider alongside the macro-portraits of the chapters. Together the two halves of this book arc in effect two separate galleries of theory. Though about equal in length, they present varying ways to portray theory in the new millennium.

By limiting the word counts on the terms and figures in Part 2, contributors were encouraged to write less encyclopedically and more essayistically. Unlike encyclopedia entries that are intended to give the air of "objectivity," the term-and-figure entries in this book, where appropriate, reveal openly the interests and concerns of their author—whose name and affiliation is clearly noted after each entry. Moreover, it is no coincidence that many of the term-and-figure contributors are

themselves authors of work on this term or figure. And rather than hiding this, they were encouraged to foreground it in either the entry itself or the suggestions for further reading. In addition, each of the term-and-figure entries is generously cross-listed with other entries as well as with the chapters to facilitate a dynamic and open-ended vision of theory in the new millennium. Tracking terms and figures through their network of associations and affiliations allows one to discover not only the breadth of theory today, but also new possibilities for it.

The possibilities for theory in the new millennium are directly connected more than anything else to its disciplinary shape and identity within the academy. After all, unlike, say, novelists who often are not members of the academy, theorists in the new millennium are more often than not members of the academy (though perhaps less by choice than fiscal necessity). Therefore, it is not unreasonable to consider theory as primarily situated in the academic context of disciplinarity and departments. So, what then is its disciplinary context? Is it narrow like philosophy or broad like interdisciplinary studies? Fortunately, for theory it is more like the latter than the former.

Theory in the new millennium is a multi- and interdisciplinary endeavor that operates within and among the humanities (particularly, history, languages, linguistics, the arts, philosophy, and religion, in addition to literature), the social sciences (including anthropology, ethnic and cultural studies, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology), and many of the professions (e.g., architecture, business, communication, education, environmental studies, journalism, law, museum studies, media studies, military science, public policy, and sport science, among others). In addition to its now somewhat more standard-fare work in these areas, of which prime examples may be found throughout this book, it has also made some substantial inroads into the natural sciences (e.g., biology, physics, the earth sciences, and the space sciences) and the formal sciences (especially mathematics, computer science, and systems

science).¹ To be sure, more disciplines from across the academy have integrated theory into their practice than at any other time in history—and, in many ways, theory today is the id of the disciplines and the engine of interdisciplinary studies. This, of course, is good news for theorists and theory at large.

Moreover, the academic community that engages, supports, and uses theory in the twenty-first century is not only much larger in number than it ever was in the twentieth century, for many the presumed "heyday of theory," it is also, in part as a consequence of its multi- and interdisciplinary reach, more diverse with respect to the objects and subjects of its attention. In addition to traditional objects of theoretical engagement such as literary, philosophical, and artistic texts, many others are now becoming commonplace such as new media, the environment, and even the university itself. But theory has also extended the range of subjects of its attention. In addition to more commonplace ones such as narrative, identity, translation, and rhetoric, subjects such as affect, globalization, biopolitics, political economy, and institutions have emerged as major concerns for theory. Many of these new and emerging objects and subjects of theory are discussed in the chapters, and term-and-figure entries in this book. For that matter, this introduction itself deals with one of the major concerns of theory and theorists today, namely, its institutionalization and place within the academy, which is itself a field of theory.

The popularity and strength of theory in the new millennium is directly related to the fearlessness it engenders in individuals and communities to question the precepts and extend the boundaries of individual disciplines as well as to draw the disciplines into dialogue with each other. In addition, theory's willingness to turn its critical powers toward the problems facing society and the world at large—as well as upon itself—proves to be still another point of attraction. This is why there seems to be nary a subject or object that has not been engaged in some way or another by theory

today. To be sure, most everything is fair game for theory—even theory itself.

Still, while more academics than ever before use theory today in their critical practices, only a small percentage of them self-affiliate as "theorists." This is a problem for theory because affiliations confer value and identity on individuals, disciplines, and institutions. They also have a formative role in determining the status and self-image of theory. As such, through the lens of affiliation, the theory community itself is a small one that is getting smaller, particularly as the older generation of theorists change tense. Without the influx of a new generation of theorists, theory appears on the brink of demise. But all here is not as it appears. Part of the explanation of this apparent decline is that theory is undergoing a sort of identity crisis. The kind of theory that dominates the new century is very different from the kind of theory presented in the textbooks of the previous one.

Late twentieth-century literary and cultural theory charted its identity and progress through a series of schools and movements designated by "-isms": formalism, structuralism, new criticism, psychoanalytic criticism, post-structuralism, linguistic criticism, Marxism, feminism, cultural materialism, New Historicism, new pragmatism, reader-response criticism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, and so on. The adjectives "new" and "post" added to these "-isms" were major points of discussion and disagreement. Also discussed was whether any of these "-isms" could be reduced to a method or system. Progress and development in theory was denoted by the "invention" of new "-isms," the appending of these two adjectives to outdated "-isms," and the success of efforts to find a method in the madness of key theorists such as Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault—and sharing it with others.

For many today, the problem seems to be not the importance, significance, and relevance of theory to subjects of concern and objects of study, but rather the identification of oneself as a "theorist"—a term with closer associations to the critical schools

and movements of the twentieth century than the emerging and energetic forms of theory of the twenty-first century. Like the great American thinker, Charles Peirce, who wanted nothing more to do with "pragmatism" after William James popularized it and refused to be called a "pragmatist," preferring instead to be called a "pragmaticist," theorists today seem to be distancing themselves from the general term used to describe their work. However, unlike Peirce who thought James dumbed down pragmatism by popularizing it, many "theorists" in the new millennium are moving in the opposite direction. Namely, they are moving to more populist instantiations of theory by taking on subjects and objects of more general concern and access.

As such, for them, there is some discomfort and inappropriateness in being called or considered a "theorist." In addition, the term "posttheorist," which may seem an appropriate one and may have served some transitional need to describe the emergence of new forms of theory in the 1990s, is today an anachronistic and inaccurate one. Finally, the term "theoreticist" à la Peirce is a really ugly one, so it too is probably off the table as an option. We are left then with a naming problem. To self-identify as a "theorist" today is for many to put oneself in the company of the past, rather than the present. However, there is not a better term to describe the current and copious work that has followed in the footsteps, at least in an historical sense, of the movements and schools of the twentieth century.

Still, the self-affiliation problems of "theorists" do not change the fact that the community in the new millennium that uses and engages the work of theory is larger and more diverse in its interests than ever. Perhaps reluctant theorists today need to do like the pop musician and singer Prince and take up a glyph as their common name,

rather than the apparently outdated designation "theorist." Though as this did not last very long for the man from Paisley Park—he gave upon the glyph and returned to his real name—there is not

much hope that it will solve theorist's problem's either (even though it would be cool to do so).

If anything has died in the world of theory in the twenty-first century, then it is the dominance of its "-isms." There was a time in the previous century when affiliation with an "-ism" was the required badge of entry into the theory world. One was not just a "theorist," but a member of a specific subcommunity of theory designated by an "-ism." Just as the world of religion has Catholicism, Judaism, and Buddhism, the world of theory had structuralism, Marxism, and feminism. And the lines of division between them within the theory community were at times no less flexible than those within the religious community. One of the most celebrated of all of the theory communities was "deconstruction's `community,'" which Henry Sussman identifies in Chapter 9 as including "Hélène Cixous, Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Bernard Stiegler, Samuel Weber, Jonathan Culler, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Rodolphe Gasché, Carol Jacobs, Werner Hamacher, Catherine Malabou, Avital Ronell, John Sallis, Geoff Bennington, Robert Bernasconi, and Tom Cohen." Reports Sussman, "for all that its convener [Jacques Derrida] looked askance at this term [deconstruction], has held remarkably tight to its inaugural specifications."

But community "tightness" in theory also had another side. Think about how search committees used to badger job candidates with parochial questions about their theoretical affiliation? To do so today almost seems like a violation of FERPA laws. And woe be to the job candidate who professed the wrong theoretical affiliation. Or confessed to the right one, but was not in line with the preferred house of postmodernism or version of feminism? Though the late twentieth century may have been the heyday of "high" theory, in retrospect, it appears much more provincial and doctrinaire compared to the world of theory in the new millennium—one that is not only much more pluralistic and amorphous but also less tight and divisive than the previous one.

Whereas in the past, fault lines between and distinctions within "-isms" often became feuding points among theorists, the new object- or subject-centered world of theory is a much less divisive one. Who today is going to argue that the object or subject of your theoretical affection (say, pop music or affect) is the wrong one? Or that working on "debt" is superior to working on "masculinity"? Though there is still some bickering about "whose" debt and "which" masculinity is the right, valid, or true one, such complaints seem more reactionary than progressive, scholastic than pluralistic—and ultimately thus less acceptable—after the demise of the big house of new-, post-, and original flavor "-isms." Theoretical attention to objects or subjects allows for more pluralism and toleration in the theory world compared to its previous incarnation as a world of schools, movements, and -isms. Though, as we will see below, the new object- and subject-centric world of theory has many more divisions than the theory world of "-isms," it is also a much less divisive one.

The shift from high theory to low theory lessened the divisiveness among theorists. Twentieth-century theory invested a lot in its "-isms," but most all have fallen on hard times in the new millennium—even if a few new ones have surfaced. For one thing, the theory world of the twentieth century often appeared as a war of all against all. Macho theorists wielded their -isms against each other both as a primary way of theoretical life and as a way to achieve power and dominance within the academy. In doing so, the world of theory came to look more and more like the world of philosophy, where disputes and disagreements are viewed as the *modus operandi* of the field—and professional power is afforded to those who battle their way to being the last man standing.

No area of theory in the twentieth century attracted, if not also welcomed, dispute more than the high or grand theory exemplified through the work of figures such as Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, Jean-François Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida. These structuralist and post-structuralist

thinkers set an impressive high-profile agenda for theory in the late twentieth century. It was also, though, a very divisive one, that is, one that met with, if not also encouraged, opposition from many different quarters.

A strong case may be made that post-structuralist responses to social and political events such as Jean Baudrillard's to the Gulf War in *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (*La Guerre du Golfe n'a pas eu lieu* [1991]), and then again to the events of September 11, 2001, in "L'esprit du terrorisme" (2002) and "Requiem pour les Twin Towers" (2002) were some of the straws that broke the camel's back of twentieth-century theory—and presaged the major changes in the temper of theory to come, which is to say, theory in the new millennium.¹ I still remember the negative reactions of students who were or knew veterans of the Gulf War, and of those grieving the death and destruction of September 11, 2001, to these works by Baudrillard—and of the feeling I had at the time that high theory responses like Baudrillard's to major current events might not be a good thing in the long run for theory. It is one thing to speculate on simulation while watching *The Matrix*, but quite another to try to present a case to students that the towers fell on their own while at the same time being respectful to the names and lives of those who died in the plane crashes that brought the towers down.

Vineent Leitch, one the contributors to this book, notes that the opposition to high theory came "from not only conservative scholars, but also a broad array of contending liberal and left theorists, indicting it (particularly post-structuralism) for philosophical idealism, nominalism, obscurantism, and quietism, charges early made famous by certain Marxists, feminists, critical race theorists, and cultural studies scholars." Work like Baudrillard's in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, only added fuel to the fire.

I mention the divisiveness not as a character flaw of high theory (for some it was and still is one of its endearing qualities, especially for those relishing

the role of *enfant terrible*, as Richard G. Smith, for example, describes Baudrillard in his figure entry on him for this books), but rather as a point of differentiation with the world of theory that succeeded it. As we now know, the high or grand theory exemplified by the work of Deleuze, Foucault, and Kristeva was eclipsed in the 1990s by both low theory, which found its form in a multitude of "studies," and posttheory, "a pragmatic approach to theory which leads them to assess various theoretical models on the basis of the socio-cultural and political understanding that these models bring about." To be sure, the *modus operandi* of "studies" and "posttheory" was anything but a divisive one. The aim of the studies and posttheory generation that followed in the wake of the high road of twentieth-century theory was less to put down differing projects, than to vigorously and interdisciplinarily pursue and study the object or subject of its theoretical attention. In fact, differing projects appear to the studies and posttheory generation not as competition, but rather as extensions of a common critical or theoretical spirit signified by their shared use of the term "studies."

Moreover, the succeeding generation of theorists were much less obsessed with how they accomplished the study of the object or subject at hand, than why they were pursuing it. In other words, method took a backseat to things such as public interest, social and political activism, and ethics. It is a trend in theory that continues today, namely, to do theory with an eye toward making the world a better place, rather than avoiding it or trying to deny its existence.

In a way then, theory "after theory" never changed tense, it just changed focus. Since the ascent of high theory (or the even higher, so-called sky-high theory or "theoreticism") and the emergence of various forms of opposition to it, rumors of and statements about the demise of theory have persisted. Even today, closure regarding the issue seems remote. It is often said that "theory is dead"—superseded by a multitude of studies. Gone are theory stalwarts such as deconstruction,

Marxism, and feminism. They have been replaced by studies of everything and anything from Barbie dolls and Beyonce to biopolitics and books. In fact, a significant number of the 258 term entries in this book are themselves "studies" areas including affect, archive, canon, class, critical climate, cyborg, debt, diaspora, disability, ethnicity, gender, genre, globalization, labor, law, materialism, memory, migration, minority, multiculturalism, neoliberalism, object, performativity, pop culture, postcolonial, posthuman, print culture, queer, race, reading, reception, resistance, rights, sexuality, sound, subaltern, subculture, surveillance, translation, trauma, university, whiteness, and many others.

This emerging and expanding multitude of literary and cultural theory in the twenty-first century leaves little or no room for the more dominant outline of literary theory and criticism, namely, one which divides it into schools and movements. Designators of the outlines of theory and criticism such as Russian formalism, New Criticism, psychoanalysis, feminism, Marxism, structuralism, post-structuralism, queer theory, New Historicism, and postcolonial theory are strictly a twentieth-century phenomenon. Though these designators were important to the emergence of "theory" in the last quarter of the twentieth century, they have outlived their usefulness for mapping literary and cultural theory in the twenty-first century. The explosion of "studies" in the first quarter of the twenty-first century leaves little opportunity for organizing literary and cultural theory into the older matrix of schools and movements. Or, alternately stated, studies as sub-species of the "twentieth-century" schools and movements make for a very messy and confusing outline. Hence, why bother? Better to just leave it to the historians of theory to trace the legacies of theory amid the "studies" multitude.

What then to do with "theory," that is, the sum body of the twentieth century's schools and movements in the wake of the explosion of twenty-first-century "studies"? For me, the answer, as evidenced through the title and organization of this book, is one of enthusiastic embrace, rather than

rejection. The heterogeneity of "theory" today is a sign of its strength, rather than an indication of its weakness or failure. The aim of this book is to provide a resource to theory in the new millennium. It does so by offering hundreds of different doors to enter the new millennial world of theory. While some of these doors are recognizable schools or movements in theory such as structuralism, feminism, and Marxism, many of these doors are not—and they are open to nascent worlds of millennial theory.

In short, because there is no other term that adequately captures the "proliferation" of objects and subjects of critical attention today, the designator "theory" needs to continue to be used. This approach to theory in the twenty-first century is the proper one and as a whole represents a powerful, collective response to the so-called death of theory. Not only is theory not dead—in spite of the recent passing of many of its major progenitors—it is undergoing a "reinvention" of sorts today. To put it bluntly, the death of theory is an illusion—and the future of this illusion, through efforts such as this book, will hopefully be short-lived."

Still, what happens if we replace all of the uses of "studies" in conjunction with the multitude of objects and subjects now associated with it with the term "theory" and make its implicit references explicit? For one thing, doing so would end the charade that all of these "studies" are not second-generation theory—or dare we say, "new theory"? For transitional purposes, it was important at the end of the twentieth century to designate this work with a term other than theory. But a quarter-century later it just seems silly and is needlessly confusing. Theory is not dead—it just changed its name when its focus and the objects of its attention began to broaden and change. Calling theory "theory," rather than "studies," allows the larger and committed community dedicated to it to regroup and retool their identity in the wake of major changes in the theory world. It is past time that this was done.

Theorists today, much like the "deconstruction community" noted above by Sussman, still work in affiliation with communities of shared interest and concern. This notion has at times been expressed by the statement "theorists run in packs," one most commonly associated with Stanley Fish's idea of "interpretive communities." Fish uses the notion of "interpretive communities" to answer the question as to "why will different readers execute the same interpretive strategies when faced with the 'same' text?," particularly as "they don't have to." "Interpretive communities," writes Fish, "are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions." Borrowing from his idea of "community" in theory, it is here being extended well beyond just "interpretive strategies" for "writing texts"—to all of the ways in which theory brings critics and activists together around shared interests and into networks of concern, that is, engages them with common subjects and objects of theoretical attention.

The notion of communities (or networks) of theorists applies equally to men and women; to students and teachers; to the high priests and low practitioners of theory. It has no sexual preference, requires no specific pedigree, and is blind to race and class. It always already reminds us that in spite of the individuality of our voices and the perceived solitude of scholarly pursuits, there is a form of affiliational collectivity that underlies the work of theory—and its multitude of areas of concern and interest. To argue for the validity of this statement is to argue for theory in the best sense of the term—for its continuing relevance; for its continued existence. It is an argument that can be made simply by observing the ways in which theory materializes and comes to be. It asks us to see individuals within the academy affiliating, rather than atomizing; as forming both relations with others, and relationships to distinct places or regions of critical exchange.

The most basic forms of affiliation are the groups and organizations we join in the name of theory.

One need look no further than the Allied Organization Directory of the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) to catch a sense of their depth and diversity: the American Comparative Literature Association, the American Name Society, the American Psychoanalytic Association, the American Translators Association, the Association for Computers and the Humanities, the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment, the Conference on Christianity and Literature, Feministas Unidas, the GL/Q Caucus for the Modern Languages, the Graduate Student Caucus, the International Society for the Study of Narrative, the Marxist Literary Group, the Modernist Studies Association, the Radical Caucus in English and Modern Languages, the Reception Study Society, the Rhetoric Society of America, the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship, and the Society for Critical Exchange.

Each of these organizations have allied with the MLA in an effort to further their theoretical interests.^o Panels are offered each year at the MIA to forward the theoretical agendas of each organization. While there are many societies and organizations affiliated with specific authors (e.g., Thoreau, Faulkner, and Goethe), languages (e.g., Italian, Portuguese), periods (e.g., eighteenth century, medieval), and areas of teaching (e.g., teachers of German, teachers of technical writing), the presence of distinctly theory-based organizations affiliated with the MLA attests to one of the more important forms of theoretical affiliation. But there are many others aside from professional organizations.

Academic journals, for example, are a form of theoretical affiliation. Communities of theorists gravitate around one or more of them with respect to their specific interests. They write articles and book reviews for them; they peer-review each other's work; and they serve as editors and advisers to them; so too are scholarly presses, conference proceedings, blogs, discussion groups, reading groups, colloquia, symposiums, and institutes. Theoretical affiliation has many different venues and far too many are supported by active

and passionate communities of scholars to even posit that theory is not alive and well. If one turns to each of the areas of theoretical concern and interest, they will find that each in turn has numerous venues and communities that support, encourage, and facilitate work in the area. Some support multiple areas of concern and interest, while others only support one though their relative inclusivity and exclusivity does not impede their role in or support of theoretical affiliation.

To really kill theory, one would need to shut down all of these venues. To make it sick, start diminishing their overall number. But fortunately, such acts of academic terrorism against theory are not occurring with great frequency. In fact, the opposite seems to be happening. There are more venues now than ever to engage in theory. Some are traditional, such as conferences and journals, but others are new, such as blogs and online discussion groups. These venues multiply as theory expands its reach into new disciplines, subjects, and objects, if not also the commons itself. Not only is the community for theory alive and well, it is continuously growing and expanding in a variety of ways.

Theorists today often affiliate simultaneously with different areas of concern and interest. For example, it is not uncommon to see a theorist committed to critically exploring neoliberalism and one or more other zones of critical inquiry. Debt or university studies, for example, are often paired with neoliberalism to produce more specialized zones of critical exchange like critical debt studies. But so too are many other zones of critical exchange paired like empire, postcolonial studies, and academic labor studies.

Working in several different areas of theoretical interest at the same time albeit with differing intensities is part of the strength of millennial theory. One of the major differences say between twentieth-century theory and twenty-first-century theory is the more exclusive nature of theoretical work in the previous century. If in the twentieth century, psychoanalysis, semiotics, deconstruction,

and feminism had any meaning, then it was generated through the common work of a particular area of theory. To be a theorist was to associate strongly with at least one school or movement of criticism or theory. If one self-identified as a working theorist during this period, it would not be unusual, as noted before, to be asked to what school of criticism or theory one belonged. Each school had a more or less distinct identity, and several leaders and master texts. For example, there was no way to affiliate with psychoanalysis without Freud and/or Lacan, no way to be a semiotician without Saussure and/or Peirce. The same, however, cannot be said of those who affiliate with the subjects and objects of the new millennial theoretical multitude. Take, for example, two of the more fruitful and well-known zones in the theoretical multitude today, neoliberalism and disability.

Sure, one can say that in the twenty-first century it is impossible to affiliate with neoliberalism without also affiliating with Milton Friedman, Friedrich von Hayek, and John Maynard Keynes, or that disability without Michael Berube, Lennard Davis, and Tobin Siebers is empty, the scale of affiliation is much different than it was in the twentieth century. To do semiotic theory without Saussure or Peirce was impossible in the twentieth century. However, to do disability studies without Berube or Davis today is not a mortal wound. Though your work may be impoverished without the presence of one of the leaders of your area of concern, it is not immediately invalidated. So too is the case with Milton Friedman, Friedrich von Hayek, and John Maynard Keynes in neoliberal theory.

The ability of theorists to work in different areas of theory at the same time is one the strengths of theory in the new millennium. When such opportunities presented themselves in the 1990s, the nervous reaction to them was to call them "posttheory." The fear was that theorists who worked in several different areas were in some way watering down or destroying the purity of theory. This may have been true in the 1990s when theoretical work was more insular, but in the

twenty-first century, not only is it acceptable as a theorist to work in several different areas of theoretical inquiry, it is more the norm than the exception.

So if theory is united through communities or networks of shared interest and concern, then one of the ways to destroy theory is to pull apart or atomize them. John Ellis sensed this when he wrote back in the late 1990s in support of his version of "antitheory" that "theorists do not run in packs." His proposal was that

they are individuals who set out to crack particular theoretical problems by thinking hard about them. Their work is solitary, it is never fashionable and must always be estranged from orthodoxies. It follows that a theory elite can arise only when theory has ceased to function effectively and when the individuals who are a part of it no longer act like theorists. Real theorists thrive on the concept of argument and counterargument that is central to theoretical analysis, but race-class-gender scholars show a marked tendency to avoid facing the substance of the arguments of the critics.

While there are many things with which to take issue in this statement by Ellis, perhaps the most important one is the notion that the work of theorists is "solitary." Nothing is further from the truth.

Though some theoretical communities are smaller than others, a community of one is not a community. Theoretical problems do require hard thinking, and making arguments and counterarguments as a theorist is a common practice, but to pursue problems and arguments outside of a community is like trying to play chess without an opponent. It may seem like chess, but it isn't. The same is true with theory.

With a community comes the critical exchange that is necessary for theory to adapt to better meet the needs of the community. Without critical exchange, theoretical communities risk becoming frozen in time or crystalized—that is, they hazard establishing orthodoxies that are impervious to critique and

never develop or change. But orthodoxy in itself is not the problem.

Orthodoxies bring communities together. They give them a sense of self-identity and shared-momentum. They put theory in motion. Sometimes they bring it down roads well-traveled, whereas other times they do not. It is often the interplay between orthodoxy and community that makes the theoretical journey a productive and progressive one. All of this is not to say that theorists cannot or should not be trailblazers. Original and heterodox theory is not only important for progress in theory, but also for challenging the status quo.

Nevertheless, it is only possible against the backdrop of orthodoxies shared by communities. If Ellis's point is that there are pioneers in theory, then I have no problem with this. If his point though is that theorists must work in a vacuum, which he seems to be saying, then he is wrong. Working in a theoretical community may result in the creation of new directions for theory, but theory that is not the consequence of some type of community life is better left on its own and ignored.

"Fashionable theory" or the "latest big thing in theory" may not be everyone's preference. But it is also not a bad thing for people to be excited about new directions or trends in theory. Again, "fashionable" or heterodox theory is only intelligible within the context of "unfashionable" or orthodox theory. Moreover, if no one believes in a proposed "theory" and if no community forms around it, isn't this just solipsism? Or worse yet, narcissism? For Ellis, theory that builds a community around it is "a degraded and corrupt shadow of what theory should be." I strongly disagree.

When theory does not work within a community, it risks irrelevance or worse yet, death. The best way to destroy a theory is for no one to believe in it. Theoretical innovation may begin with the unorthodox work of one individual, but it will end there if it continues to lurk in the shadows of the theory community. Moreover, there is nothing wrong or elite with being the leader of a community of

theorists. After all, communities without leadership inevitably fail.

In sum, theory without community is dead theory. Community helps it to survive, thrive, and stay relevant. Theorists without community lapse into esotericism and risk becoming irrelevant. The solitary theorist is nothing to be celebrated. Rather it is something to be mourned. But still, the flourishing and multiplication of subjects and objects of theoretical intrigue in the twenty-first century presents a challenge to creating and sustaining community in theory. If one does not have the relatively limited number of schools and movements around which to build community, but rather have the scores of objects and subjects such as those listed above and in Part 2 of this book, then creating community around this multitude can be a challenge.

If there is any problem with theory in the new millennium, it is that the multitude of theoretical objects and subjects today leaves theorists with too many choices for theoretical affiliation. There are so many, in fact, that the whole notion of affiliation can become as overwhelming as trying to visualize the whole field of theory today. Let us again take, for example, affiliation with neoliberalism, one of the few -isms still in vogue today.

In twenty-first-century theory, "neoliberalism" has become one of our most visible and productive sites for critical exchange. For many, it implies both a critique of late capitalism and the belief that political economy is something that is worthy of our critical attention. Theorists who affiliate with this subject both explore differing ways to define its terms and defend its territories as well as survey alternative histories and extensions of it.

However, theorists who work on neoliberal theory and who find this subject a valuable point of or nexus for critical inquiry, again, more than likely have interests in one or more other areas of theory as well. Moreover, there may also be other subjects and objects and along with them their communities of inquirers that also fit well with the interests of neoliberal inquiry. This is one of the exciting

features of the brave new world of twenty-first-century theory: namely, the way in which it encourages different communities to network with each other in the shared pursuit of theory. It is also one of the more intimidating features of theory in the new millennium, for it is often unclear where affiliations should begin—and where they should end.

The community activity of theorists involves reading and commenting on each other's work. It also involves using the theoretical work of others as a launching pad for your own work either positively as a source of critical insight—or negatively as a foil. Sometimes, theorists praise each other. Other times they disagree with each other. Some theoretical communities have recognizable leaders, while others don't. Regardless, community is essential to the well-being of theory.

Theory today is a community, or, more precisely, a set of communities. They may not go by recognizable names like the feminism, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis of the last century, but theory still is driven by communities of individuals who share common bonds of theoretical pursuit and interest. Like all communities, theoretical ones go through periods of growth and popularity—and periods of decline and unpopularity. Some become fashionable, while others languish in relative obscurity. For example, few today seem to want to live in the structuralist community. Though it was once a thriving and active one, arguments and disagreements within the community led many to move to other communities or to take part in the formation of new ones. And this, of course, is not a bad thing. Just look at what the legacies of structuralism gave to the world of theory, including, most significantly, post-structuralism, the roots of which still branch through much millennial theory.

While community is not unique to theorists, it does not diminish its importance in understanding how theory works, flourishes, and even sometimes fails. Theory today has a large, robust, and strong community, one that anyone who values it needs to

support. Without the support of communities, theory risks becoming the solitary and esoteric entity envisioned by Ellis. Working in one or several communities of theorists allows theory to flourish and thrive in the new millennium as it continues the process of refiguring or remapping its purview. The chapters, and term-and-figure entries, in this book energetically demonstrate that theory in the new millennium is neither isolated nor dead. Rather, it is supported and strengthened by a global network of scholars committed to not just the survival of theory—but to its continued development and relevancy, particularly in dark times. <>

[Conceptions of Dreaming from Homer to 1800](#) by G. W. Pigman III [Anthem Press, 9781783088881]

Byron's designation of the dream as 'the mystical usurper of the mind' captures two aspects of its perennial fascination. Dreams are mysterious and they take possession of our minds as if they had an irresistible power of their own. The usurpation of the mind by dreams has contributed to the belief that they accurately and supernaturally predict the future, reveal things unknown in the present or warn the dreamer to do or not to do something. This kind of dream goes by many names - admonitory, divinatory, precognitive, veridical, and prophetic - and even today most people believe in it. 'Conceptions of Dreaming from Homer to 1800' presents the history of conceptions of dreaming in Europe from Homer to the turn of the nineteenth century, the long period in which the admonitory dream was the centre of learned and popular interest.

By the end of the eighteenth century many researchers were interested in the dream as a psychological event rather than as a portent of the future. More of them were ceasing to ask what dreams are and how they work and asking instead which dreams reveal the future, how and their interpretation. In broader terms, western European thinking about dreams up to 1800 was primarily concerned with what they might mean or reveal. Although revelation of the future was the most common kind of significance, dreams were also

thought to reveal the health of the dreamer, their wishes, character and daily pursuits. Hence the overwhelming concern with classifying dreams as significant (requiring attention) or insignificant (safe to ignore). Since the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed an important shift in the study of dreams, the period from Homer to the turn of the nineteenth century should be taken as a whole - the period of the admonitory dream. During this period the admonitory dream was accepted, questioned or rejected. But it was rarely ignored or simply mentioned as a historical curiosity, as increasingly happened in nineteenth-century scholarly and scientific discourse.

[Conceptions of Dreaming from Homer to 1800](#) traces the history of ideas about dreaming during the period in which the admonitory dream was the main focus of learned interest - from the Homeric epics through the Renaissance - and the period in which it begins to become a secondary focus - the eighteenth century. The book also considers the two most important dream theorists at the turn of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud and Sante de Sanctis. While Freud is concerned with the old questions of what a dream means and how to interpret it, De Sanctis offers a synthesis of nineteenth-century research into what a dream is and represents the Enlightenment transition from particular facts to general laws.

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Excerpt: The Period of the Admonitory Dream

Byron's designation of the dream as "The mystical Usurper of the mind" (Don Juan 4.30.4) captures two aspects of its perennial fascination. Dreams are mysterious, and they take possession of our minds as if they had an irresistible power of their own. After more than two millennia of research and theorizing even defining dream* remains nontrivial and controversial. By adopting "the most broad, general, and indisputable definition of dreaming mental activity occurring in sleep" (Hobson 2002, 7), one excludes phenomena often not distinguished from dreams in the past—waking visions. In accounts from antiquity and the Middle Ages one sometimes cannot tell whether visio refers to a waking vision or a dream, and sometimes waking visions are included in classifications of dreams. In 1999, a task force of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies failed to agree upon a definition of dreaming, and some contemporary scientists argue that dreams from REM sleep should be

distinguished from the "dream-like mentation" of NREM sleep.

The mystery of dreaming extends beyond problems of definition. The question that has preoccupied people since Homer—"What do dreams mean?"—has yet to be answered to general satisfaction. Since the discovery of REM sleep by Aserinsky and Kleitman, scientists have learned a good deal about the physiology of sleep—for example, which areas of the brain are active in different stages of sleep, or which neurotransmitters are performing which functions—but no one has come up with a persuasive theory of the function or significance of dreams.¹ Hobson states a widely held suspicion: "dreaming itself could be an epiphenomenon without any direct effect on normal or abnormal cognition". Sohns concludes a recent survey of the neurobiology and neurology of dreaming: "An adaptive function for dreaming has, however, not been empirically demonstrated". In fact, today there is less of a consensus on the relation of REM sleep to dreaming than a couple of decades ago because dreams also occur in NREM sleep, although not as frequently and, more controversially, are not of the same character as in REM.¹ Consequently, a history of conceptions of dreams cannot be written as a series of approaches to and deviations from an accepted theory.¹ The debate about the significance or insignificance of dreams continues, often in terms familiar to one who knows the history of dream theory.

The usurpation of the mind by dreams has contributed to the belief that they accurately and supernaturally predict the future, reveal things unknown in the present or warn the dreamer to do or not to do something. This kind of dream goes by many names—admonitory, divinatory, precognitive, veridical and prophetic—and even today, most people believe in it. "Admonitory dream" might be the single most inclusive designation, since some dreams deemed supernatural are not strictly speaking predictions but rather warnings or commands, but dreams that predict the future are usually regarded as

admonitions. The main part of this book presents the history of conceptions of dreaming from Homer to the turn of the nineteenth century, the period in which the admonitory dream was the center of learned and popular interest. Although the center of interest, however, the admonitory dream was never the only kind of dream regarded as meaningful, so I consider all of the prominent kinds of dream—whether meaningful or not.

Toward the end of this period, Konrad Philipp Dieffenbach, the son of an evangelical minister and a teacher at the Collegium Fridericianum in Kongsberg, denied any significance to dreams and dismissed relying upon them as the mental weakness of the dumb and ignorant, since the fulfillment of a dream might be coincidental. Divine providence has given the wise man a different kind of prophetic power than dream interpretation: clear-seeing reason and strong judgment that allow him to predict in accordance with the usual connection of things.¹ Dieffenbach roundly condemned dream interpreters: "Today in enlightened lands one seeks to prevent these apostles of superstition from spreading their follies—one puts them in prisons or madhouses" (1789). Although unusually uncompromising and contemptuous, by the second half of the eighteenth century Dieffenbach is by no means alone in rejecting the persistence of admonitory dreams. Scholars used to take this kind of Enlightenment self-congratulation at face value but more recently regard the triumph of Enlightenment rationalism over superstition as an exaggeration.

Nevertheless, there is something more than wish fulfillment in positions such as Dieffenbach's. By the end of the eighteenth century, many researchers were interested in the dream as a psychological event rather than as a portent of the future. More of them were ceasing to ask, "Which dreams reveal the future, how do they do it, and how can we interpret them?" and were asking instead, "What are dreams, and how do they work?" In broader terms, Western European thinking about dreams up to 1800 was primarily concerned with what they might mean or reveal. Although revelation of the

future was the most common kind of significance, dreams were also thought to reveal the health or illness of the dreamer's body, his wishes, character and daily pursuits. Such dreams might also reveal the future, especially the development of an illness that has yet to produce waking symptoms, or might reveal nothing out of the ordinary, as when Theocritus's fisherman dreams of fishing. Hence the overwhelming concern with classifying dreams as significant (requiring attention) or insignificant (safe to ignore). Very few dream theorists—Sigmund Freud is the most notable exception—have thought that all dreams are significant.

Since the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed an important shift in the study of dreams, it makes sense to consider the period from Homer to the turn of the nineteenth century as a whole—the period of the admonitory dream. During this period the admonitory dream was accepted, questioned or rejected. But it was rarely ignored or simply mentioned as a historical curiosity, as increasingly happened in nineteenth-century scholarly and scientific discourse. By no means, however, did conceptions of dreaming simply develop from ancient superstition to modern science. In antiquity Aristotle and Epicurus denied the existence of godsent dreams, and some romantics and nature philosophers, reacting against eighteenth-century naturalism and rationalism, attributed extraordinary powers to the dreaming mind and occasionally justified the godsent dream. At the turn of the twentieth century, Myers, other members of the Society for Psychical Research and some nonspiritualist researchers—not just the ignorant vulgar of Enlightenment polemic—were still taking precognitive dreams seriously. Furthermore, the nineteenth century sees intense interest in "the dream as revelation," to use the title of an important essay by James Sully (1893), and one crucial component of that interest is in the revelation of character, an ancient theme much expanded in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, the whole question of the significance of dreams continues to preoccupy many scientists today, although often couched in terms of adaptive

function. As Wamsley and Stickgold put it, "Even if dreams are not constructed in order to communicate a meaning, this does not rule out psychological meaning in an alternative sense". Although the admonitory dream has been relegated to the fringes of contemporary dream research, the significant dream remains an important subject. One example of the shattering significance of an admonitory dream should indicate that Enlightenment debate over its continued existence was not idle or academic. Probably early in 1773 the poet William Cowper had a "fatal dream" that formed part of his second nervous breakdown.¹ In 1785 he wrote a letter of consolation, or rather of congratulation, to John Newton on the death of his niece, contrasting his own death in life with her life in heaven: "I had a dream 12 years ago, before the recollection of which, all consolation vanishes, and, as it seems to me, must always vanish" (1979-1986, 2.385). In this dream he heard a loud voice crying, "Actum est de te, periisti" (It is all over with you; you are done for: 1.510). Henceforth Cowper regarded himself as a slain soul and his despair "an inveterate habit" (2.199). Almost nine years later he wrote, "I despair of every thing, and my despair is perfect, because it is founded on a persuasion that there is no effectual help for me, even in God" (January 2, 1793). Although he never recounted the shattering dream of 1773, another one almost 20 years later is impressively terrifying.

I have had a terrible night—such a one as I believe I may say God knows no man ever had. Dream'd that in a state of the most insupportable misery I look'd through the window of a strange room being all alone, and saw preparations making for my execution. That it was but four days distant, and that then I was destined to suffer everlasting martyrdom in the fire, my body being prepared for the purpose and my dissolution made a thing impossible. Rose oerwhelm'd with infinite despair, and came down to the study execrating the day when I was born with inexpressible bitterness. And while I write this, I repeat those execrations, in my very soul persuaded that I shall perish

miserably and as no man ever did. Every thing is, and for 20 years has been, lawful to the Enemy against me. (November 16, 1792)

The last sentence suggests that, among other things, Cowper believed that the devil had been allowed to persecute him with dreams, and an earlier letter avows his belief that his dreams have been caused by "an exterior agency" Insisting that he was "as free from superstition as any man living," he went on to challenge the common view that dreams are "only the ordinary operations of the Fancy" argued against the bold idea that God has ceased speaking in dreams, and declared his conviction that all dreams are caused by supernatural agents, a radical theory that he probably took from William Baxter (see p. 166). It is sad to read Cowper's defense of the persistence of admonitory dreams, since his own are far from the workings of a merciful providence responding to the needs of blind and fallible man (3.14). His dreams are nightmares that strengthen his conviction that he is a "castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27), as he calls himself in the famous poem of that title, predestined to eternal damnation. After the dream of 1773, Cowper never went to church or prayed, certain that he was an object of God's reprobation. For the next 20 years he was "hunted by spiritual hounds in the night-season" (July 29, 1792).

I have not believed that I shall perish because in dreams I have been told it, but because I have had hardly any but terrible dreams for 13 years, I therefore have spent the greatest part of that time most unhappily. They have either tinged my mind with melancholy or filled it with terrour, and the effect has been unavoidable. If we swallow arsenic we must be poison'd, and he who dreams as I have done, must be troubled. (January 14-16, 1787)

Especially if one is convinced that these admonitions have been sent by God or by His express permission?

Although the scholarly bibliography on dreams is immense and there are several fine studies of

particular writers and periods, there is no reliable study of conceptions of dreaming from Homer through the eighteenth century. Without a reliable study, scholars interested in dreams in history and literature are often led into errors about the originality of ideas in later periods. What Anthony Grafton has written of astrology is equally valid of dream theory, "Any historian who attempts to study an individual segment of this long history must repeatedly risk mistaking traditional, and even ancient, ideas and methods for new ones" (1999, 5). Since almost all of the conceptions of dreams of any prominence through the eighteenth century were developed in antiquity, one finds explicit or implicit assertions of originality that completely neglect or relegate to a footnote earlier versions of the ideas under consideration. Just as numerous eighteenth-century authors adopt Aristotelian ideas without acknowledging or even realizing their provenance, many modern scholars ignore the earlier history of their subject. Or they know one national tradition in detail but do not consider its European, often neo-Latin, context.

I will give an example from Manfred Engel because his work on the history of dream theory is excellent. Engel shows that German "anthropologists" of the mid- to late eighteenth century developed a "deficit theory" of dreams. Dreaming appeared deficient because essential waking faculties such as the senses, reason, consciousness and will were not functioning at all or only in a weakened form. The imagination exploited these deficits to rule the dream. Engel does not explicitly claim originality for the deficit theory of these anthropologists, so it may be unfair to criticize him for not examining its history. Nevertheless, this deficit theory owes much to Aristotle, who bases his theory that the dream is an illusory activity of the imagination upon the suspension of the senses and the consequent impairment of judgment. Versions of Aristotle's theory abounded in the eighteenth century, often forming the basis for further theorizing. Furthermore, a compelling account of dream theory since antiquity could focus on deficit and "surplus"

models. Engel (1998a) presents Romantic dream theory as a reaction against the deficit model, a celebration of the special powers of the dreaming mind and even a rehabilitation of the admonitory dream. But there are several earlier important surplus models of dreaming, for example, the prophetic power of the sleeping soul, first attested in Pindar, the extraordinary powers that Synesius attributes to the imagination in dreams and the even greater powers of imagination in the Arabic Aristotelians. Sometimes deficit and surplus models combine, as in Aristotle's explanation that the dream's ability to reveal illness results from the impairment of the senses."

Before explaining what I have tried to do in this book, let me explain what I have not. Although I do discuss the theoretical aspects of Artemidorus's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the only complete dream book from antiquity and a work that continues to inform books about dream symbolism to this day, the focus remains on conceptions and theories of dreams, not on the mechanics of dream interpretation. In other words, the focus is on what Dario Del Corno has termed the oneirological tradition, not the oneiromantic. The distinction between dream and vision does not receive much consideration, although the sections on the Arabic Aristotelians and Albertus Magnus have something to say about it. Nor do the many figurative uses of dream feature prominently, such as Pindar's "Man is the dream of a shadow," even though they are pervasive (e.g. "the American dream" or "I have a dream"). The only literary author treated in any detail is Homer and only because the Homeric poems antedate all other discussions of dreams in classical antiquity and contain a type of dream of exceptional importance, the "messenger dream" I also refer only in passing to the philosophical difficulty first raised in Plato, *Theaetetus* 158c-e, and most notorious from Descartes's *First Meditation*: since we think we are awake when we are dreaming, how can we be sure when we are waking that we are not in fact dreaming? Finally, the focus is on the psychological aspects of

dreaming rather than on the physiological theories of sleep and dreaming.

Especially as the book enters the early modern period, I am reluctant to try to identify the "dominant theories" or "most influential authors," although the temptation is occasionally too strong to resist. The scholarly literature gives no indication of the mass of writing about dreams from the beginning of printing to 1800. At the beginning of this work several years ago, a search of WorldCat for "insomniis," "insomnijs," "somniis" or "somnijs" in the tide of books yielded 733 results. Once combed through for duplicates, multiple editions and works by authors not from the early modern period, this list still contained 65 original items not listed in the bibliography to this book. A search for the other cases of insomnia and somnium turned up another 2,770 items. If one assumes that the same proportion applies, that would add another 249 works. But since the vast majority of these items contain somnium—Macrobius's *Somnium Scipionis* was a popular text—and many works with the nominative forms of the Latin dream words may be dream allegories or may not consider dreams literally, let us be conservative and throw away half of these 1,878 items and take 9 percent of the remainder. That still adds 165 for a total of 230 books in Latin—most of which no modern scholar has ever looked at. Of course, one would have to add works in the vernaculars. Not to mention the numerous treatises on philosophy, psychology and theology, as well as reference works, in which dreams are discussed. Not to mention the periodical literature that becomes so important in the eighteenth century. The bibliography to this book is extensive, and I have not cited everything that I have read or consulted. But I do not flatter myself that I have read more than a small fraction of the works on dreaming from the early modern period. Until someone compiles and analyzes an unbiased sample of the relevant literature, we ought to acknowledge that we have only subjective impressions about dominant theories. I am convinced that Aristotle was the most influential writer on dreams until the

beginning of the eighteenth century, and that Christian Wolff was the most influential theorist writing in that century, but claims about influence implicitly have a statistical component, and I have no numbers to support my impressions. Caveat lector.

Although the various contexts—social, national, institutional, religious and so on—in which ideas have originated and been transmitted are of course important, I have for the most part neglected them to concentrate on the ideas themselves. It is much easier to call for contextualization or utter truisms about its importance than actually to present a convincing account of the relations between ideas and the world. No one reads Ellenberger's invaluable *Discovery of the Unconscious* (1970) for his remarks about historical periods. Many of the concepts discussed in this book had an exceedingly tenacious life despite the disappearance of the social, political and religious worlds in which they developed. A survey of popular beliefs about dreams at the present would probably reveal that the most common one remains unchanged since the days of Homer—dreams are godsent revelations of the future—even though the gods and their modes of communication would vary considerably. It is reckless enough to try to write the history of conceptions of dreaming over more than two millennia; to pretend to contextualize ideas during that period would be silly.

What, then, does this book try to do? The three main chapters trace the history of ideas about dreaming during the period in which the admonitory dream was the main focus of learned interest—from the Homeric epics through the Renaissance—and the period in which it begins to become a secondary focus—the eighteenth century. With the exception of one excursion into the Arabic Aristotelians, the book is restricted to classical antiquity and Western Europe (England, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain), and the Arabs are included because their work mixed Aristotle with Neoplatonism and had such a profound influence on scholasticism. The proportions

of the book may at first glance appear odd because the longest chapter deals with the ancient world, although the period from Homer to 500 CE contains far fewer discussions of dreaming than the period from 1500 to 1800. The chapter on antiquity tries to be comprehensive because that is when most of the conceptions of dreams important through the eighteenth century were first elaborated. Since much of the dream theory during the Middle Ages and Renaissance builds upon or argues against Aristotle's, Aristotelianism is the subject of half of the two chapters on the Middle Ages and the early modern period. By the eighteenth century, one need not have read Aristotle to believe that the incapacitation of the senses allows dreams to be taken for realities or to assign the imagination a prominent role in their production. Fundamentals of Aristotelian dream theory had become a common possession. Although all the important innovations in dream theory during the period of the admonitory dream are considered, the coverage becomes less comprehensive over time, since so many of the older conceptions remain remarkably tenacious. The organization of the three main chapters combines chronology and topics, and occasionally subjects appear out of chronological order (e.g., the discussion of Biblical dreams occurs in the chapter on the Middle Age; which also looks forward to the early modern period in the discussions of demonic dreams, classification and witchcraft). Usually authors are discussed solely in terms of the contributions that they made to particular ways of understanding dreams. Only a few authors receive a more or less general exposition of their dream theory: Plato, the first author explicitly to discuss dreams as wish-fulfilling and revealing of character; Aristotle, since his dream theory was the most influential for almost 2,000 years; Albertus Magnus, who synthesized and supplemented Aristotelian dream theory during the Middle Ages; and Christian Wolff who did not devote a book to dreams but was the most innovative and influential writer about them in the eighteenth-century. This is not to say that other figures such as Julius Caesar Scaliger and

Girolamo Cardano, the two Renaissance writers whose work on dreams has received the most scholarly attention, are not considered in detail, but the focus remains on aspects of their dream theory.

The first chapter, "The Ancient World," contains 12 sections. It begins with a general discussion of a prominent type of dream not often had today. In a "messenger dream" a figure appears to the dreamer and delivers a message such as an admonition to do something or a revelation of the future. The first section argues that this kind of dream, attested from the third millennium BCE to the present, should not be dismissed as a literary fiction, and the second section studies the messenger dreams in the Iliad and the Odyssey, the functions they serve, the kind of interpretation they require and the status of Dream as a messenger. The third section surveys the scant evidence for a conception of dreaming as a journey of the soul during sleep—a conception noted by anthropologists in many parts of the world but, curiously, almost completely neglected in classical antiquity. The fourth section concerns two ideas that will have an important history: the soul as the creator or site for dreams, and the allegorical dream as a form of divination. Belief in allegorical dreams made one profession possible—that of dream interpreter—and became part of another—medicine. The fifth section focuses on medicine, especially the fourth book of the Hippocratic On Regimen, Galen, and the practice of incubation (sleeping in a sanctuary, usually of Asclepius, in the hope of a healing dream). From the medical tradition emerges one of the most important ideas about dreams—they can reveal health or illness, sometimes an illness that has not produced other symptoms—and this idea persists into the twentieth century (Vaschide and Pieron 1902). The brief section on Plato discusses the first explicit account of two other conceptions destined to have a long, important history—the dream as a revelation of character and of the wishes of the dreamer—and sets these ideas within the context of his theory of the tripartite soul. The seventh section is devoted to Aristotle and his often

obscure, occasionally inconsistent dream theories in *On Sleep and Waking*, *On Dreams* and *On Divination in Sleep*. His technical conception of the dream as a remnant of sense impressions and a product of the perceptual part of the soul in its imaginative capacity would be re-elaborated for centuries, and his analysis of the dream as a form of divination was an influential naturalistic challenge to the god-sent dream. Epicurean and Ciceronian skepticism about the dream as god-sent revelation is the subject of the eighth section, which focuses on Lucretius's account of the dream as a reflection of the pursuits, hopes and fears of the day and Cicero's scornful attack on all forms of divination. The ninth section deals with the numerous classifications of dreams in antiquity by physicians, philosophers and dream interpreters, from Herophilus to Macrobius, and the interrelations of the various systems. Some of these systems are more concerned with practical matters relating to interpretation—which dreams reveal the future?—and others with theoretical issues—how do dreams originate and how do they reveal the future? The tenth section traces the development—surprisingly late from a contemporary point of view—of the role of memory in the production of dreams, as well as the beginnings of a conception of the imagination as an image-producing, as opposed to an image-reproducing, power of the mind. These late fourth-century CE developments stem from Christian writers, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius of Pontus, Augustine, and one who became a Christian, Synesius of Cyrene. Christian writers remain the center of the eleventh section because the greatest scrutiny of the dream as revelation of the dreamer's character is stimulated by the question, is the dreamer morally responsible for his dreams? Christians, especially monks, are particularly anxious about the innocence or sinfulness of wet dreams. Positions range from unqualified condemnation to resigned acceptance of a corporeal necessity, and the distinction between a nocturnal, dreamless emission and a wet dream often proves crucial. The twelfth section briefly describes indications of the purpose of dreams and Lactantius's theory that God has given us false

dreams to protect sleep and true ones to learn of impending good or evil.

The second chapter, "The Middle Ages," contains five sections. The first concerns demonic dreams, the major innovation of Christian dream theory. Although pagan authors admit that a god might send a dream to deceive, this possibility does not become a significant anxiety or attract much attention by dream interpreters. But beginning with Tertullian's early second-century *On My Soul*, the first systematic Christian discussion of dreams, devil-sent dreams become an obsession, even though not a single one is mentioned in the Bible. Belief in them probably contributes to the church's emphasis on the danger of putting any faith in dreams and on the importance of "discerning spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10). The second section explains the idiosyncratic but extremely influential classification of dreams by Gregory I, and the more systematic classifications based on origin or causes that become common in the Renaissance. Almost all of these classifications build upon an initial division into external/eternal, supernatural/natural or extraordinary/ordinary. In the third section I describe the most innovative account of dreaming in the Middle Ages, the development of the symbolizing imagination by the Arabic philosophers al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Avicenna, al-Ghazali and Averroes. In their cosmological psychology, a heady mixture of Aristotle, Neoplatonism and Ptolemaic astronomy, they ascribe creative, symbolizing powers to the imagination that go far beyond those of Synesius and other Greek Neoplatonists. Owing to Latin translations and the critical revision of their ideas by Albertus Magnus, the theory of the Arabic Aristotelians was very influential in Western Europe. Albert is the subject of the third and longest section of the chapter on the Middle Ages because his *On Sleep and Waking*, which takes the form of a commentary on Aristotle's three treatises, is more than a masterful synthesis of the Aristotelian tradition: he explicitly clarifies and supplements the philosopher. In the early *On Man*, his commitment to veridical dreams leads to some extraordinary

interpretive ingenuity in trying to find a place in Aristotle for godsent dreams, but his final account more confidently abandons his guide on the subject of divination in dreams. Aside from the intrinsic interest of Albert's dream theory it deserves detailed study because of its influence well into the Renaissance. The fifth and final section deals with the role that conceptions of dreaming play in two aspects of witchcraft, transvection (the nocturnal flight of witches) and incubi (demons that lie upon or copulate with women). Opponents of the reality of transvection and demonic sex propose dreams as an alternative explanation, but most of them still concede the terrifying power of the devil to make people believe that their dreams are reality.

The longest section of the book opens the third chapter, 'The Early Modern Period,' for, when it comes to dream theory, Aristotle remains as much "the master of those who know" as he was for Dante and the Middle Ages. His ideas are pervasive even when unacknowledged, and even theorists who reject his views, like Hobbes, end up working with them. Scaliger and Cardano engage as much with Aristotle as with the titular subjects of their works, Hippocrates and Synesius. This first section studies some of the many uses of Aristotle, as well as the severe criticism by Francisco Sanches in his attack on divination, and pays special attention to the development of the role of memory in dreams, a topic not treated by Aristotle that becomes part of Aristotelianism. The second section considers the innovations of Christian Wolff, whose originality and influence have not been recognized in the scholarly literature. Taking a fundamentally Aristotelian idea as his point of departure—"Dreams are nothing other than images"—Wolff introduces in *Rational Thoughts on God, the World, and the Soul of Man*, as well as *All Things In General* (1720) three ideas that set the terms of debate for much eighteenth-century dream theory: (1) every dream originates in a sensation dimly perceived during sleep; (2) dreams are either simple or composite; (3) the dream is an intermediate state between sleeping and waking. The third section discusses the embarrassment of

supernatural dreams. Since the Old Testament, the Judeo-Christian tradition has been ambivalent about dreams; warnings against trusting them go hand in hand with admissions that God has sent some of them. In the Enlightenment, the admonitory dreams in the Bible force many writers into an uneasy compromise. Yes, God used to send them but not in our day, when (one often reads) only the superstitious believe in them. On the one hand, many concede that godsent dreams remain theoretically possible but then try to explain away all purported instances as chains of associations of the dreamer's experience. On the other hand, people like Cowper explicitly object to the "not in our day" argument, and others raise the stakes by insisting that rejecting supernatural dreams requires rejecting all of revelation. The fourth section moves beyond the admonitory dream to survey some of the old and new observations about what dreams are and do rather than what they signify about the future. Two of the oldest ideas—dreams reveal the dreamer's character and the state of her body—become prominent in new ways. Some theorists debate just what aspects of character are revealed or even whether it is revealed at all, and a growing number of others view dreams as revealing insanity. Two old topics receive new empirical treatments. The morning dream, long thought likely to be more veridical than ones from earlier in the night, begins to be thought clearer because the brain is approaching its waking state, and the rule of opposites in dream interpretation yields to contrariety as one of the laws of association determining the dream's development. A few other examples of the shift from significance to observation—sleepwalking, problem-solving and creativity, and unusual memories—and to the purposes of dreaming conclude the chapter.

Nineteenth-century dream theory cannot be primarily studied as an engagement with ancient ideas and would require a book of its own because it witnesses an explosion of empirical work of the sort that becomes popular in the eighteenth century. One important aspect of nineteenth-century dream theory is discussed in an epilogue on Freud and De

Sanctis, who emblematically published important books in 1899. Freud, arguing against what he incorrectly takes to be the dominant theory of the dream as psychologically insignificant, revives and universalizes one of the ancient conceptions of the significant dream, its representation of a fulfilled wish. While Freud is concerned with the old questions, "What does the dream mean, and how do we interpret it?", De Sanctis, who also sees dreams as meaningful, offers a synthesis of nineteenth-century research into the question, "What is a dream?", and represents the Enlightenment transition from particular facts to general laws. Although Freud's theories dominated the first half of the twentieth century, the approach represented by De Sanctis, little known as he is, has become standard since the discovery of REM sleep.

The earliest interest in the dream stems from the desire to know the future, and the young Leopardi was probably right: "There was perhaps no superstition more common among the ancients than that of regarding dreams as portending some event". But not only among the ancient Greeks and Romans. Lombroso affirms that the belief in revelation in dreams has been so widespread throughout human history that the number of nations that believe in dreams may outnumber those that believe in a god (1890, 184). Google abundantly shows that belief in dreams as a form of divination or admonition is very much alive today, as do the innumerable manuals descended from Artemidorus's second-century CE Interpretation of Dreams. Within Christianity and Islam (not to mention other religions) dreams continue to serve as sources of revelation. A recent survey of 81 commuters in Boston found that 68 percent reported a belief that dreams foretell the future. Even in a collection of contemporary perspectives ranging from neuroscience to anthropology one finds a plea for telepathic, out-of-body and precognitive dreams. Most of us have probably heard stories like the ones in the next two paragraphs.

The morning after an earthquake in southern California in 2008, I was chatting with the

custodian of my office building in the usual postquake fashion dear to Angelinos. Lowering his voice to a confidential tone, he asked me whether I believed in dreams. Before I had time to reply, he told me the dream he had had that night: a tsunami triggered by a devastating earthquake destroyed Santa Barbara. This dream assured him that the big one would occur within 30 days, and he was preparing to move his extended family to Texas. He urged me to leave, too. And before a month had passed, he was gone.

During the massive but futile search for Randy Morgenson in California's Sierra Nevada in 1996, his wife was initially unconcerned. Her husband, after all, had 30 years of experience as a backcountry ranger. Yet two nights of dreams of "a man with a backpack floating at the bottom of the lake" convinced her that something was truly wrong. For years she continued to believe that her husband was under water. One of the search and rescue rangers had a dream "of Randy stumbling into his camp and collapsing on his tent" and interpreted it as "a message not to give up". Another ranger had a dream that he took as a sign of where Randy was, and two other rangers vainly searched the lake in the dream. A hiker, whose partner said she had "psychic capabilities," had a dream or vision of a man in distress, desperately trying to free himself. Randy's body was eventually discovered, and he may have broken through ice on a pond and drowned. Given his wife's dream and the psychic's vision, Randy's death "holds something for those with an appetite for the supernatural".

All of these dreamers believed that they had received an admonition concerning the present or future, although it is not clear whether they thought that God had sent it. Be that as it may, belief in divination in dreams shows no sign of disappearing, and one reason is not far to seek. As long as people believe in an omnipotent deity, they will find it difficult to disbelieve in the possibility of divine revelation through dreams. It is hard to see how to disbelieve without doubting omnipotence.

It would be, therefore, to limit Him, to affirm that a revelation by dreams was antecedently impossible.—priggish and impertinent to say that it was antecedently absurd. The unanimous voice, nemine contradicente, must be, that He could so reveal Himself, if He would; the general voice is, that it is possible He does; the more restricted opinion is that He does; and there is, in addition, an inner circle of persons who profess to have personal evidence, not of the possibility, not of the probability, but of the actuality of such illuminations.

Categorically denying the existence of godsent dreams is the province of atheists. Although the admonitory dream no longer concerns most scientists, for millions of people it remains as much the mystical usurper of the mind as it was during the period studied in this book.

Aristotle Arabicus: The Symbolizing Imagination Philosophers writing in Arabic—al-Kindi (d. ca. 870), al-Farabi (ca. 870-ca. 950), Avicenna (980-1037) and Averroes (ca. 1126-98)—developed the most innovative account of dreaming in the Middle Ages, and, thanks to translations into Latin and to criticism and revision by Albertus Magnus (ca. 1200-80), their account was very influential in the Latin west. All of these Arabic authors depend upon the Aristotelian tradition, but even a cursory look at their work reveals a major divergence from Aristotle himself. Although Averroes (1967, 75), for example, plainly states that the peripatetic philosophers held that God is the cause of warnings in dreams, Aristotle stoutly denies the existence of godsent dreams and implies that dreams have no connection with the divine. In addition to the general implausibility of godsent dreams, it is, in Aristotle's view, absurd to say that God sends dreams and that He sends them not to the best and most intelligent but to ordinary people (On Divination in Sleep 462b20-2; cf. 464a20-2). Aristotle also states that since some animals dream, dreams could not be sent by God (463b12-14). Dreams may foretell the future but not owing to

anything supernatural: they may be signs, causes or coincidences of things that come to pass. The theories of the Arabic Aristotelians could be described, to borrow Carlyle's phrase, as natural supernaturalism. They do not consider dreams as immediate revelations from God; instead, they acknowledge and try to explain prophetic dreams emanating from the active intellect.

Nevertheless, the Arabic philosophers may not have thought that they were diverging significantly from Aristotle because the *Parva Naturalia* known to them very likely—no translation into Arabic has yet been discovered—included a section on veridical dreams not in the Greek. In the "Epistle concerning Dreams" attributed to Avicenna, the author gives Aristotle's opinion on dream visions from the *Area Naturalia*. When God decrees a chain of causes concerning a man, He may warn him through the intermediary of the active intellect by showing his soul a representation of what will happen to him in the future. The cause of veridical dream visions is God (Pines 1974, 120-1). In his commentary (ca. 1280) on Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*, Zerahyah ben Isaac cites the *Parva Naturalia* to very similar effect: the ground and cause of the true dream vision is the Creator (Ravitzky 1981-1982). A short text purporting to follow Aristotle on dreams combines views recognizably from the *Parva Naturalia* with others that are not: the union of the dreamer with the active intellect and the divine vision of the soul (Gatje 1971, 85-8 and 132-4). Another text purporting to translate Aristotle on dreams but bearing a slight relationship to his works—MS Rampur (India) 1752--does contain the "Aristotelian" passages from Avicenna and Zerahyah and was known to other medieval Muslim and Jewish writers. Consequently, when the Arabic philosophers developed explanations for veridical dreams, they probably thought that they were elaborating Aristotelian doctrine. Nor should one forget that Aristotle's early dialogues contain a messenger dream and passages about the prophetic powers of the soul when not dominated by the body. One of these passages, in fact, is preserved by al-Kindi.

Al-Kindi does not state that veridical dreams are godsent in *On Sleep and Vision*, but he does attribute extraordinary cognitive powers to the soul when asleep. For al-Kindi, sleep occurs when healthy individuals cease using their senses. Since the senses are inactive, the most important faculty of the soul in the production of dreams is the form making, which, al-Kindi says, the Greeks call *phantasia*. The form-making faculty presents individual forms abstracted from matter, while the senses present forms contained in matter. Although active while we are both awake and asleep, the form-making faculty is stronger in sleep, since it is not distracted by the senses: it can perceive forms more clearly and vividly. The form-making faculty has another advantage over the senses; it can make us know things that the senses cannot. It can compose sensible forms, for example, a feathered man or a talking animal. In dreams, we think without using our senses. Although al-Kindi assigns striking cognitive significance to the imagination, to give his form-making faculty its traditional name, he does not say how it does its work—whether, for example, it composes new forms out of remnants of sense impressions or out of memories.

Nor, despite distinguishing different kinds of veridical dreams, does al-Kindi explain in detail how they can predict the future. He begins with a proposition that he attributes to Plato and Aristotle: the soul by nature possesses knowledge and is the site of the forms of sensible and intelligible things." Apparently al-Kindi assumes that the soul by nature, at least potentially, knows the past, present and future. But he does not say so explicitly or, like later Arabic philosophers, provide an emanationist account in which knowledge passes from divine intermediaries to the human soul, even though in an astrological treatise he states that the past and present are inscribed in the celestial harmony of the universe, and that many believe that incorporeal substances reveal to men many things not founded in sense or reason. Instead, al-Kindi baldly asserts that the soul, which is knowledgeable, awake and alive, indicates things before they happen, either through symbols or

directly. There are four kinds of dreams, depending on the soul's capacity to receive and its freedom from disturbance: (1) clear dreams that announce things as they will occur; (2) symbolic dreams that foretell the future (e.g, flying foretells a journey); (3) symbolic dreams that foretell the opposite of what will happen (e.g, seeing a poor man who later becomes rich); (4) confused dreams that foretell nothing. Al-Kindi assigns a pivotal role to the form-making faculty in the production of dreams but neglects to explain its role in these four kinds. Does it, for example, produce the clear dreams, which are received as they will occur? For a more systematic account of dreaming, imagination and prophecy one must turn to his successors.

The dream theory of al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes forms part of what one might call their cosmological psychology, a dizzying combination of Aristotelian incorporeal movers and psychology, Neoplatonic emanationism and Ptolemaic astronomy. Al-Farabi may have been responsible for integrating the Ptolemaic universe with AristotelianNeoplatonic metaphysics and psychology, or he may have found the integration in an unknown source (Reisman 2005, 56). In his late work, *The Principles of the Views of the City* of the Best City, an incorporeal first cause (God) presides over the universe, which consists of nine concentric celestial spheres with their nine incorporeal movers (also called intellects or intelligences) and the sublunar world, governed by the tenth and last incorporeal intelligence, the active intellect. The nine celestial spheres that rotate around the immobile sublunary world are the first heaven, the outer sphere which rotates around the earth once every 24 hours and which imparts its diurnal motion to the spheres within it; the sphere of the fixed stars; and the seven spheres containing the known planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the sun, Venus, Mercury and the moon. In Aristotle, the incorporeal movers only cause the motion of their spheres, not their being, and their motion does not descend hierarchically, but in al-Farabi a Neoplatonic system of emanations accounts for the

existence and order of the spheres. The first intellect eternally emanates from the first cause and thinks two thoughts: of the first cause and of its own essence. From its first thought, the second intellect proceeds, and from its second thought, the first sphere itself proceeds. This process repeats itself. The second intellect, by thinking of the first cause, produces the third intellect, and, by thinking of its own essence, produces its own sphere. And so on down to the ninth intellect, which produces the sphere of the moon.

Now comes the linchpin of the whole system, at least as far as veridical dreams are concerned. The ninth intellect emanates a tenth and final one, the active (or agent) intellect of Aristotle and his commentators, and the active intellect governs the sublunary world, the world of coming-to-be and passing. The brief discussion of the active intellect in *De anima* 3.5 is notoriously obscure and has provided Aristotle's commentators, ancient and modern, with many opportunities for speculation and disagreement. The active intellect (or reason)—a phrase not in fact used by Aristotle but reasonably inferred from the context and adopted by his ancient commentators—can have a separate existence and is eternal (430a22-3). The active intellect is invoked to explain how humans think—how the potentiality of thought is actualized—since there must be something in the soul that acts as a cause and actualizes its potential, just as in the rest of nature. Although Aristotle only states that there is in the soul one intellect that becomes all things and another that makes all things, he was taken by his Arabic followers to mean that the active intellect actualizes the potential intellect. In the Arabic Aristotelians the active intellect is the final incorporeal emanation descending from the first cause and produces thought in the human potential or material intellect. But the active intellect, which al-Farabi identifies with the Holy Spirit, the angel of revelation, not only explains how humans come to use their potential to think but also accounts for the dreaming mind's access to knowledge of past, present and future.

The active intellect forms a bridge between the celestial spheres and the human soul and its faculties. For al-Farabi, the most important of these faculties for dreaming is the imagination, which is even more active and important than in Synesius's theory the nearest analogue from Greco-Roman antiquity. In sleep, according to al-Farabi; the imagination is free from sense impressions and does not have to serve the rational and appetitive faculties. The imagination performs three functions. The first two involve the preservation of images, since al-Farabi does not regard memory as an independent faculty and describes the imagination as remembering and recollecting. The imagination not only retains sense impressions but also combines and separates them. Synesius also attributes to the imagination the ability to combine and separate images but not to preserve them: they light upon it from the outside. The third function that al-Farabi assigns to the imagination has no Greek precedent—imitation.

The imagination can imitate sensibles, intelligibles, the nutritive and appetitive faculties and the temperament of the body. The imagination imitates sense objects by combining the sensibles that it has preserved. Although al-Farabi does not say so, presumably this is how he would account for what might be considered the reproduction of a memory image in a dream. When the appetitive faculties are involved, the imitation can produce within the body the same actions as the emotions themselves. The imagination imitates the actions that the emotion would produce before the emotion itself occurs. When, for example, the temperament of the body would lead to a desire for sexual intercourse, the imagination prepares the appropriate organs for intercourse; the desire for intercourse is not actual, only imitated.

"Express in symbols" would be another way to render the Arabic word used by al-Farabi for imitate, and this meaning is required for the imitation of the intelligibles and of the temperament. Imitation or symbolization of the temperament comes from the medical tradition that some dreams represent the condition of the body,

although the physicians do not specify the role of the imagination in the process, and al-Farabi does not mention the diagnostic benefits of dream interpretation. One of al-Farabi's examples recalls his Greek predecessors, although, unlike them, he does not take the dream as a sign of disease. If the imagination finds that the temperament is moist, it imitates moist sensibles, like water and swimming (213). Since the imagination can only imitate intelligibles with sensibles, it represents them symbolically. For example, the most perfect intelligibles such as the first cause or the heavens are represented by beautiful things.

The imagination can imitate intelligibles provided not only by the rational faculty, as in the last example, but also by the active intellect, and this is how divination occurs in dreams. In addition to actualizing the human potential intellect, the active intellect acts in some unspecified way upon the imagination by providing it with intelligibles and sensibles. As with intelligibles received from the rational faculty, the imagination has to imitate intelligibles received from the active intellect with sensibles. But the sensibles themselves can be represented directly as received or indirectly by means of other sensibles. These different kinds of reception and imitation can occur in sleeping and in waking, and form a rather complicated hierarchy of visionary experience. The stages range from the utmost perfection of the imagination, waking vision of present and future events and vision of things divine in symbolic form, to enigmatic, allegorical dreams. In sleep the imagination usually receives sensibles from the active intellect, rarely intelligibles. But in all cases true dreams or visions come from the active intellect, the last immaterial link in the chain of emanations descending from the first cause. Al-Farabi makes the active intellect ultimately responsible for veridical dreams, but he does not explain how it knows all present and future events. Avicenna supplies an explanation for such knowledge and also modifies the role of the imagination and other psychological faculties.

In his *De anima*, widely known in Europe after 1150 in the Latin translation of Dominicus

Gundissalinus, Avicenna distinguishes five internal faculties or senses: common sense, retentive or formative imagination, estimation, the custodial or memorative faculty, and compositive imagination. Unlike al-Farabi, Avicenna requires two kinds of imagination because he believes that the same faculty cannot receive and retain an object. He adds estimation because there are two different objects of internal sensation, the forms of sensibles and the intentions of sensibles. Consequently, his first four faculties form two pairs: the common sense receives the forms of sensibles, and the retentive imagination retains them, while the estimation receives intentions, and the memorative faculty retains them. The compositive imagination combines and divides forms stored in the retentive imagination and intentions stored in the memorative faculty; its activity in sleep is responsible for dreams.

This normal activity of the compositive imagination can be blocked by the soul in three ways. First, when the common sense and the retentive imagination are occupied by the external senses, the compositive imagination does not retrieve images from the retentive imagination for combining or dividing. Second, when the intellect takes control of the compositive imagination and common sense to combine and separate images in accordance with something that the soul desires, the compositive imagination is not free to act on its own but is led by the intellect. Third, when the intellect calls the compositive imagination away from images that do not resemble external things and declares that they are false, the compositive imagination cannot fashion such images. But these impediments are removed in sleep, and the compositive imagination can join with the retentive imagination and send images to the common sense. These images are then seen as if they had come from the outside.

In specifying these impediments to the compositive imagination, Avicenna is extending Aristotle's analysis of the psychological conditions that make dreaming possible. Aristotle's point of departure—his characterization of sleep as an immobilization

of the perceptual part of the soul--almost comes in as an afterthought for Avicenna (33), since he is more concerned with the workings of the internal senses. In keeping with this focus Avicenna also goes into a bit more detail about the process that al-Farabi calls imitation. The compositive imagination searches the two repositories of images, the retentive imagination and the memorative faculty, and produces forms that are similar, opposite or related to the ones found there. Avicenna notes that there are particular reasons for the different transformations but does not enumerate them. Something coming from the senses, intellect, estimation or the supernal region is responsible for the particularization.

The clarity and clairvoyance of dreams depend on the activity of the compositive imagination. When it does not distract the intellect from contemplation, the sleeping soul can join with the supernal region, which comprises the souls of the celestial spheres and the incorporeal intelligences (including the active intellect), and can apprehend the truth of things and retain them unaltered. Avicenna gives a fuller explanation of the celestial intelligences' knowledge of everything present, past and future in the "Letter on the Soul of the Sphere". Each celestial movement is set in motion by an intelligence that understands the particulars appropriate to it and represents to itself the ends toward which movements lead in this world as well as this world itself with its particulars. Consequently, the intelligences represent things that will occur in the future, since their existence necessarily follows from (1) the relations between movements attached to these intelligences, (2) the relations between things here below and (3) the relations between these things and movements above. In this deterministic world, anything that represents to itself all current situations and their evolution also represents to itself events that will necessarily follow from them. Since all past situations are simultaneously present to the movers of the celestial bodies, all future situations are equally present to them. So when the practical intellect is joined to the forms of things past, present and future, it uses the

compositive imagination to turn the forms of particulars into images that do not require interpretation. In veridical dreams, people usually see things that pertain to themselves, their families, cities or regions. There are two special instances of this kind of clear, prophetic dream. One often sees the interpretation of the dream in the dream itself when the intellect moves from the form to the image and back to the form; Avicenna calls this recollection. Or the action of the intellect is often imagined again as if someone were speaking to it through the compositive imagination. In addition, sometimes there is clear dream vision without the conjunction of the soul with the celestial intelligences; the compositive imagination on its own presents a true image. True dreams occur to those whose soul has been accustomed to speak the truth and to conquer false imaginings. They usually occur in the morning when cogitations are at rest and the motions of the humors have finished; the compositive imagination is not impeded by the body nor separated from the retentive imagination or the memorative faculty, so it best can serve the soul and receive the form that reaches it. Moreover, people of more temperate complexion have true dreams, especially people accustomed to telling the truth, since lying makes the compositive imagination disobey correction from the reason.

Avicenna mentions two other kinds of emanational dreams. First, when the compositive imagination opposes images comparable to the form that the soul receives, they are retained instead of the form, and interpretation is necessary. More people have dreams of this kind than ones that require no interpretation. When the soul has been concerned about something during the day, in sleep the compositive imagination produces an image contrary to that concern. This restriction to contraries is unprecedented in discussions of dreams that reflect the pursuits of the day. Second, when the compositive imagination is so active that it interrupts the intellect's reception of a form from the celestial intelligences, the images are too confused for meaningful interpretation.

Not all dreams, however, are true or need to be heeded. The compositive imagination does not always represent emanations from the celestial intelligences. More frequently, in fact, it represents things closer to it; some of these are natural but others are voluntary. Natural dreams occur when the compositive imagination represents bodily or humoral states. When, for example, there is an urge to expel sperm, the compositive imagination represents the form of the person with whom one is accustomed to have intercourse. But sometimes an image of the desired form will appear for some other reason, and the physiological process leading to ejaculation will occur. Avicenna's voluntary dreams stem from the pursuits of the day, but, unlike dreams in which the compositive imagination opposes images to forms received from the celestial intelligences, these are incoherent.

Another kind of incoherence concerns al-Ghazali (1058-1111)—the incoherence of the natural supernaturalism of his predecessors. In [The Incoherence of the Philosophers](#), primarily an attack on Avicenna's metaphysics and psychology al-Ghazali completely rejects the emanational theory of dreaming. By refuting the theory that the souls of the heavens are aware of the particulars that originate in the world, he challenges Avicenna's view that contact with these souls explains the mechanism of veridical dreams. Al-Ghazali dismisses as arbitrary the premise that if the souls of the heavens form representations of particular motions, they also form representations of their attendants and consequences. Such a premise is as insane as saying that if a man moves and knows his movement, he knows what necessarily follows from it, for example, the effect of his shadow on the places on which he walks or the change in his humors owing to the heat of moving. The details of future events are infinite and unknowable. Nor can we assume that the souls of the heavens are, unlike us, free from preoccupations that prevent them from apprehending particulars. Al-Ghazali regards the explanation of the philosophers as superfluous and idle: of course God enables the prophet to know hidden things, and of course God

or an angel enables people to know them through dreams.

In [The Revival of the Religious Sciences](#), al-Ghazali has swept away the complicated emanational apparatus but still assigns a crucial role to the imaginative faculty in the reception of veridical dreams. Desires and worldly activity obscure our vision of the Realm of the Unseen and the Kingdom, but for the prophets and saints while awake and for the rest of us while asleep, this realm can be unveiled. Unveiling in sleep is not as strong as waking vision, and one should only credit the dreams of the righteous and truthful. The greater the purity of heart of the dreamer, the more clearly he can see what will happen in the future.

Everything ordained by God from the beginning to the end of the world has been inscribed on the Tablet, which belongs to the Kingdom. The Tablet mirrors the entire destiny of the world, and the human heart mirrors the images of the Tablet. Desires and the senses veil the Tablet, but sleep, which quiets the senses so that they do not preoccupy the heart, raises the veil. Sleep does not disable the imaginative faculty, which takes the images mirrored by the Tablet onto the heart and imitates them. These images of images are lodged in the dreamer's memory upon awakening and require interpretation. The imitation or abstraction created by the imaginative faculty is symbolic, so an interpreter of dreams needs to investigate the correspondence between dream and imitation. Al-Ghazali gives an example told to Ibn Sinn, "I saw in a dream that in my hand I held a seal with which I could seal the mouths of men and the pudenda of women". Ibn Sirin correctly told the man that he was a muezzin. Since in his call to prayer in Ramadan a muezzin tries to prevent people from eating and drinking, the imaginative faculty mixed prevention and sealing and produced the image of a seal, which remained in the memory for interpretation. But this is the only example of a symbolic dream. The bulk of the chapter, "On the States of the Dead Which Have Been Known through Unveiling in Dreams" (156-69), catalogs messenger dreams in which the dead reveal their

current state or advise the living. These dreams require no interpretation. Since death rends the veil, all is revealed to the dead, who can appear to the living in dreams to comfort or to prophesy.

The most ardent Aristotelian of the philosophers writing in Arabic undertook a dialectical refutation, the *Destructio destructionum*, of al-Ghazali's *Des!ructio philosophorum*, to use the titles of their medieval Latin translations. In [The Incoherence of the Incoherence](#) (1179-81), Averroes restricts himself to persuasion, while reserving demonstration for his long commentaries on Aristotle. Consequently, he combats al-Ghazali's largely rhetorical arguments with more rhetoric. Averroes says that neither the necessity nor impossibility of the existence of an immaterial intellect that thinks things with all their consequences is self-evident, although the philosophers assert that they can prove its existence. Instead of offering this proof, he chides al-Ghazali for objecting to one part of the theory through another and declares that the differences between the souls of the heavenly bodies and of man are obscure and not suited for discussion in this context.

In [The Incoherence of the Incoherence](#), Averroes diverges from positions that he took in his most extensive discussion of dreams, the epitome or compendium of Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia*." Most of his account is consistent with those of the other Arabic Aristotelians. The imagination remains the most important psychological faculty, and the active intellect remains the crucial intermediary in the production of veridical dreams. Averroes divides dreams into true (i.e., prophetic) and false and, as usual, is much more interested in true dreams. He equates rejecting their existence with rejecting the existence of the objects of sense, for everyone has had dreams that warn of the future (3940). He even provides, although cursorily, a criterion for distinguishing true dreams from false other than their traditional occurrence at morning. The soul marvels and wonders at the true forms and occasionally awakens and is disturbed at their sight and amazed at their spiritual subtlety. He limits the causes of most false dreams (1) to the activity of

the imaginative faculty on the remnants of sense impressions—Averroes's own remnant of the Aristotelian definition of the dream—and on notions stored in the memorative and cogitative faculties" and (2) to natural desires of the soul such as lust and thirst.

Averroes offers the standard reasons for the primacy of the imaginative faculty in the production of dreams. Unlike the cogitative and memorative faculties, the imaginative continues to be active in sleep, and in fact is freer to act because it is not constrained by the cogitative faculty. He argues against the idea, advocated by al-Farabi and Avicenna, that dreams can furnish theoretical knowledge of divine matters and metaphysical principles, although he does allow that theoretical knowledge occasionally can be received in dreams. Divine solicitude for humanity is ultimately responsible for true dreams, which supplement the cogitative faculty by furnishing knowledge of what is beneficial or harmful in the future. Averroes infers that the active intellect is the intermediary that makes predictions of the future possible. Just as the human intellect does not possess the theoretical first principles of thought before they are furnished by the active intellect, the dreamer does not possess the premises that allow for prediction of the future before its intervention.

A major difficulty confronts Averroes that does not bother his predecessors. The active intellect, like all incorporeal intelligences, only thinks of universals, not of particulars, which are bound up with matter. How, then, can the active intellect reveal particular details of the future (43-4)? Averroes solves this problem by positing a new kind of interaction between the imaginative faculty and the active intellect. The imaginative faculty, which always works in conjunction with the storehouse of the cogitative and memorative faculties, has its own knowledge of particular things (52-3). The active intellect provides the imaginative faculty with knowledge of the universal nature—knowledge of causes—of the particular things that appear in the dream. The prediction of the future in a dream resembles one that a physician makes about

someone's health. Just as the physician combines a universal intelligible premise with a particular sensible premise, the imaginative faculty combines the universal intelligible premise received from the active intellect with its own knowledge of particulars. Consequently, veridical dreams only concern people and things known to the dreamer. In effect, the dream is a form of thinking under the control of the imaginative faculty, and this is appropriate, since the dream supplements the rational, cogitative faculty, which is limited in its ability to predict the future.

Most of the time the imaginative faculty presents something similar to the individual object that is the subject of the dream's prediction, not an image of the object itself.

This similar image is actually closer to the spiritual form of the object, that is, closer to the nature of the universal of which the object is a particular. In dreams, then, the imaginative faculty receives the conception of the intellect as perfectly as possible. Averroes does not insist upon this point, but it is extraordinary. The forms with which the imaginative faculty clothes intelligibles in dreams are the most accurate representations of intelligibles given to us. Although Averroes does not allow the reception of theoretical or metaphysical knowledge in dreams, he does allow the imaginative faculty to imitate the forms of universals.

In aspects of Artemidorus's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the only complete dream book from antiquity and a work that continues to inform books about dream symbolism to this day, the focus remains on conceptions and theories of dreams, not on the mechanics of dream interpretation. In other words, the focus is on what Dario Del Corno has termed the oneirological tradition, not the oneiromantic. The distinction between dream and vision does not receive much consideration, although the sections on the Arabic Aristotelians and Albertus Magnus have something to say about it. Nor do the many figurative uses of dream feature prominently, such as Pindar's "Man is the dream of a shadow,"

even though they are pervasive (e.g., "the American dream" or "I have a dream"). The only literary author treated in any detail is Homer and only because the Homeric poems antedate all other discussions of dreams in classical antiquity and contain a type of dream of exceptional importance, the "messenger dream" I also refer only in passing to the philosophical difficulty first raised in Plato, *Theatetus* 158c-e, and most notorious from Descartes's *First Meditation*: since we think we are awake when we are dreaming, how can we be sure when we are waking that we are not in fact dreaming? Finally, the focus is on the psychological aspects of dreaming rather than on the physiological theories of sleep and dreaming.

Especially as the book enters the early modern period, I am reluctant to try to identify the "dominant theories" or "most influential authors," although the temptation is occasionally too strong to resist. The scholarly literature gives no indication of the mass of writing about dreams from the beginning of printing to 1800. At the beginning of this work several years ago, a search of WorldCat for "insomniis," "insomnijs," "somniis" or "somnijs" in the tide of books yielded 733 results. Once combed through for duplicates, multiple editions and works by authors not from the early modern period, this list still contained 65 original items not listed in the bibliography to this book. A search for the other cases of *insomnium* and *somnium* turned up another 2,770 items. If one assumes that the same proportion applies, that would add another 249 works. But since the vast majority of these items contain *somnium*—Macrobius's *Somnium Scipionis* was a popular text—and many works with the nominative forms of the Latin dream words may be dream allegories or may not consider dreams literally, let us be conservative and throw away half of these 1,878 items and take 9 percent of the remainder. That still adds 165 for a total of 230 books in Latin—most of which no modern scholar has ever looked at. Of course, one would have to add works in the vernaculars. Not to mention the numerous treatises on philosophy, psychology and theology, as well as reference

works, in which dreams are discussed. Not to mention the periodical literature that becomes so important in the eighteenth century. The bibliography to this book is extensive, and I have not cited everything that I have read or consulted. But I do not flatter myself that I have read more than a small fraction of the works on dreaming from the early modern period. Until someone compiles and analyzes an unbiased sample of the relevant literature, we ought to acknowledge that we have only subjective impressions about dominant theories. I am convinced that Aristotle was the most influential writer on dreams until the beginning of the eighteenth century, and that Christian Wolff was the most influential theorist writing in that century, but claims about influence implicitly have a statistical component, and I have no numbers to support my impressions. *Caveat lector.*

Although the various contexts—social, national, institutional, religious and so on—in which ideas have originated and been transmitted are of course important, I have for the most part neglected them to concentrate on the ideas themselves. It is much easier to call for contextualization or utter truisms about its importance than actually to present a convincing account of the relations between ideas and the world. No one reads Ellenberger's invaluable *Discovery of the Unconscious* (1970) for his remarks about historical periods. Many of the concepts discussed in this book had an exceedingly tenacious life despite the disappearance of the social, political and religious worlds in which they developed. A survey of popular beliefs about dreams at the present would probably reveal that the most common one remains unchanged since the days of Homer—dreams are godsent revelations of the future—even though the gods and their modes of communication would vary considerably. It is reckless enough to try to write the history of conceptions of dreaming over more than two millennia; to pretend to contextualize ideas during that period would be silly.

What, then, does this book try to do? The three main chapters trace the history of ideas about dreaming during the period in which the admonitory dream was the main focus of learned interest—from the Homeric epics through the Renaissance—and the period in which it begins to become a secondary focus—the eighteenth century. With the exception of one excursion into the Arabic Aristotelians, the book is restricted to classical antiquity and Western Europe (England, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain), and the Arabs are included because their work mixed Aristotle with Neoplatonism and had such a profound influence on scholasticism. The proportions of the book may at first glance appear odd because the longest chapter deals with the ancient world, although the period from Homer to 500 CE contains far fewer discussions of dreaming than the period from 1500 to 1800. The chapter on antiquity tries to be comprehensive because that is when most of the conceptions of dreams important through the eighteenth century were first elaborated. Since much of the dream theory during the Middle Ages and Renaissance builds upon or argues against Aristotle's, Aristotelianism is the subject of half of the two chapters on the Middle Ages and the early modern period. By the eighteenth century, one need not have read Aristotle to believe that the incapacitation of the senses allows dreams to be taken for realities or to assign the imagination a prominent role in their production. Fundamentals of Aristotelian dream theory had become a common possession. Although all the important innovations in dream theory during the period of the admonitory dream are considered, the coverage becomes less comprehensive over time, since so many of the older conceptions remain remarkably tenacious. The organization of the three main chapters combines chronology and topics, and occasionally subjects appear out of chronological order (e.g., the discussion of Biblical dreams occurs in the chapter on the Middle Age; which also looks forward to the early modern period in the discussions of demonic dreams, classification and witchcraft). Usually authors are discussed solely in

terms of the contributions that they made to particular ways of understanding dreams. Only a few authors receive a more or less general exposition of their dream theory: Plato, the first author explicitly to discuss dreams as wish-fulfilling and revealing of character; Aristotle, since his dream theory was the most influential for almost 2,000 years; Albertus Magnus, who synthesized and supplemented Aristotelian dream theory during the Middle Ages; and Christian Wolff who did not devote a book to dreams but was the most innovative and influential writer about them in the eighteenth-century. This is not to say that other figures such as Julius Caesar Scaliger and Girolamo Cardano, the two Renaissance writers whose work on dreams has received the most scholarly attention, are not considered in detail, but the focus remains on aspects of their dream theory.

The first chapter, "The Ancient World," contains 12 sections. It begins with a general discussion of a prominent type of dream not often had today. In a "messenger dream" a figure appears to the dreamer and delivers a message such as an admonition to do something or a revelation of the future. The first section argues that this kind of dream, attested from the third millennium BCE to the present, should not be dismissed as a literary fiction, and the second section studies the messenger dreams in the Iliad and the Odyssey, the functions they serve, the kind of interpretation they require and the status of Dream as a messenger. The third section surveys the scant evidence for a conception of dreaming as a journey of the soul during sleep—a conception noted by anthropologists in many parts of the world but, curiously, almost completely neglected in classical antiquity. The fourth section concerns two ideas that will have an important history: the soul as the creator or site for dreams, and the allegorical dream as a form of divination. Belief in allegorical dreams made one profession possible—that of dream interpreter—and became part of another—medicine. The fifth section focuses on medicine, especially the fourth book of the Hippocratic *On Regimen*, Galen, and the practice

of incubation (sleeping in a sanctuary, usually of Asclepius, in the hope of a healing dream). From the medical tradition emerges one of the most important ideas about dreams—they can reveal health or illness, sometimes an illness that has not produced other symptoms—and this idea persists into the twentieth century (Vaschide and Pieron 1902). The brief section on Plato discusses the first explicit account of two other conceptions destined to have a long, important history—the dream as a revelation of character and of the wishes of the dreamer—and sets these ideas within the context of his theory of the tripartite soul. The seventh section is devoted to Aristotle and his often obscure, occasionally inconsistent dream theories in *On Sleep and Waking*, *On Dreams* and *On Divination in Sleep*. His technical conception of the dream as a remnant of sense impressions and a product of the perceptual part of the soul in its imaginative capacity would be reelaborated for centuries, and his analysis of the dream as a form of divination was an influential naturalistic challenge to the godsent dream. Epicurean and Ciceronian skepticism about the dream as godsent revelation is the subject of the eighth section, which focuses on Lucretius's account of the dream as a reflection of the pursuits, hopes and fears of the day and Cicero's scornful attack on all forms of divination. The ninth section deals with the numerous classifications of dreams in antiquity by physicians, philosophers and dream interpreters, from Herophilus to Macrobius, and the interrelations of the various systems. Some of these systems are more concerned with practical matters relating to interpretation—which dreams reveal the future?—and others with theoretical issues—how do dreams originate and how do they reveal the future? The tenth section traces the development—surprisingly late from a contemporary point of view—of the role of memory in the production of dreams, as well as the beginnings of a conception of the imagination as an image-producing, as opposed to an image-reproducing, power of the mind. These late fourth-century CE developments stem from Christian writers, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius of Pontus, Augustine, and one who became a Christian,

Synesius of Cyrene. Christian writers remain the center of the eleventh section because the greatest scrutiny of the dream as revelation of the dreamer's character is stimulated by the question, is the dreamer morally responsible for his dreams? Christians, especially monks, are particularly anxious about the innocence or sinfulness of wet dreams. Positions range from unqualified condemnation to resigned acceptance of a corporeal necessity, and the distinction between a nocturnal, dreamless emission and a wet dream often proves crucial. The twelfth section briefly describes indications of the purpose of dreams and Lactantius's theory that God has given us false dreams to protect sleep and true ones to learn of impending good or evil.

The second chapter, "The Middle Ages," contains five sections. The first concerns demonic dreams, the major innovation of Christian dream theory. Although pagan authors admit that a god might send a dream to deceive, this possibility does not become a significant anxiety or attract much attention by dream interpreters. But beginning with Tertullian's early second-century *On Me Soul*, the first systematic Christian discussion of dreams, devil-sent dreams become an obsession, even though not a single one is mentioned in the Bible. Belief in them probably contributes to the church's emphasis on the danger of putting any faith in dreams and on the importance of "discerning spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10). The second section explains the idiosyncratic but extremely influential classification of dreams by Gregory I, and the more systematic classifications based on origin or causes that become common in the Renaissance. Almost all of these classifications build upon an initial division into external/ eternal, supernatural/natural or extraordinary/ordinary. In the third section I describe the most innovative account of dreaming in the Middle Ages, the development of the symbolizing imagination by the Arabic philosophers al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Avicenna, al-Ghazah and Averroes. In their cosmological psychology, a heady mixture of Aristotle, Neoplatonism and Ptolemaic astronomy, they

ascribe creative, symbolizing powers to the imagination that go far beyond those of Synesius and other Greek Neoplatonists. Owing to Latin translations and the critical revision of their ideas by Albertus Magnus, the theory of the Arabic Aristotelians was very influential in Western Europe. Albert is the subject of the third and longest section of the chapter on the Middle Ages because his *On Sleep and Waking*, which takes the form of a commentary on Aristotle's three treatises, is more than a masterful synthesis of the Aristotelian tradition: he explicitly clarifies and supplements the philosopher. In the early *On Man*, his commitment to veridical dreams leads to some extraordinary interpretive ingenuity in trying to find a place in Aristotle for godsent dreams, but his final account more confidently abandons his guide on the subject of divination in dreams. Aside from the intrinsic interest of Albert's dream theory it deserves detailed study because of its influence well into the Renaissance. The fifth and final section deals with the role that conceptions of dreaming play in two aspects of witchcraft, transvection (the nocturnal flight of witches) and incubi (demons that lie upon or copulate with women). Opponents of the reality of transvection and demonic sex propose dreams as an alternative explanation, but most of them still concede the terrifying power of the devil to make people believe that their dreams are reality.

The longest section of the book opens the third chapter, 'The Early Modern Period,' for, when it comes to dream theory, Aristotle remains as much "the master of those who know" as he was for Dante and the Middle Ages. His ideas are pervasive even when unacknowledged, and even theorists who reject his views, like Hobbes, end up working with them. Scaliger and Cardano engage as much with Aristotle as with the titular subjects of their works, Hippocrates and Synesius. This first section studies some of the many uses of Aristotle, as well as the severe criticism by Francisco Sanches in his attack on divination, and pays special attention to the development of the role of memory in dreams, a topic not treated by Aristotle that becomes part of Aristotelianism. The second section

considers the innovations of Christian Wolff, whose originality and influence have not been recognized in the scholarly literature. Taking a fundamentally Aristotelian idea as his point of departure—"Dreams are nothing other than images"—Wolff introduces in *Rational Thoughts on God, the World, and the Soul of Man*, as well as *All Things In General* (1720) three ideas that set the terms of debate for much eighteenth-century dream theory: (1) every dream originates in a sensation dimly perceived during sleep; (2) dreams are either simple or composite; (3) the dream is an intermediate state between sleeping and waking. The third section discusses the embarrassment of supernatural dreams. Since the Old Testament, the Judeo-Christian tradition has been ambivalent about dreams; warnings against trusting them go hand in hand with admissions that God has sent some of them. In the Enlightenment, the admonitory dreams in the Bible force many writers into an uneasy compromise. Yes, God used to send them but not in our day, when (one often reads) only the superstitious believe in them. On the one hand, many concede that godsent dreams remain theoretically possible but then try to explain away all purported instances as chains of associations of the dreamer's experience. On the other hand, people like Cowper explicitly object to the "not in our day" argument, and others raise the stakes by insisting that rejecting supernatural dreams requires rejecting all of revelation. The fourth section moves beyond the admonitory dream to survey some of the old and new observations about what dreams are and do rather than what they signify about the future. Two of the oldest ideas—dreams reveal the dreamer's character and the state of her body—become prominent in new ways. Some theorists debate just what aspects of character are revealed or even whether it is revealed at all, and a growing number of others view dreams as revealing insanity. Two old topics receive new empirical treatments. The morning dream, long thought likely to be more veridical than ones from earlier in the night, begins to be thought clearer because the brain is approaching its waking state, and the rule of opposites in dream interpretation

yields to contrariety as one of the laws of association determining the dream's development. A few other examples of the shift from significance to observation—sleepwalking, problem-solving and creativity, and unusual memories—and to the purposes of dreaming conclude the chapter.

Nineteenth-century dream theory cannot be primarily studied as an engagement with ancient ideas and would require a book of its own because it witnesses an explosion of empirical work of the sort that becomes popular in the eighteenth century. One important aspect of nineteenth-century dream theory is discussed in an epilogue on Freud and De Sanctis, who emblematically published important books in 1899. Freud, arguing against what he incorrectly takes to be the dominant theory of the dream as psychologically insignificant, revives and universalizes one of the ancient conceptions of the significant dream, its representation of a fulfilled wish. While Freud is concerned with the old questions, "What does the dream mean, and how do we interpret it?", De Sanctis, who also sees dreams as meaningful, offers a synthesis of nineteenth-century research into the question, "What is a dream?", and represents the Enlightenment transition from particular facts to general laws. Although Freud's theories dominated the first half of the twentieth century, the approach represented by De Sanctis, little known as he is, has become standard since the discovery of REM sleep.

The earliest interest in the dream stems from the desire to know the future, and the young Leopardi was probably right: "There was perhaps no superstition more common among the ancients than that of regarding dreams as portending some event". But not only among the ancient Greeks and Romans. Lombroso affirms that the belief in revelation in dreams has been so widespread throughout human history that the number of nations that believe in dreams may outnumber those that believe in a god (1890, 184). Google abundantly shows that belief in dreams as a form of divination or admonition is very much alive today, as do the innumerable manuals descended from Artemidorus's second-century CE *Interpretation of*

Dreams. Within Christianity and Islam (not to mention other religions) dreams continue to serve as sources of revelation (Bulkeley, Adams and Davis 2009). A recent survey of 81 commuters in Boston found that 68 percent reported a belief that dreams foretell the future (Morewedge and Norton 2009, 253). Even in a collection of contemporary perspectives ranging from neuroscience to anthropology (Barrett and McNamara 2007) one finds a plea for telepathic, out-of-body and precognitive dreams (Krippner 2007). Most of us have probably heard stories like the ones in the next two paragraphs.

The morning after an earthquake in southern California in 2008, I was chatting with the custodian of my office building in the usual postquake fashion dear to Angelinos. Lowering his voice to a confidential tone, he asked me whether I believed in dreams. Before I had time to reply, he told me the dream he had had that night: a tsunami triggered by a devastating earthquake destroyed Santa Barbara. This dream assured him that the big one would occur within 30 days, and he was preparing to move his extended family to Texas. He urged me to leave, too. And before a month had passed, he was gone.

During the massive but futile search for Randy Morgenson in California's Sierra Nevada in 1996, his wife was initially unconcerned. Her husband, after all, had 30 years of experience as a backcountry ranger. Yet two nights of dreams of "a man with a backpack floating at the bottom of the lake" convinced her that something was truly wrong. For years she continued to believe that her husband was under water. One of the search and rescue rangers had a dream "of Randy stumbling into his camp and collapsing on his tent" and interpreted it as "a message not to give up". Another ranger had a dream that he took as a sign of where Randy was, and two other rangers vainly searched the lake in the dream. A hiker, whose partner said she had "psychic capabilities," had a dream or vision of a man in distress, desperately trying to free himself. Randy's body was eventually discovered, and he may have broken through ice on a pond

and drowned. Given his wife's dream and the psychic's vision, Randy's death "holds something for those with an appetite for the supernatural".

All of these dreamers believed that they had received an admonition concerning the present or future, although it is not clear whether they thought that God had sent it. Be that as it may, belief in divination in dreams shows no sign of disappearing, and one reason is not far to seek. As long as people believe in an omnipotent deity, they will find it difficult to disbelieve in the possibility of divine revelation through dreams. It is hard to see how to disbelieve without doubting omnipotence.

It would be, therefore, to limit Him, to affirm that a revelation by dreams was antecedently impossible.—priggish and impertinent to say that it was antecedently absurd. The unanimous voice, nemine contradicente, must be, that He could so reveal Himself, if He would; the general voice is, that it is possible He does; the more restricted opinion is that He does; and there is, in addition, an inner circle of persons who profess to have personal evidence, not of the possibility, not of the probability, but of the actuality of such illuminations.

Categorically denying the existence of godsent dreams is the province of atheists. Although the admonitory dream no longer concerns most scientists, for millions of people it remains as much the mystical usurper of the mind as it was during the period studied in this book.

Aristotle Arabicus: The Symbolizing Imagination
Philosophers writing in Arabic—al-Kindi (d. ca. 870), al-Farabi (ca. 870-ca. 950), Avicenna (980-1037) and Averroes (ca. 1126-98)--developed the most innovative account of dreaming in the Middle Ages, and, thanks to translations into Latin and to criticism and revision by Albertus Magnus (ca. 1200-80), their account was very influential in the Latin west. All of these Arabic authors depend upon the Aristotelian tradition, but even a cursory look at their work reveals a major divergence from

Aristotle himself. Although Averroes, for example, plainly states that the peripatetic philosophers held that God is the cause of warnings in dreams, Aristotle stoutly denies the existence of godsent dreams and implies that dreams have no connection with the divine. In addition to the general implausibility of godsent dreams, it is, in Aristotle's view, absurd to say that God sends dreams and that He sends them not to the best and most intelligent but to ordinary people (*On Divination in Sleep* 462b20-2; cf. 464a20-2). Aristotle also states that since some animals dream, dreams could not be sent by God (463b12-14). Dreams may foretell the future but not owing to anything supernatural: they may be signs, causes or coincidences of things that come to pass. The theories of the Arabic Aristotelians could be described, to borrow Carlyle's phrase, as natural supernaturalism. They do not consider dreams as immediate revelations from God; instead, they acknowledge and try to explain prophetic dreams emanating from the active intellect.

Nevertheless, the Arabic philosophers may not have thought that they were diverging significantly from Aristotle because the *Parva Naturalia* known to them very likely—no translation into Arabic has yet been discovered—included a section on veridical dreams not in the Greek. In the "Epistle concerning Dreams" attributed to Avicenna, the author gives Aristotle's opinion on dream visions from the *Area Naturalia*. When God decrees a chain of causes concerning a man, He may warn him through the intermediary of the active intellect by showing his soul a representation of what will happen to him in the future. The cause of veridical dream visions is God (Pines 1974, 120-1). In his commentary (ca. 1280) on Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*, Zerahyah ben Isaac cites the *Parva Naturalia* to very similar effect: the ground and cause of the true dream vision is the Creator (Ravitzky 1981-1982). A short text purporting to follow Aristotle on dreams combines views recognizably from the *Parva Naturalia* with others that are not: the union of the dreamer with the active intellect and the divine vision of the soul (Gatje 1971, 85-8 and

132-4). Another text purporting to translate Aristotle on dreams but bearing a slight relationship to his works—MS Rampur (India) 1752--does contain the "Aristotelian" passages from Avicenna and Zerahyah and was known to other medieval Muslim and Jewish writers. Consequently, when the Arabic philosophers developed explanations for veridical dreams, they probably thought that they were elaborating Aristotelian doctrine. Nor should one forget that Aristotle's early dialogues contain a messenger dream and passages about the prophetic powers of the soul when not dominated by the body. One of these passages, in fact, is preserved by al-Kindi.

Al-Kindi does not state that veridical dreams are godsent in *On Sleep and Vision*, but he does attribute extraordinary cognitive powers to the soul when asleep. For al-Kindi, sleep occurs when healthy individuals cease using their senses. Since the senses are inactive, the most important faculty of the soul in the production of dreams is the form making, which, al-Kindi says, the Greeks call *phantasia*. The form-making faculty presents individual forms abstracted from matter, while the senses present forms contained in matter. Although active while we are both awake and asleep, the form-making faculty is stronger in sleep, since it is not distracted by the senses: it can perceive forms more clearly and vividly. The form-making faculty has another advantage over the senses; it can make us know things that the senses cannot. It can compose sensible forms, for example, a feathered man or a talking animal. In dreams, we think without using our senses. Although al-Kindi assigns striking cognitive significance to the imagination, to give his form-making faculty its traditional name, he does not say how it does its work—whether, for example, it composes new forms out of remnants of sense impressions or out of memories.

Nor, despite distinguishing different kinds of veridical dreams, does al-Kindi explain in detail how they can predict the future. He begins with a proposition that he attributes to Plato and Aristotle: the soul by nature possesses knowledge and is the site of the forms of sensible and intelligible things."

Apparently al-Kindi assumes that the soul by nature, at least potentially, knows the past, present and future. But he does not say so explicitly or, like later Arabic philosophers, provide an emanationist account in which knowledge passes from divine intermediaries to the human soul, even though in an astrological treatise he states that the past and present are inscribed in the celestial harmony of the universe, and that many believe that incorporeal substances reveal to men many things not founded in sense or reason. Instead, al-Kindi baldly asserts that the soul, which is knowledgeable, awake and alive, indicates things before they happen, either through symbols or directly. There are four kinds of dreams, depending on the soul's capacity to receive and its freedom from disturbance: (1) clear dreams that announce things as they will occur; (2) symbolic dreams that foretell the future (e.g, flying foretells a journey); (3) symbolic dreams that foretell the opposite of what will happen (e.g, seeing a poor man who later becomes rich); (4) confused dreams that foretell nothing. Al-Kindi assigns a pivotal role to the form-making faculty in the production of dreams but neglects to explain its role in these four kinds. Does it, for example, produce the clear dreams, which are received as they will occur? For a more systematic account of dreaming, imagination and prophecy one must turn to his successors.

The dream theory of al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes forms part of what one might call their cosmological psychology, a dizzying combination of Aristotelian incorporeal movers and psychology, Neoplatonic emanationism and Ptolemaic astronomy. Al-Farabi may have been responsible for integrating the Ptolemaic universe with AristotelianNeoplatonic metaphysics and psychology, or he may have found the integration in an unknown source. In his late work, *The Principles of the Views of the City of the Best City*, an incorporeal first cause (God) presides over the universe, which consists of nine concentric celestial spheres with their nine incorporeal movers (also called intellects or intelligences) and the

sublunar world, governed by the tenth and last incorporeal intelligence, the active intellect. The nine celestial spheres that rotate around the immobile sublunary world are the first heaven, the outer sphere which rotates around the earth once every 24 hours and which imparts its diurnal motion to the spheres within it; the sphere of the fixed stars; and the seven spheres containing the known planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the sun, Venus, Mercury and the moon. In Aristotle, the incorporeal movers only cause the motion of their spheres, not their being, and their motion does not descend hierarchically, but in al-Farabi a Neoplatonic system of emanations accounts for the existence and order of the spheres. The first intellect eternally emanates from the first cause and thinks two thoughts: of the first cause and of its own essence. From its first thought, the second intellect proceeds, and from its second thought, the first sphere itself proceeds. This process repeats itself. The second intellect, by thinking of the first cause, produces the third intellect, and, by thinking of its own essence, produces its own sphere. And so on down to the ninth intellect, which produces the sphere of the moon.

Now comes the linchpin of the whole system, at least as far as veridical dreams are concerned. The ninth intellect emanates a tenth and final one, the active (or agent) intellect of Aristotle and his commentators, and the active intellect governs the sublunary world, the world of coming-to-be and passing away. The brief discussion of the active intellect in *De anima* 3.5 is notoriously obscure and has provided Aristotle's commentators, ancient and modern, with many opportunities for speculation and disagreement. The active intellect (or reason)—a phrase not in fact used by Aristotle but reasonably inferred from the context and adopted by his ancient commentators—can have a separate existence and is eternal (430a22-3). The active intellect is invoked to explain how humans think—how the potentiality of thought is actualized—since there must be something in the soul that acts as a cause and actualizes its potential, just as in the rest of nature. Although Aristotle only states that there is

in the soul one intellect that becomes all things and another that makes all things, he was taken by his Arabic followers to mean that the active intellect actualizes the potential intellect. In the Arabic Aristotelians the active intellect is the final incorporeal emanation descending from the first cause and produces thought in the human potential or material intellect. But the active intellect, which al-Farabi identifies with the Holy Spirit, the angel of revelation, not only explains how humans come to use their potential to think but also accounts for the dreaming mind's access to knowledge of past, present and future.

The active intellect forms a bridge between the celestial spheres and the human soul and its faculties. For al-Farabi, the most important of these faculties for dreaming is the imagination, which is even more active and important than in Synesius's theory the nearest analogue from Greco-Roman antiquity. In sleep, according to al-Farabi; the imagination is free from sense impressions and does not have to serve the rational and appetitive faculties. The imagination performs three functions. The first two involve the preservation of images, since al-Farabi does not regard memory as an independent faculty and describes the imagination as remembering and recollecting (179). The imagination not only retains sense impressions but also combines and separates them. Synesius also attributes to the imagination the ability to combine and separate images (18.3) but not to preserve them: they light upon it from the outside (16.1). The third function that al-Farabi assigns to the imagination has no Greek precedent—imitation.

The imagination can imitate sensibles, intelligibles, the nutritive and appetitive faculties and the temperament of the body. The imagination imitates sense objects by combining the sensibles that it has preserved. Although al-Farabi does not say so, presumably this is how he would account for what might be considered the reproduction of a memory image in a dream. When the appetitive faculties are involved, the imitation can produce within the body the same actions as the emotions themselves. The imagination imitates the actions that the

emotion would produce before the emotion itself occurs. When, for example, the temperament of the body would lead to a desire for sexual intercourse, the imagination prepares the appropriate organs for intercourse; the desire for intercourse is not actual, only imitated.

"Express in symbols" would be another way to render the Arabic word used by al-Farabi for imitate, and this meaning is required for the imitation of the intelligibles and of the temperament. Imitation or symbolization of the temperament comes from the medical tradition that some dreams represent the condition of the body, although the physicians do not specify the role of the imagination in the process, and al-Farabi does not mention the diagnostic benefits of dream interpretation. One of al-Farabi's examples recalls his Greek predecessors, although, unlike them, he does not take the dream as a sign of disease. If the imagination finds that the temperament is moist, it imitates moist sensibles, like water and swimming. Since the imagination can only imitate intelligibles with sensibles, it represents them symbolically. For example, the most perfect intelligibles such as the first cause or the heavens are represented by beautiful things.

The imagination can imitate intelligibles provided not only by the rational faculty, as in the last example, but also by the active intellect, and this is how divination occurs in dreams. In addition to actualizing the human potential intellect, the active intellect acts in some unspecified way upon the imagination by providing it with intelligibles and sensibles. As with intelligibles received from the rational faculty, the imagination has to imitate intelligibles received from the active intellect with sensibles. But the sensibles themselves can be represented directly as received or indirectly by means of other sensibles. These different kinds of reception and imitation can occur in sleeping and in waking, and form a rather complicated hierarchy of visionary experience. The stages range from the utmost perfection of the imagination, waking vision of present and future events and vision of things divine in symbolic form, to enigmatic, allegorical

dreams. In sleep the imagination usually receives sensibles from the active intellect, rarely intelligibles. But in all cases true dreams or visions come from the active intellect, the last immaterial link in the chain of emanations descending from the first cause. Al-Farabi makes the active intellect ultimately responsible for veridical dreams, but he does not explain how it knows all present and future events. Avicenna supplies an explanation for such knowledge and also modifies the role of the imagination and other psychological faculties.

In his *De anima*, widely known in Europe after 1150 in the Latin translation of Dominicus Gundissalinus, Avicenna distinguishes five internal faculties or senses: common sense, retentive or formative imagination, estimation, the custodial or memorative faculty, and compositive imagination. Unlike al-Farabi, Avicenna requires two kinds of imagination because he believes that the same faculty cannot receive and retain an object. He adds estimation because there are two different objects of internal sensation, the forms of sensibles and the intentions of sensibles. Consequently, his first four faculties form two pairs: the common sense receives the forms of sensibles, and the retentive imagination retains them, while the estimation receives intentions, and the memorative faculty retains them. The compositive imagination combines and divides forms stored in the retentive imagination and intentions stored in the memorative faculty; its activity in sleep is responsible for dreams.

This normal activity of the compositive imagination can be blocked by the soul in three ways. First, when the common sense and the retentive imagination are occupied by the external senses, the compositive imagination does not retrieve images from the retentive imagination for combining or dividing. Second, when the intellect takes control of the compositive imagination and common sense to combine and separate images in accordance with something that the soul desires, the compositive imagination is not free to act on its own but is led by the intellect. Third, when the intellect calls the compositive imagination away from

images that do not resemble external things and declares that they are false, the compositive imagination cannot fashion such images. But these impediments are removed in sleep, and the compositive imagination can join with the retentive imagination and send images to the common sense. These images are then seen as if they had come from the outside.

In specifying these impediments to the compositive imagination, Avicenna is extending Aristotle's analysis of the psychological conditions that make dreaming possible. Aristotle's point of departure—his characterization of sleep as an immobilization of the perceptual part of the soul—almost comes in as an afterthought for Avicenna (33), since he is more concerned with the workings of the internal senses. In keeping with this focus Avicenna also goes into a bit more detail about the process that al-Farabi calls imitation. The compositive imagination searches the two repositories of images, the retentive imagination and the memorative faculty, and produces forms that are similar, opposite or related to the ones found there. Avicenna notes that there are particular reasons for the different transformations but does not enumerate them. Something coming from the senses, intellect, estimation or the supernal region is responsible for the particularization.

The clarity and clairvoyance of dreams depend on the activity of the compositive imagination. When it does not distract the intellect from contemplation, the sleeping soul can join with the supernal region, which comprises the souls of the celestial spheres and the incorporeal intelligences (including the active intellect), and can apprehend the truth of things and retain them unaltered. Avicenna gives a fuller explanation of the celestial intelligences' knowledge of everything present, past and future in the "Letter on the Soul of the Sphere". Each celestial movement is set in motion by an intelligence that understands the particulars appropriate to it and represents to itself the ends toward which movements lead in this world as well as this world itself with its particulars. Consequently, the intelligences represent things that will occur in

the future, since their existence necessarily follows from (1) the relations between movements attached to these intelligences, (2) the relations between things here below and (3) the relations between these things and movements above. In this deterministic world, anything that represents to itself all current situations and their evolution also represents to itself events that will necessarily follow from them. Since all past situations are simultaneously present to the movers of the celestial bodies, all future situations are equally present to them. So when the practical intellect is joined to the forms of things past, present and future, it uses the compositive imagination to turn the forms of particulars into images that do not require interpretation. In veridical dreams, people usually see things that pertain to themselves, their families, cities or regions. There are two special instances of this kind of clear, prophetic dream. One often sees the interpretation of the dream in the dream itself when the intellect moves from the form to the image and back to the form; Avicenna calls this recollection. Or the action of the intellect is often imagined again as if someone were speaking to it through the compositive imagination. In addition, sometimes there is clear dream vision without the conjunction of the soul with the celestial intelligences; the compositive imagination on its own presents a true image. True dreams occur to those whose soul has been accustomed to speak the truth and to conquer false imaginings. They usually occur in the morning when cogitations are at rest and the motions of the humors have finished; the compositive imagination is not impeded by the body nor separated from the retentive imagination or the memorative faculty, so it best can serve the soul and receive the form that reaches it. Moreover, people of more temperate complexion have true dreams, especially people accustomed to telling the truth, since lying makes the compositive imagination disobey correction from the reason.

Avicenna mentions two other kinds of emanational dreams. First, when the compositive imagination opposes images comparable to the form that the soul receives, they are retained instead of the form,

and interpretation is necessary. More people have dreams of this kind than ones that require no interpretation. When the soul has been concerned about something during the day, in sleep the compositive imagination produces an image contrary to that concern. This restriction to contraries is unprecedented in discussions of dreams that reflect the pursuits of the day. Second, when the compositive imagination is so active that it interrupts the intellect's reception of a form from the celestial intelligences, the images are too confused for meaningful interpretation.

Not all dreams, however, are true or need to be heeded. The compositive imagination does not always represent emanations from the celestial intelligences. More frequently, in fact, it represents things closer to it; some of these are natural but others are voluntary. Natural dreams occur when the compositive imagination represents bodily or humoral states. When, for example, there is an urge to expel sperm, the compositive imagination represents the form of the person with whom one is accustomed to have intercourse. But sometimes an image of the desired form will appear for some other reason, and the physiological process leading to ejaculation will occur. Avicenna's voluntary dreams stem from the pursuits of the day, but, unlike dreams in which the compositive imagination opposes images to forms received from the celestial intelligences, these are incoherent.

Another kind of incoherence concerns al-Ghazali (1058-1111)—the incoherence of the natural supernaturalism of his predecessors. In [The Incoherence of the Philosophers](#), primarily an attack on Avicenna's metaphysics and psychology al-Ghazali completely rejects the emanational theory of dreaming. By refuting the theory that the souls of the heavens are aware of the particulars that originate in the world, he challenges Avicenna's view that contact with these souls explains the mechanism of veridical dreams. Al-Ghazali dismisses as arbitrary the premise that if the souls of the heavens form representations of particular motions, they also form representations of their attendants and consequences. Such a premise is as

insane as saying that if a man moves and knows his movement, he knows what necessarily follows from it, for example, the effect of his shadow on the places on which he walks or the change in his humors owing to the heat of moving. The details of future events are infinite and unknowable. Nor can we assume that the souls of the heavens are, unlike us, free from preoccupations that prevent them from apprehending particulars. Al-Ghazal" regards the explanation of the philosophers as superfluous and idle: of course God enables the prophet to know hidden things, and of course God or an angel enables people to know them through dreams.

In [The Revival of the Religious Sciences](#), al-Ghazali has swept away the complicated emanational apparatus but still assigns a crucial role to the imaginative faculty in the reception of veridical dreams. Desires and worldly activity obscure our vision of the Realm of the Unseen and the Kingdom, but for the prophets and saints while awake and for the rest of us while asleep, this realm can be unveiled. Unveiling in sleep is not as strong as waking vision, and one should only credit the dreams of the righteous and truthful. The greater the purity of heart of the dreamer, the more clearly he can see what will happen in the future.

Everything ordained by God from the beginning to the end of the world has been inscribed on the Tablet, which belongs to the Kingdom. The Tablet mirrors the entire destiny of the world, and the human heart mirrors the images of the Tablet. Desires and the senses veil the Tablet, but sleep, which quiets the senses so that they do not preoccupy the heart, raises the veil. Sleep does not disable the imaginative faculty, which takes the images mirrored by the Tablet onto the heart and imitates them. These images of images are lodged in the dreamer's memory upon awakening and require interpretation. The imitation or abstraction created by the imaginative faculty is symbolic, so an interpreter of dreams needs to investigate the correspondence between dream and imitation. Al-Ghazali gives an example told to Ibn Sinn, "I saw in a dream that in my hand I held a seal with which

I could seal the mouths of men and the pudenda of women". Ibn Sirin correctly told the man that he was a muezzin. Since in his call to prayer in Ramadan a muezzin tries to prevent people from eating and drinking, the imaginative faculty mixed prevention and sealing and produced the image of a seal, which remained in the memory for interpretation. But this is the only example of a symbolic dream. The bulk of the chapter, "On the States of the Dead Which Have Been Known through Unveiling in Dreams" (156-69), catalogs messenger dreams in which the dead reveal their current state or advise the living. These dreams require no interpretation. Since death rends the veil, all is revealed to the dead, who can appear to the living in dreams to comfort or to prophesy.

The most ardent Aristotelian of the philosophers writing in Arabic undertook a dialectical refutation, the *Destructio destructionum*, of al-Ghazali's *De!ructio philosophorum*, to use the titles of their medieval Latin translations. In [The Incoherence of the incoherence](#) (1179-81), Averroes restricts himself to persuasion, while reserving demonstration for his long commentaries on Aristotle. Consequently, he combats al-Ghazali's largely rhetorical arguments with more rhetoric. Averroes says that neither the necessity nor impossibility of the existence of an immaterial intellect that thinks things with all their consequences is self-evident, although the philosophers assert that they can prove its existence. Instead of offering this proof, he chides al-Ghazali for objecting to one part of the theory through another and declares that the differences between the souls of the heavenly bodies and of man are obscure and not suited for discussion in this context.

In [The Incoherence of the Incoherence](#), Averroes diverges from positions that he took in his most extensive discussion of dreams, the epitome or compendium of Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia*." Most of his account is consistent with those of the other Arabic Aristotelians. The imagination remains the most important psychological faculty, and the active intellect remains the crucial intermediary in the production of veridical dreams. Averroes

divides dreams into true (i.e., prophetic) and false and, as usual, is much more interested in true dreams. He equates rejecting their existence with rejecting the existence of the objects of sense, for everyone has had dreams that warn of the future (3940). He even provides, although cursorily, a criterion for distinguishing true dreams from false other than their traditional occurrence at morning. The soul marvels and wonders at the true forms and occasionally awakens and is disturbed at their sight and amazed at their spiritual subtlety. He limits the causes of most false dreams (1) to the activity of the imaginative faculty on the remnants of sense impressions—Averroes's own remnant of the Aristotelian definition of the dream—and on notions stored in the memorative and cogitative faculties" and (2) to natural desires of the soul such as lust and thirst.

Averroes offers the standard reasons for the primacy of the imaginative faculty in the production of dreams. Unlike the cogitative and memorative faculties, the imaginative continues to be active in sleep, and in fact is freer to act because it is not constrained by the cogitative faculty. He argues against the idea, advocated by al-Farabi and Avicenna, that dreams can furnish theoretical knowledge of divine matters and metaphysical principles, although he does allow that theoretical knowledge occasionally can be received in dreams. Divine solicitude for humanity is ultimately responsible for true dreams, which supplement the cogitative faculty by furnishing knowledge of what is beneficial or harmful in the future. Averroes infers that the active intellect is the intermediary that makes predictions of the future possible. Just as the human intellect does not possess the theoretical first principles of thought before they are furnished by the active intellect, the dreamer does not possess the premises that allow for prediction of the future before its intervention.

A major difficulty confronts Averroes that does not bother his predecessors. The active intellect, like all incorporeal intelligences, only thinks of universals, not of particulars, which are bound up with matter. How, then, can the active intellect reveal particular

details of the future (43-4)? Averroes solves this problem by positing a new kind of interaction between the imaginative faculty and the active intellect. The imaginative faculty, which always works in conjunction with the storehouse of the cogitative and memorative faculties, has its own knowledge of particular things (52-3). The active intellect provides the imaginative faculty with knowledge of the universal nature—knowledge of causes—of the particular things that appear in the dream. The prediction of the future in a dream resembles one that a physician makes about someone's health. Just as the physician combines a universal intelligible premise with a particular sensible premise, the imaginative faculty combines the universal intelligible premise received from the active intellect with its own knowledge of particulars. Consequently, veridical dreams only concern people and things known to the dreamer. In effect, the dream is a form of thinking under the control of the imaginative faculty, and this is appropriate, since the dream supplements the rational, cogitative faculty, which is limited in its ability to predict the future.

Most of the time the imaginative faculty presents something similar to the individual object that is the subject of the dream's prediction, not an image of the object itself.

This similar image is actually closer to the spiritual form of the object, that is, closer to the nature of the universal of which the object is a particular. In dreams, then, the imaginative faculty receives the conception of the intellect as perfectly as possible. Averroes does not insist upon this point, but it is extraordinary. The forms with which the imaginative faculty clothes intelligibles in dreams are the most accurate representations of intelligibles given to us. Although Averroes does not allow the reception of theoretical or metaphysical knowledge in dreams, he does allow the imaginative faculty to imitate the forms of universals. <>

[The Derveni Papyrus: Unearthing Ancient Mysteries](#)
edited by Marco Antonio Santamaría

[Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava, Brill,
9789004384842]

[The Derveni Papyrus: Unearthing Ancient Mysteries](#)

is devoted to this fascinating and challenging document, discovered in 1962 in a tomb in Derveni, near Thessaloniki, and dated c. 340-320 BCE. It contains a text probably written at the end of 5th c. BCE, which after some reflections on minor divinities and unusual cults, comments upon a poem attributed to Orpheus from an allegorical and philosophical perspective. This volume focuses on the restoration and conservation of the papyrus, the ideas of the anonymous author about Erinyes and daimons, the quoted Orphic poem in comparison with Hesiod's Theogony and Parmenides' poem, the exegetical approach of the commentator, his cosmogonic system, his attitude regarding mystery cults and his peculiar theology.

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Excerpt: More than fifty years have passed since the chance discovery of the Derveni Papyrus among the remains of a pyre heaped on the tomb of a distinguished Macedonian warrior, dated to the last third of the fourth century BC, not far from Thessaloniki. Although scholars have been familiar with the bulk of its text since the unauthorised publication of the preliminary text of the papyrus in 1982 (ZPE 47), the long-awaited editio princeps, by K. Tsantsanoglou and G. M. Parássoglou, with an introduction and commentary by Th. Kouremenos, did not appear until 2006 as vol. XIII of the prestigious series *Studi e Testi per il Corpus dei Papiri Filosofici Greci e Latini* published by Leo S. Olschki in Florence. Mainly based on this text and on Janko's interim version (2002), Bernabé published his own edition, with a detailed critical apparatus, in the third volume of his *Orphica* (2007). Since then, scholars have rightly felt that they could finally found their investigations on a firm basis, at least for columns VII to XXVI.

Indeed, after these editions appeared, two international conferences on the papyrus have been held: one at Washington's Center for Hellenic Studies in July 2008, the papers of which were published (with some significant additions) by I. Papadopoulou and L. Muellner in 2014, and the other at the University of Salamanca in May 2012, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the papyrus' discovery, contributions from which are brought together in this volume. To these papers, two new pieces by Chiara Ferella and Radcliffe G. Edmonds III have been added. In contrast to previous monographs and edited volumes on the Derveni Papyrus, the two aforementioned works arising from these conferences are the first to take into account the text of the *editio princeps* and that of Bernabé, as well as the new reconstructions and readings of the first four columns proposed by R. Janko and F. Ferrari. An autoptic inspection of the papyrus forms the basis of two important new editions of the first six columns: that of V. Piano and that of R. Janko, who has also made use of a large number of microphotographs. The latter author has published (2016) his most important readings for the first columns, including a possible quotation of Parmenides' fr. 1.1 in col. 0, and is preparing a complete edition and commentary of the papyrus along with M. Kotwick (who has accepted Janko's new text of the papyrus in her translation into German and commentary on the document, 2017). These recent textual proposals of Piano, Janko and Kotwick have been considered in all chapters.

Besides these efforts on the *constitutio textus* of the Derveni Papyrus, in recent years plenty of publications have delved into vital issues, such as the aim of the work, the personality of its author, the congruence between the description of rites and the allegorical commentary, and the meaning of specific passages, as evidenced by the abundant and varied bibliography included at the end of the volume. Traditionally, scholars have envisaged the papyrus as an *unicum*, an exceptional document in many regards: it has been viewed as the oldest European book, the only papyrus found in Greece, the earliest preserved

commentary on a poem, the first testimony of Orphic literature, a bizarre cosmogony, and a puzzling mixture of religion and philosophy. However, many of these assumptions are being reconsidered and nuanced in the light of new discoveries (such as the papyrus from the "tomb of the musician" in Daphni, near Athens, dated to 430–420 BC) and the detailed comparison of the Papyrus with similar texts, which reveal striking parallels. Thus, the analytical tool of interpreting divine names through etymology can be traced back to Akkadian hermeneutic commentaries of the first millennium BC, as argued by M. L. West (1997) and, more extensively, by J. Myerston (2013). Its cosmogony is not whimsical, but has a rationale, albeit one that is sometimes difficult to discern, given its fragmentary exposition and the lacunae of the document. In this volume, A. Bernabé shows that the different stages of the cosmogony precisely correspond to the successive divine reigns in the poem. Some of the interests and approaches of the Derveni author can also be identified in contemporary figures in literature and philosophy. I. Papadopoulou (2014) has noted that in books II, III and X of Plato's *Republic* Socrates discusses a number of Homeric and Hesiodic verses on gods, daimons, heroes, death, and the underworld, and criticises the traditional visions they convey—a stance which can be compared with the commentator's attitude. I have argued that the character of Tiresias in Euripides'

Bacchae portrays (and satirises) a common type in Athens in his day: the learned priest or seer who justifies a traditional myth by recourse to current philosophical ideas, a group to which the Derveni author probably belonged. Moreover, his combined interest in physics and daimons and the allegoresis of gods as physical elements is paralleled by Empedocles and Kotwick and by the early Stoics. It was the comparison of the Derveni Papyrus with these philosophers that led to the formation of the "Stoic hypothesis," first introduced by F. Casadesús, who claims that many doctrines of the papyrus concerning divination, Heraclitus' philosophy, the cosmic role of fire, Zeus, and the

Moira, and the allegorical interpretation of poetic texts are very similar to those held by early Stoics, to the extent that the papyrus ought to be considered a Stoic document if this were not impeded by the standard dating. This approach has been adopted by L. Brisson. In this vein, C. Megino highlights some remarkable similarities between the Derveni Papyrus and Stoic texts regarding their conception of daimons, but without assuming the Stoic nature of the papyrus. On the contrary, the Stoic hypothesis has been contested, convincingly in my view, by G. Betegh and V. Piano.

The contributions of this volume address some of the questions, both general and particular in nature, that are still open-ended in the study of the Derveni Papyrus. The first section regards its conservation and restoration, and is constituted by a paper of ROGER T. MACFARLANE and GIANLUCA DEL MASTRO, which is totally innovative among the studies of this document. They tackle the problem of how to handle the remains of the carbonised roll from Derveni, taking into consideration some advances and proposals for similar papyri, such as those from Bubastos, Tanis, Thmouis, Tebtunis, Petra, and especially Herculaneum. They outline the history of the Derveni scroll's conservation at the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, from its opening by Anton Fackelmann in 1962 up to the present day. They assess the current conservation condition of the Derveni Papyrus, which they had the opportunity to inspect in 2006 when performing multispectral imaging on the document's fragments, and suggest improvements to ensure its optimal conservation and reproduction in line with recently developed techniques.

The second section consists of two essays on the reconstruction and interpretation of the first columns. VALERIA PIANO focuses on col. III according to her edition, justifying her proposals and criticising some of the alternative readings on papyrological and textual grounds. She shows how the partial restoration of the text of col. III published in the editio princeps of the papyrus allows us to reconstruct a column which is fully

consistent with the other ones forming the “first part” of the document. Furthermore, she illuminates the author's ethical concerns, as well as the daimonological issues present in the text, where daimons seem to act as mediators of retributive justice between the human and the divine. CARLOS MEGINO surveys the nature and function of the daimons, Erinyes and Eumenides, mentioned in cols. III and VI of the Papyrus, and compares the views of the DA with those professed by the early Stoics. His conclusion is that there are significant parallels between the two conceptions, which must be added to other similarities between the Derveni Papyrus and the early Stoics in many details of method and doctrine.

The third part regards the Orphic poem quoted and commented upon in the papyrus. In chapter three MARCO ANTONIO SANTAMARÌA assesses the extent to which Hesiod's Theogony influenced the Derveni poem, establishing which elements from the first poem have been adopted and reworked by the Orphic poet. He concludes that, in some cases, the Derveni poet follows Hesiod closely, while in others he diverges from the Theogony in order to temper certain details, to replace some aspects with others, or to emphasise and develop several features that were simply outlined or suggested in the Theogony. The main agenda of the Orphic poem is to highlight Zeus' central role as organiser and father of the world. CHIARA FERRELLA analyses a probable echo of verse OF 12 of the Derveni poem, in which Zeus becomes alone ($\mu\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\varsigma \xi\gamma\epsilon\nu\tau\omicron$), in a verse of Parmenides' poem which describes ‘what-is’ as $\mu\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$ (fr. 8.4 DK). She concludes that the all-encompassing Zeus featured in the Orphic poem is a probable antecedent of Parmenides' ‘what-is,’ which is called $\mu\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$, in the sense of ‘being the only one,’ because it encloses everything that is, and apart from it there is nothing at all.

The fourth section of the volume features several contributions on the DA's views on the poem: which exegetical methods he deploys in his commentary,

and which cosmogonical ideas he extracts from the Orphic verses. RADCLIFFE G. EDMONDS III examines the use of allegory in the papyrus and in the Orphic theogony associated with Hieronymus and Hellanicus. He concludes that the DA is a ritual practitioner of the late fifth century BC who employs allegory to show off his expertise in the exegesis of sacred rites and authoritative texts, in order to advertise his services in the marketplace. His commentary does not entail a systematic cosmology, but is merely intended to show potential clients his capacity to unravel the riddles of the mysteries. By contrast, the accounts of the Theogony of Hieronymus come from a scholastic context, whose allegorical exegesis points to the systematising practices of Peripatetic philosophers, rather than to the allegoresis practised by the Stoics. SOFIA RANZATO reflects on the commentator's definition of Orpheus' speech given in col. VII. She attempts to determine the meaning of the enigmatic quality that is ascribed to Orpheus' words through a comparison with the kind of poetic speech employed by Parmenides and Empedocles and its religious and epistemological implications. In his all-embracing contribution, ALBERTO BERNABÉ shows how the anonymous author of the papyrus carries out a physical exegesis of the Orphic poem interpreting the series of reigns of the gods, Uranus, Cronus and Zeus, as the sequence of stages in a cosmogonical process in which *Noûç* occupies the central role. The paper not only reconstructs the commentator's physical theory, but also shows that many features have precedents in the proposals of other early philosophers such as those of Anaximander, Anaxagoras, Diogenes of Apollonia and the Atomists.

The fifth set of essays looks into the intriguing last columns of the papyrus. ANA ISABEL JIMÉNEZ SAN CRISTÓBAL attempts to clarify the different levels of access to the ritual dealt with in col. XX, which affect the correct understanding of their meaning and message. She explains what these rites are, who celebrates them and their relation to the rituals

described in the first six columns of the papyrus. The question of whether column XX represents an excursus in the commentary of Orpheus' poem is also raised. MARISA TORTORELLI explains Aphrodite's epithet *Urania* in col. XXI 5 in light of the etymology of *Uranus* attested in col. XIV, according to which the latter name would stem from *Noûç* that *ὀρίζεται*, the intellect that delimits the nature of things. The commentator seems to perceive in the epiclesis *Urania* the same etymological value as *Uranus*. In this sense, if Aphrodite is the power that actualises the *μεσίτις* of elements, Aphrodite *Urania* is the force that determines the union of related elements, while respecting the natural limits of things, on the strength of mutual yielding (*Peitho*) and of the harmonic adjustment of particles (*Harmonia*).

Although many aspects of the Derveni Papyrus are, inevitably, destined to remain obscure forever, due to its fragmentary nature, the articles collected in this book, with their different perspectives and methods, will no doubt help cast new light on some of the mysteries hidden in Orpheus' poetic words and on the—sometimes no less mysterious—explanations of his anonymous commentator. <>

[Pamela Colman Smith: The Untold Story](#) edited by Stuart R. Kaplan, contributors: Mary K. Greer, Elizabeth Foley O'Connor, Melinda Boyd Parsons [U.S. Games Systems Inc., 9781572819122]

[Pamela Colman Smith: The Untold Story](#) brings together the work of four distinguished scholars who have devoted years of research to uncover the life and artistic accomplishments of Pamela Colman Smith. Known to millions as the creator of the Rider-Waite Tarot deck, Pamela Colman Smith (1878-1951) was also a stage and costume designer, folklorist, poet, author, illustrator of ballads and folktales, suffragette, and publisher of books and broadsheets.



This collaborative work presents: a richly illustrated biography of Pamela's life with essays on the events and people that influenced her including Jack Yeats, Ellen Terry, Alfred Stieglitz, Bram Stoker and William Gillette. There is also a chronological survey of her folktales, art and poetry and an exploration of her lasting legacy.

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[Pamela Colman Smith: The Untold Story](#) is the most comprehensive and exhaustive collection of works by and about Pamela Colman Smith published to date.

Editorial Appraisal

I have had an fantasy image biography of Pamela Colman Smith [PCS] in my head for some years, specifically around the psycho-biographical

circumstances of the genesis of the Colman-Waite tarot deck, especially PCS's original contributions of 40 ambiguous pip images. The impact of these pictures were the seeds, that through much of the 20th century, created a tarot reading practice that evolved from occult divination and fortunetelling into a variety of therapeutic and psychological approaches to reading tarots for self and others, a means of exploring the significance of events, behaviors and relationships in ones' life. These ambiguous images have provided to generations of anglophone card readers rich contentious imaginative fodder of endless projective-subjective interpretations and discussions of their mystery and the questions that arise viewing them in tandem.

My fantasy, as I have no wish to do archival work, is that PCS suffered from depression at the time she created the pip images, many of them derived from previous works. PCS mood may have come from a broken heart, perhaps feeling abandoned when Edy Craig, daughter of Ellen Terry, moved to the continent with another companion. PCS, perhaps under some influence from Waite and his circle, eventually found solace through conversion to Catholicism.



[Pamela Colman Smith: The Untold Story](#) provides indirect evidence for my conceit. It offers tempting and fulsome documentation of her many faceted careers in the arts and Craft movement and

bohemian circles. Melinda Boyd Parsons expressly shows how her friends images become part of the deck. Each of the four sections provides the best effusive account of her work so far available. Stuart R. Kaplan offers the best curation of PCS's folktales, art and poetry arranged chronologically. The lavish color illustrations give an indication of her Arts & Crafts style of illustrations. See the following blogs that discuss aspects of PCS's life and work. Highly recommended.

[Demystifying Pamela Colman Smith](#)

[Fools Journey: The Fascinating Life of Pamela Colman Smith](#)

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Excerpt: Pamela's Life —by Elizabeth Foley O'Connor

Corinne Pamela Colman Smith was an artist, poet, folklorist, editor, publisher, and costume and stage designer who was active from the mid-1890s through the 1920s. Born in London to American parents, Pamela traveled widely, spent a significant part of her youth in Jamaica, was educated as an illustrator at the highly-regarded Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, and died in her beloved Cornwall, England. Her paintings were exhibited in many galleries in the U.S., Continental Europe, and England—where she lived the majority of her

life—including several international art exhibitions. She also has the distinction of being the first non-photographic artist to have her work shown at Alfred Stieglitz's "Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession" in New York.

Pamela illustrated more than 20 books and many magazine articles, wrote two collections of Jamaican folktales, co-edited *A Broad Sheet* with Jack Yeats from 1902-1903, edited *The Green Sheaf* from 1903-1904 by herself, and, after its demise, ran the *Green Sheaf* press, which focused particularly on women writers, including her own work. Her venture into publishing appears to have emerged as both a calculated business move and a reaction to the frustrations she encountered when dealing with the virtually all-male publishing establishment. She occasionally referred to publishers in letters as "pigs" and vented her frustrations over failing to place work and not receiving royalties to which she considered herself entitled.¹ Active in the theatrical world, Pamela staged her own "miniature" theatre performances, traveled with the Lyceum Theatre Company, contributed set and costume designs to several plays, and performed Jamaican folktales and other poems for public recitals in both England and the U.S.

Pamela was an irrepressible spirit. This is reflected in both her nickname "Pixie" and her deviation from the standards and expectations for women of her time. She pursued a career and did not marry or have children; instead, she surrounded herself with like-minded female friends and companions. As a teller of West Indian Anansi stories at public performances in both London and New York, Pamela blended her interest in Irish and Jamaican folktales into a personal mythology that celebrated freedom, fearlessness and independence of spirit. These characteristics are evident in much of her work and are especially apparent in her two published collections of Jamaican folktales *Annancy Stories* (1899) and *Chim-Chim* (1905). The latter was published by her own *Green Sheaf* press and includes several traditional tales that emphasize the agency of the female characters.

Throughout her life, Pamela struggled with those who did not understand her and who had a hard time positioning her within existing gender, class and racial categories. John Yeats had this assessment in the summer of 1899 after meeting her to arrange a possible literary venture with his son W.B. Yeats:

"Pamela Smith and father are the funniest-looking people, the most primitive Americans possible, but I like them much... Her work whether a drawing or the telling of a piece of folklore is very direct and original and therefore sincere, its originality being its naïveté. I should feel safe in getting her to illustrate anything. ... She looks exactly like a Japanese. Nannie says this Japanese appearance comes from constantly drinking iced water. You at first think her rather elderly, you are surprised to find out that she is very young, quite a girl ... I don't think there is anything great or profound in her, or very emotional or practical."

At the time of her visit to Yeats, the "rather elderly" Pamela was just twenty-one. John Yeats's assessment reflects both his paternalism and his biases against "primitive" Americans, especially those whom he assumed to be a class below him and whose racial origins he had trouble ascertaining. However, his comments are characteristic of the uncertainty and confusion contemporaries had in placing her into conventional categories like age and ethnicity. Perhaps in response to his and others'—assertion that she had Asian origins, Pamela created a sketch of herself in a kimono that was published in *The Critic* magazine in 1900. In the accompanying article, Pamela explains that the Japanese influence on her work is "not so much as people suppose." The article adds that the caricature was created "[w]ith a merry recognition of the association;" moreover, it is characteristic of Pamela's irreverent humor.



Published accounts of Pamela's art and life also exhibited a tendency to exoticize her background and depict her, and often by extension her art, as simple and naïve. A full-page 1904 Brooklyn Daily Eagle article is representative: "There could be no greater contrast to the ordinary dainty young Heights girl, of pretty manners, or normal tendencies, conventional ways and the usual ambitions. Yet were an Iphetonga to be danced to-day, Pamela Coleman Smith [sic], this odd-artist mystic girl, would be trebly qualified for its inmost place." Pamela is described as different from most young women of her time due to her focus on an independent life and an artistic career rather than marriage and children.

The unnamed writer appears to insinuate that she may have Native American blood as "Iphetonga" is both the Native American word for Brooklyn Heights and refers to the indigenous tribe who inhabited Brooklyn before the arrival of the Europeans.¹ However, "Iphetonga" also refers to a series of exclusive balls held in Brooklyn Heights in the 1880s and 90s that were eventually ended because of disagreements over which families had high enough social standing to attend. Both Pamela's maternal and paternal relatives inhabited the highest echelons of Brooklyn society, which would have guaranteed her an undisputed place at these soirées.

The clearest written reference to Pamela's possible mixed race comes in Henry Wood Nevinson's 1923 memoir, *Changes and Chances*, which recalls his time in London in the early 20th century. Nevinson terms Pamela an "exciting little person" and notes that he "supposed" she was "touched with negro blood."² A year later, Pamela's fellow Pratt student, Earnest Elmo Calkins, in his memoir, *'Louder Please!'* *The Autobiography of a Deaf Man*, likens Pamela during her folktale performances to "a strange African deity." He references Nevinson's book and states that while he had "never heard" that Pamela was of mixed race, it would "account for her peculiar dramatic power."³

Other contemporary articles passed beyond questioning Pamela's racial origins and described her as more animal or even ethereal than human. A 1912 *Delineator* profile states that she resembled "a brown squirrel, and a Chinese baby, and a radiant morning...." As the article acknowledges, Pamela defied convention and easy categorization and, most importantly, blazed an important path for female artists: "Before she was twenty she was an inspiration to American women painters who were working toward something different. Many of our women have since done notable decorative work, but she was the pioneer who gave them courage."⁴ Similarly, Arthur Ransome's generally complimentary description of her in his 1907 *Bohemia in London* veers into this territory when he terms her a "strange little creature" and states that upon welcoming him into her London salon she describes herself as a "goddaughter of a witch and sister to a fairy." While it is impossible to know whether Pamela actually uttered these words or if they are Ransome's interpretation of what she would have said, it does seem in keeping with her known tongue-in-cheek type of response. What is clear is that people who met Pamela were uncertain about her exact racial makeup. Questions about her physical appearance seem to have affected the way Pamela and her work were received, possibly explaining her lack of sustained success in her artistic and publishing pursuits.

Excerpt: Influences & Expression in the Rider-Waite Tarot Deck — Melinda Boyd Parsons

This chapter explores some of the symbolism in The Rider-Waite Tarot deck, and the ways Pamela Colman Smith drew inspiration from her own life, beliefs, interests and friends at the time she created the cards.

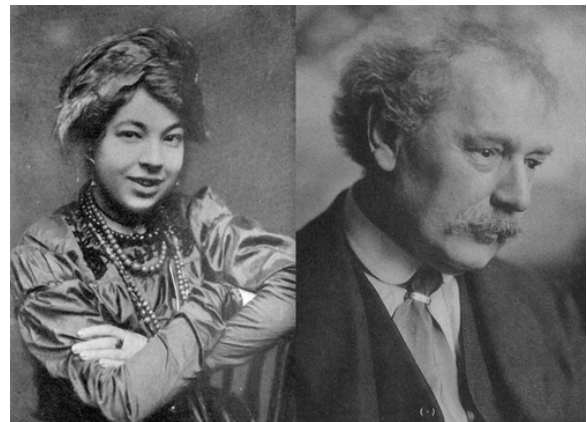
There are two groups of cards in the tarot deck. First are the 22 Trump cards (also called the Major Arcana), which are the most tradition-bound, dating back to 15th century Renaissance cards that were used in card games. These cards are numbered and have names and illustrations, for example, The Fool or The Magician, but they do not correspond to any suits, nor do they have parallels in the traditional playing card deck. Second are the 56 Minor Arcana cards, which have suits similar to those in today's playing cards that correspond to Cups (Hearts), Pentacles (Diamonds), Wands (Clubs), and Swords (Spades). Additionally, each suit relates to one of the four basic elements—earth (Pentacles), air (Swords), fire (Wands) and water (Cups) What's fascinating is how much the four elements—earth, air, fire and water dominate the imagery in Pamela's visionary paintings, a characteristic that not surprisingly carries over into her tarot designs.

There are four court cards—Page, Knight, Queen, King—in each suit» The court cards display medieval-style military or crusader figures—the Page and Knight—and royalty —Queen and King—in each suit. According to tarot scholar Mary Greer, the court cards were based on designs by one of the founders of the Golden Dawn and somewhat resemble the very popular photographic postcards (called cabinet cards) of Victorian actors in costume. Pamela Colman Smith drew several of the court cards in the Rider- Waite Tarot as representations of Victorian and Edwardian actors in costume. They were, in fact, actor friends of hers whom she knew well and admired.

In addition to the court cards in each suit, there are numbered cards from One to Ten, called "pip"

cards. To tarot historians, what is particularly interesting about the Rider-Waite deck is that it was the first modern deck to have pictorial scenes on every numbered pip card in each suit. Pamela's detailed artwork is what makes the tarot deck more accessible and easier to use. The pictorial scenes enable tarot readers to view each card and project themselves into the scene and to identify with those actions and meanings. The Rider-Waite deck also helps indicate Pamela Colman Smith's own concerns at the time, as she was largely responsible for creating it. Waite's descriptions of the Minor Arcana cards in *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* are considerably briefer than his discussion of the Major Arcana. Therefore, it's impossible to know now whose idea it was originally to illustrate the numbered cards. There were photographs of the Renaissance Sola-Busca Tarot, the only earlier deck that had full illustrations on the numbered cards, on display at the British Museum from 1907 on. Waite's knowledge of the Sola-Busca cards—or lack thereof—is unknown. Pamela, the artist and art historian, certainly was familiar with the deck, as she used a few of the Minor Arcana cards as sources for several of her own pip cards and court cards.

Pamela Colman Smith and Arthur Edward Waite



How and why did Waite and Pamela come together to create the Rider-Waite Tarot? In 1901, just after Pamela said she had her first vision to music, she joined London's Isis-Urania Temple of the

Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a secret group devoted to the practice of magic, occultism, religious studies and mysticism. Disagreements among members led to a schism in 1903. Those interested in magic and occultism followed William Butler Yeats into his branch, while Pamela and others interested in Judeo-Christian mysticism went with Arthur Waite.

As Waite came to know Pamela better, he realized she had mystic and visionary qualities. Not only did he regard her as psychic, but he was pleased she already knew something of tarot. So she was the perfect person to create a "rectified" tarot deck, that is, one based on Judeo-Christian mysteries rather than occult magic. Waite had been Catholic but left the church, while Pamela converted to Catholicism a little over a year after she drew the tarot. As Waite said:

I... have interested a very skilful and original artist in the proposal to design a set [of tarot cards]. Miss Pamela Coleman [sic] Smith, in addition to her obvious gifts, has some knowledge of the Tarot values; she has lent a sympathetic ear to my proposal to rectify the symbolism by reference to channels of knowledge which are not in the open day, and we have had help from one who is deeply versed in the subject. The result...is a marriage of art and symbolism for...a true Tarot under one of its aspects.

Excerpt: Critical Commentaries on the Works of Pamela Colman Smith— by Mary K Greer

It is true that some viewers of Pamela's artworks, both in her heyday and into the 21st century, find her work less stimulating. They declare it relatively sparse, naïve, too primitive and old fashioned with its emphasis on faux medieval and bygone eras. Her color palette is limited, and tones (at least in the tarot deck) are too bright and too flat. Critics say she displays a flawed perspective and faulty figure drawing skills. Her tarot images are not ethnically diverse, being too Western and Christian,

leaving out both Eastern and African culture and history. They find her erratic, immature and, dare it be said, "disturbing." Finally, it is felt that her work may not capture the evolving changes in culture and human experience.



This book, however, amply displays a greater range of her styles and themes than has been recognized in the past. The welcoming and tremendous sales of her tarot deck around the world show that it speaks equally to other cultures, even when those people are not fully aware of the myths and symbols to which an image alludes.

A great many people around the world agree that Pamela Colman Smith leaves a legacy of originality, sincerity, unaffected childlike naturalness and harmony of expression. They appreciate her clarity and richness of symbolic detail, the theatrical 'tableau vivant' quality of the tarot, and her mysterious faux medieval atmosphere. Her scenes arc like stories that can be read by a child and ring true as a fairy tale. Emotional energy can be clearly discerned from the expressions and body language of the figures. The flatness the vibrant colors, the simple faces and stylized movements of her tarot cards form easily recognized patterns and comparisons, linking thematically significant features throughout the work. Pamela's images are quirky and nonthreatening, with happy scenes that include frailties and unhappy scenes that show strengths.

Conclusion

We now see Pamela Colman Smith as an independent, self-determined, artist, and performer

who traveled freely and expressed herself whimsically and colorfully. She kept a sense of humor while upholding the truth and integrity of her own vision, spoke out against discrimination in her profession and insisted on her financial due. excelled at visual storytelling in the mode of Shakespeare's plays or the Arthurian and Grail legends so prevalent in her beloved Cornwall. People still make pilgrimages honor

her in the Cornish towns where she lived. She died just a short distance from Tintagel, site of Merlin's cave and the reputed castle where Merlin used magic to bring about King Arthur's conception through Igraine and Uther Pendragon. Who can say but the mysteries surrounding her birth and life are just as magical? Her stories are forever young as Pamela will be in our hearts.

If Pamela's legacy is her being an "envoy or messenger sent with a commission" then her charge has certainly been one of keeping the joy and magic of a natural, free creative spirit alive in the world. The richness and bounty of tarot decks that make use of her ingenious template will continue to inspire and delight for generations to come. <>

[Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy](#) by Roger Lipsey [Shambhala Publications, 9781611804515]

From a master biographer and longtime Gurdjieff practitioner, a brilliant new exploration of the quintessential Western esoteric teacher of the twentieth-century.

The Greek-Armenian teacher G.I. Gurdjieff was one of the most original and provocative spiritual teachers in the twentieth-century West. Whereas much work on Gurdjieff has been either fawning or blindly critical, acclaimed scholar and writer Roger Lipsey balances sympathetic interest in Gurdjieff and his "Fourth Way" teachings with a historian's sense of context and a biographer's feel for personality and relationships. Using a wide-range of published and unpublished sources, Lipsey explores Gurdjieff's formative travels in Central Asia, his famed teaching institution in France, the development of the Gurdjieff Movements and music, and, above all, Gurdjieff's fascinating continuous evolution as a teacher.

Published on the 70th anniversary of Gurdjieff's death, [Gurdjieff Reconsidered](#) delves deeply into Gurdjieff's writings and those of his most important students, including P. D. Ouspensky and Jeanne de Salzmann. Lipsey's comprehensive approach and unerring sense of the subject make this a must-read for anyone with a serious intention to explore Gurdjieff's life, teachings, and reputation.

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Excerpt:...Gurdjieff worked on our essence. He listened to our inner need with tireless patience and kindness, which hurt because we always felt unworthy. He took an interest in our difficulties. He gave practical help to take the next step. With unbelievable exactness he indicated the definite inner act that each had to carry out at the given moment to free himself further from his automatism. Here there was on Gurdjieff's part never any acting, and no pressure. This was truly a gift from above, which left the impression of love and compassion for the human condition. He made us feel our possibilities, our potential and, with the means he gave, he brought the hope of seeing them grow.

On the other hand, Gurdjieff worked on our functions in a relentless way—continual pressure, greater and greater demands, putting us in horrible situations, shocks of all kinds. Not only did he not attract us but, in pushing us to extreme limits,

he forced us to resist him, to react against him. And he did this without mercy.

Here was the grandeur of Gurdjieff. The first way, work on our essence, was outside life, wholly concentrated on inner action. The second, work on our functions, was in life itself and through life.

With one hand he called us; with the other he beat us, showing us our slavery to our functions. Very few people had the chance to experience both sides. Yet it is impossible to understand Gurdjieff's methods or behavior without having received ... both ... aspects of his work.

for instance, with useful advice, money, and things essential for life, such as food, letters of recommendation, etc." On the other hand, he vowed to be merciless toward vanity and egoistic self-love, including his own, including all of the consequences of illusion, cruelty, artificiality, and so on nearly without end, which flow from those traits of character. "I still further intensified, in relation to all people coming in contact with me, my inner benevolence, but accompanied it by ... remembering and, in conversations, deliberately manifesting, under a mask of serious irritation, the device I have practiced since the beginning of my aforesaid twenty-one year period Of artificial life, and which I have summed up in the phrase: 'To quarrel ruthlessly with all manifestations dictated in people by the evil factor of vanity present in their being.'"

To what end? Gurdjieff's response to this question is, at last, expressed nearly in the unelaborated language of everyday life: "the manifestation in human intercourse of a 'naked' relationship based on love, pity, trust, sympathy, etc., free from all kinds of evil conventions outwardly established in our life."

Several months after Gurdjieff's death, Jeanne de Salzmann had occasion in London with a circle of his pupils to reflect on the very topics we have been exploring.

I would like to say a few words about Mr. Gurdjieff's way of teaching. Most of the misunderstandings and disagreements about Gurdjieff's methods and behavior come from the fact that he worked at the same time on our two natures.

Coda

When my daughter and her cousins were young, they shared gala winter holidays. Year in and year

out they were all stacked in one bedroom—I have a crowded memory of children and beds—and with childhood's unyielding will they expected a glorious entertainment before day's end. That suited me, there was a book I wanted them to know: Arthur Waley's *Monkey*, his spectacular version of the sixteenth-century Chinese masterpiece, Wu Cheng-en's *Journey to the West*. I read it aloud, of course, and the silence of listening, punctuated with laughter, enveloped us all. The book is literature as elixir. Its imaginativeness left us nightly breathless and entranced.

One of the leading characters in the book's little troupe of pilgrims seeking holy scripture "in the West"—in India—is *Monkey*, a born troublemaker with a mischievous mind and awesome powers. A refrain is heard throughout the book: "Bad, bad monkey!" With iron logic, the children freely applied it to themselves. They acknowledged their inability to stay out of mischief and—"Bad, bad monkey!"—forgave themselves.

Monkey has a cudgel, sometimes enormous—a terrifying weapon against any who impede the pilgrims' progress—and sometimes as small as a toothpick, conveniently stored behind an ear. Large or small, a fact in the world or invisible, *Monkey's* cudgel is unaccountably memorable, surely a symbol: it tumbles into one's deeper place where matters are actually worked out and meanings assigned. Whatever Wu Cheng-en may have intended, the cudgel says more than a little about teachings as they make contact with the world. Teachings are a small thing in our large world with its crushing burden of seemingly insoluble problems and crises. Participation in a teaching is the participant's secret—what business is it of anyone else that he or she feels it worthwhile to "remember oneself" in the course of daily life, to reassemble oneself as a thinking, feeling, sensing human being, to examine one's motives on the model of Belculturassi's search for self-knowledge? It need concern no one else that a participant in a teaching loves the mind—loves its capacity for clarity and penetration, its capacity to create good things from slight clues—and knows all too well how easily it wanders off into its own little worlds, how easily it distorts what it encounters. Hence the teaching about vigilance: dreamers, awaken. Why should anyone else care if the participant in a teaching has an organic need to be present, to be aware

here and now, and this for strong reasons: it feels right, it delivers oneself to the world and the world to oneself, it is the basis for authentic relations. In all of these respects and more, a teaching is a small thing, no matter for notice, private. Yet when circumstances require, a teaching can be a cudgel, a large thing—larger than the world when the world is confused, violent, idiotic. Then a teaching needs to appear and speak its word with a force and originality that command attention. We have seen something like this often, though never often enough, in men and women who have left the mark of life in recent history. Martin Luther King, Sakharov, Mandela, Havel, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, young Malala Yousafzai, and, reaching back, Hammarskjöld, Gandhi, and still others. Some of these might disbelieve that they were rooted in a teaching when they spoke their word; Sakharov might have said that he was rooted in the obvious. But each was moved by precise ideals—of nonviolence, of resistance to evil, of social justice, of religious reform, of universal education, of politics as a service and moral exercise. However great their personal sacrifice, each understood the need to call us back to ourselves, to simple decency, mutual respect, and at least the minimum of policies and attitudes needed for survival as a species among other species on a generous planet. I have no idea whether the Gurdjieff teaching or any other will in future exercise that degree of humane influence. Perhaps they will remain secret. Perhaps they should remain secret. The well-being and even wisdom they generate in individuals will surely influence the geographical and professional communities in which those individuals make their lives. That would be enough, and already a great deal. When I look into your eyes and listen to you, I have no need to know if you are a Gurdjieff pupil or a Buddhist meditator, a Sufi or Vedantist, an engaged Christian or Jew, a secular humanist; I perceive you, not your path to maturity. This is as it should be. At some point, when we're better acquainted, we may compare notes. We'll take out our journals, so to speak, and show one another what we've written there over the years. And for the most part it will be the same.

Afterword

I am aware that this book provides scarcely any acquaintance with the distinguished leaders of the North American and British groups, and as well of

the South American groups. It would be convenient to write that this is a topic for another day, but that day is unlikely to come for me personally; others will find their way to it. As there are too many men and women to note by name, I limit myself here to those who were generous enough to allow me, and many others of my generation, to learn from them at length. All of these direct pupils of Gurdjieff, with one blessed exception, have passed on. Lord Pentland, the vastly creative president of the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York from its first day, should have a book of the kind this is. He was the embodiment of the teaching, forceful, wise, and—truth be known—a man of benevolent shamanic energy: he had assimilated that aspect of the teaching, although as far as I know it wasn't taught. There are several books based on meetings with Lord Pentland in New York and San Francisco. William Segal in New York is well represented in books available today and in videos created by his friend, the documentary filmmaker Ken Burns. Margaret Flinsch, also in New York, wrote little but exercised a strong and welcome influence. Her work with children, brilliantly recorded in Lillian Firestone's book, *The Forgotten Language of Children*, gives her a lasting place in the field of early education. Mrs. Flinsch's sister, Dorothea Dooling, founder of *Parabola*, the quarterly magazine, is well represented in the literature and in the pages of *Parabola* in its earlier years. Christopher Fremantle, British but living in New York with responsibility also for groups in Mexico, is represented by a book, though no book can capture his refinement. Dr. William Welch has his place in this book; his gifted wife, Louise, who founded groups in New York, Toronto, and Halifax, must be remembered. Martin Benson also has a book, a riotous late homage from some of his pupils to a riotous and faithful teacher. Louise March, founder of the Rochester Folk Art Guild and familiar in New York, has her place in this book, but something more should be said. It was as if she had come directly from the early Bauhaus, with its strong ideals, to our vicinity—not factually true, but symbolically exact. Paul Reynard, teaching Movements with immense skill and leading groups in New York, San Francisco, and elsewhere, was among the youngest pupils to have heard Gurdjieff at rue des Colonels Renard. There are others also to be remembered; I am thinking of them all.

Henriette Lannes carried in her lifetime the large responsibility for the groups in London and Lyon; she is well represented by two books of writings and edited transcripts. After Madame Lannes's passing in 1980, Dr. Bernard Courtenay-Mayers was for years in London the center of gravity, the true voice—a man who almost didn't wish to speak, or so it seemed, but when he spoke the teaching was reborn.

I have not had occasion to mention several outstanding men and women in Paris, among them Jeanne de Salzmans's son, Michel, a psychiatrist by profession, and his wife, Josée. Many of us, from many countries, looked to them. Dr. de Salzman somehow combined originality of insight, human understanding, and a festive spirit. Around him no one's question was idiotic; every question, however halting, fit somewhere in the pattern of the teaching and the pattern of useful truth. I wish also to remember here Pauline de Dampierre, a leader in Paris whom we saw from time to time in New York. Her understanding was extraordinarily exact and inspiring; in her care the teaching became a science. And, at the last, a friend in Paris, Lise Etiévan, who would not tolerate here an excess of kind words; she deserves them all.

I trust that these few words express some part of the gratitude owed to the generation of teachers who were the nucleus that Gurdjieff knew to be necessary.

Review: Author and art historian Roger Lipsey provides a valuable, but problematic, re-examination of G.I. Gurdjieff (1866-1949), one of the 20th century's most controversial mystics and spiritual teachers, in *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy*. The text represents an amalgamation between a proper apologia of Gurdjieff's body of work—aimed at the many critics of his writings and teachings—and a biographical account of the his life, enhanced by the use of a plethora of published and unpublished sources.

Lipsey is an acclaimed biographer and senior member of the New York Gurdjieff Foundation, and biographical sections of the book benefit greatly from the author's expertise in the biographical genre as well as his clear, incisive, and lucid style. However, sections devoted to the critique of Gurdjieff's detractors are often marred by an over-zealous approach, which at times

abandons an etic, objective treatment of the subject: such is the case with his description of author Katherine Mansfield, briefly a member of Gurdjieff's group, as "one of us"; or in describing Gurdjieff's eyes as full of "serenity and sacred sadness—classic values of Western Spirituality". The book includes a foreword penned by Cynthia Bourgeault, author and Episcopal priest: immediately the emic overtones of the following chapters are made clear by the assumptions that Gurdjieff was sent as a teacher "clearly on a cosmic assignment" or by the acknowledgement that events during his life happened as if "on providential cue". Bourgeault's own judgment of Lipsey's work is that "it's an insider's portrait, for sure" (xv) and that "the vision Gurdjieff illuminated is more urgently needed than ever."

Chapter 1 is Lipsey's declaration of intent for the text: in acknowledging the double objective he hopes to achieve—a rebuttal of Gurdjieff's critics and a rich biographical account of his life—the author provides us with a tentative mnemonic. This shapes the chapters to come: Russia and the theoretical development of Gurdjieff's ideas; the communal years at the Prieuré and the mise en pratique of such ideas; the period of loss represented by the 1930s; the period of fulfillment brought by the 1940s.

The most substantial section, chapters 2 through 7, are a biographical account of Gurdjieff's life: from stories of his travels to the far east to his early teachings in Russia, through the frantic, yet productive period at the Prieuré des Basses-Loges d'Avon to his final days in post-war Paris. This is where the book holds its value, for Lipsey's knowledge of the subject is impressive, and the use of an astounding number of primary sources, comprised of published accounts and manuscripts held in the archives of the Institut Gurdjieff in Paris as well as other private collections, help illustrate Gurdjieff's character and its development over the decades. Among the unpublished materials, the private writings and correspondence of key figures such as Margaret Anderson, Kathryn Hulme, Solita Solano, and René Zuber render the reading of these chapters fresh and engaging to the Gurdjieff scholar, and the use of newspaper clippings describing his years at the Prieuré validate Lipsey's theory that Gurdjieff's reputation was indeed distorted by the media and unsympathetic critics.

The biographical section also presents the reader with new theories and revelations: the figure of Émile Jacques-Dalcroze (1865-1950) is viewed by the author as a developer of sacred dances contemporary to Gurdjieff, an idea deserving of further research. Nevertheless, Lipsey's insider *weltanschauung* is also apparent in these chapters. In one example, the eulogy of Jeanne de Salzmann (1889-1990), the author acknowledges the accusation of writing a "hagiography" but at the same time dismisses such critiques by stating: "yet there are people whom one is simply grateful to have known".

Chapter 8, entitled "Derision," represents the most problematic section of an otherwise remarkable work. Lipsey sets out to rebut authors who have, in his view, vilified Gurdjieff and his teachings throughout the decades. The academic reevaluation of characters considered to be beyond the pale or objectionable is not new: in the past decade, figures such as Aleister Crowley (1875-1947)—the so-called "wickedest man in the world"—have been, to use a term dear to Lipsey, reassessed and reconsidered. Nevertheless, the author's stance is that of a confidant incensed at the negative portrayal of his master: in Lipsey's words, "you would think that derision would be out of the question, that the merit of Gurdjieff's accomplishment would shelter his reputation and teaching from assaultive extremes of criticism." Unfortunately for Lipsey, this is seldom the case, and, in the domain of Western esotericism, there have been many less-controversial figures that have received far more criticism than Gurdjieff. The chapter progresses through a book-by-book rebuttal of all critiques leveled against Gurdjieff, including works by Louis Pauwels (1920-1997), Jean-François Revel (1924-2006), Anthony Storr (1920-2011), Peter Washington (b. 1946), and Whitall Perry (1920-2005). The texts critiquing Gurdjieff show a marked lack of serious research, therefore Lipsey is right in raising the issue of mainstream misrepresentation of Gurdjieff. However, it is his method—the emic zeal that the author employs to dismiss such critics—that is questionable.

The book concludes with a chapter on Gurdjieff's magnum opus *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* and a short coda.

Lipsey's *Gurdjieff Reconsidered* is a welcome addition to the field of Gurdjieff Studies and the field of Western esotericism, more generally. The book is an excellent introduction to Gurdjieff's ideas, thanks to the author's use of an abundance of primary sources. Nevertheless, its opening chapter and chapter 8 suffer from an emic approach, marring an otherwise commendable undertaking. <>

[The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences](#) by Jason A. Josephson-Storm [University of Chicago Press, 9780226403366]

[The Problem with Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse, 1900-1939](#) by Egil Asprem [SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions, University of New York Press, 9781438469928]

Challenges the conventional view of a "disenchanted" and secular modernity, and recovers the complex relation that exists between science, religion, and esotericism in the modern world.

A great many theorists have argued that the defining feature of modernity is that people no longer believe in spirits, myths, or magic. Jason A. Josephson-Storm argues that as broad cultural history goes, this narrative is wrong, as attempts to suppress magic have failed more often than they have succeeded. Even the human sciences have been more enchanted than is commonly supposed. But that raises the question: How did a magical, spiritualist, mesmerized Europe ever convince itself that it was disenchanted?

Josephson-Storm traces the history of the myth of disenchantment in the births of philosophy, anthropology, sociology, folklore, psychoanalysis, and religious studies. Ironically, the myth of mythless modernity formed at the very time that Britain, France, and Germany were in the midst of occult and spiritualist revivals. Indeed, Josephson-Storm argues, these disciplines' founding figures were not only aware of, but profoundly enmeshed in, the occult milieu; and it was specifically in response to this burgeoning culture of spirits and magic that they produced notions of a disenchanted world.

By providing a novel history of the human sciences and their connection to esotericism, [The Myth of Disenchantment](#) dispatches with most widely held

accounts of modernity and its break from the premodern past.

Max Weber famously characterized the ongoing process of intellectualization and rationalization that separates the natural world from the divine (by excluding magic and value from the realm of science, and reason and fact from the realm of religion) as the “disenchantment of the world.” Egil Asprem argues for a conceptual shift in how we view this key narrative of modernity. Instead of a sociohistorical process of disenchantment that produces increasingly rational minds, Asprem maintains that the continued presence of “magic” and “enchantment” in people’s everyday experience of the world created an intellectual problem for those few who were socialized to believe that nature should contain no such incalculable mysteries. Drawing on a wide range of early twentieth-century primary sources from theoretical physics, occultism, embryology, radioactivity, psychical research, and other fields, Asprem casts the intellectual life of high modernity as a synchronic struggle across conspicuously different fields that shared surprisingly similar intellectual problems about value, meaning, and the limits of knowledge.

Review: It is praiseworthy that State University of New York (SUNY) made Egil Asprem’s study available in a paperback reprint. Based on the author’s doctoral thesis of 2013, *The Problem with Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse, 1900-1939* was originally published in 2014 in Brill’s Numen Book Series. Since then, it has received considerable attention from both scholars of Western esotericism and those interested in the modern relationship between science, religion, and disenchantment.

The study departs from Max Weber’s famous disenchantment thesis. According to his historical claim, processes of intellectualization and rationalization, together with the growing potential of science to explain and calculate the forces of the natural world without resorting to the supernatural or magical, increasingly demystify the world. Asprem demonstrates that if one examines the development of the relationship between the sciences and religious fields in the first four decades of the 20th century, things become more complicated. Taking the concept of “disenchantment” as a “problem”—in the sense of

“Problemgeschichte”/ “problem history”—he asks how actors framed it differently within the emerging sciences, within the academic discourse on religion, and especially in the field of Western esotericism. Throughout the book, Asprem emphasizes how the concept of disenchantment as a homogenous and unchallenged paradigm obscures the standpoint of actors who were seeking to combine the scientific ethos of controlled experimentation with a kind of “religious naturalism” (Ann Taves) or “open-ended naturalism” (Asprem). Such perspectives were open to integrative views that combined biological life, physical forces, chemical structures, and human experiences deemed religious.

Chapter 1 begins with a presentation of Weber’s disenchantment theory. Unfortunately, for readers interested in global history, the study limits itself to the West (though not indicated in the title), which, given the growing awareness for interdependent processes in global modernity, seems in need of at least a small justification considering that: the “polytheism of worldviews” was an effect strengthened by globalization; and the question surrounding the scope and form of disenchantment in non-Western societies of the early 20th century is equally important. Chapter 2 outlines the characteristics of science as a worldview. Part 1 introduces valuable distinctions between forms of naturalism and argues that protagonists of the disenchantment thesis often ignore median positions within the naturalism-supernaturalism continuum, which become theoretical “blind spots.” Part 2 moves on to discuss developments in modern physics (the theory of relativity, quantum physics, radioactivity) and biology (embryology and the question of vitalism, mendelism, behaviorism), demonstrating how interpretations of these scientific innovations were synchronous with the emergence of “natural theologies” such as a panentheistic theology advocating—in line with the author’s own concept of “open-ended naturalism”—the existence of an immanent component of the “supernatural”. Part 3 visits the “laboratories of enchantment,”—psychical research and parapsychology—which became established as a research paradigm at universities. Some protagonists engaged parapsychology as an attempt to conduct “enchanted science.” However, Asprem notes that these efforts failed to establish parapsychology as

a progressive science. Part 4 discusses esotericism in its relation to the problem of disenchantment. According to Asprem, post-enlightenment forms of esotericism, such as Theosophy, were less engaged with “gnosis” than with pushing the boundaries of perceiving and experiencing higher domains. Here, Asprem observes that early Theosophists created problems for future Theosophists by aligning their psychical research with paradigms of mainstream sciences later discarded—such as ether theory, or chemical elements that were subsequently redefined by mainstream science. Equally enlightening is Asprem’s comparison of Rudolf Steiner’s and Aleister Crowley’s engagement with the emerging sciences, which highlights the different cultural backgrounds of these attempts: Steiner’s program to attain higher knowledge, an ineffable gnosis, must be situated within the tradition of romanticism and its philosophical anti-Kantianism, while Crowley’s endeavor should be regarded as vigorously “experimental”, resulting in a Scientific Illuminism that capitalized on controllable methods and techniques.

In the conclusion, Asprem summarizes and contextualizes his results. Clearly, esotericism reacted with various, often conflicting responses to the “problem of disenchantment”: the enchanted continuation of views and practices predicated on occult powers, the pursuit of higher knowledge, and the assumption of intermediate beings—the latter being an important factor. In the final section, Asprem refers to insights of the cognitive science of religion regarding the “theologically incorrect” folk-religious assumptions broadly held today. These are seen as parallel to earlier spiritualist and occult convictions.

Without doubt, the study—almost encyclopedic in scope, and at the same time replete with new insights—provides an extraordinary contribution to the clarification of the intricate interrelation of esotericism and science in the early 20th century. However, there are a few minor points in which the study could have been more conclusive. First, major trends in Western theology (beyond the more idiosyncratic approaches of “natural theology”) are rarely mentioned and even less often discussed, although they were influential frames of the religion/science interface (e.g., critical approaches to the Bible, liberal and ecumenical theology). Second, while the study explicitly declares the

inclusion of ethics and the “value sphere” of religion, it largely leaves ethical aspects of disenchantment untouched, including the Weberian view of “value-free” science. For example Weber observed that the “ethics of intention/conscience” favored in many religious traditions was progressively replaced by an “ethics of responsibility,” in line with the ideal of secular politics in a democratic society. Obviously, this change is relevant for the “problem of disenchantment.” Finally, the concept of “open-ended naturalism” as an operative, analytical category could have been made clearer. As a category it serves to denote an attitude shared by psychical researchers, occultists, and parapsychologists who sought to overcome the boundary between “natural” and “supernatural” by declaring (some) objects of esoteric knowledge to be empirically observable—in other words, to negotiate religion and nature in immanentist perspectives. Even though the study demonstrates that actors expressed an attitude of “open access to the absolute” (Wouter Hanegraaff), it is less obvious whether the underlying category of “naturalism” (in “open-ended naturalism”) is appropriate. The reader may wonder if the term “naturalism” is fitting to define an etic category of analysis, given it is at the same time an essential element of emic discourse. What does “empirical” knowledge of the “supernatural” mean if not that the supernatural will be transformed into nature that can be observed? How is it possible to escape the dialectics that emic protagonists of open-ended naturalism may transform the yet unknown into “nature,” and thereby undermine their own “open-endedness”? A solution could be to describe “open-ended naturalism” as merely the cognitive disposition to be open for the supernatural; this, however, seems to transgress the definition of naturalism. Defined in this way, open-ended naturalism turns into an epistemological meta-theory of a unity of nature and non-nature. But these are only follow-up questions inspired by the richness of the study. <>

[Black Death at the Golden Gate: The Race to Save America from the Bubonic Plague](#) by David K. Randall [W.W. Norton, 9780393609455]
A spine-chilling saga of virulent racism, human folly, and the ultimate triumph of scientific progress.

For Chinese immigrant Wong Chut King, surviving in San Francisco meant a life in the shadows. His passing on March 6, 1900, would have been unremarkable if a city health officer hadn't noticed a swollen black lymph node on his groin—a sign of bubonic plague. Empowered by racist pseudoscience, officials rushed to quarantine Chinatown while doctors examined Wong's tissue for telltale bacteria. If the devastating disease was not contained, San Francisco would become the American epicenter of an outbreak that had already claimed ten million lives worldwide. To local press, railroad barons, and elected officials, such a possibility was inconceivable—or inconvenient. As they mounted a cover-up to obscure the threat, ending the career of one of the most brilliant scientists in the nation in the process, it fell to federal health officer Rupert Blue to save a city that refused to be rescued. Spearheading a relentless crusade for sanitation, Blue and his men patrolled the squalid streets of fast-growing San Francisco, examined gory black buboes, and dissected diseased rats that put the fate of the entire country at risk.

In the tradition of Erik Larson and Steven Johnson, Randall spins a spellbinding account of Blue's race to understand the disease and contain its spread—the only hope of saving San Francisco, and the nation, from a gruesome fate.

Review: David K. Randall has written several excellent, approachable books about science and history: [Dreamland: Adventures in the Strange Science of Sleep](#) and [The King and Queen of Malibu: The True Story of the Battle for Paradise](#). His third book, *Black Death at the Golden Gate: The Race to Save America from the Bubonic Plague* provides a fascinating, in-depth look at a little-known episode in American history. In 1900, a San Francisco health official discovered a swollen black lymph node on the body of a deceased Chinese immigrant named Wong Chut King. This discovery signaled an outbreak of bubonic plague, a disease that had killed millions since its resurgence in the 19th century.

San Francisco's initial response left something to be desired, as city officials and press relied on racist pseudoscience to downplay or even deny the extent of the plague threat. Widespread prejudice against Chinese immigrants led to a quarantine of Chinatown. In turn, distrust for authorities led

Chinese immigrants to attempt to conceal victims of the disease. The degree to which racism and poor relations with the Chinese community compromised the response to the plague is a major theme of the book, with Randall tracing the build-up of anti-Chinese sentiment deep into the city's past. San Francisco developed rapidly in the wake of the Gold Rush as a town where "those who were able to survive in this unconstrained land forged new identities as self-made men...." By 1900, the city was "stuck at a crossroads between its rough past and a new future in which gold was no longer plentiful... an uncomfortable reality in which white men could not easily find work, breeding a generation that felt cheated out of the riches once showered upon their grandfathers." In such an environment, it was easy to blame the problems of white men on Chinese immigrants willing to work for low wages. Randall does not attempt to establish parallels with more recent events, but it's difficult to read these passages without thinking about the ways this cycle has repeated itself numerous times in American history.

One of the men whose judgment was sometimes compromised by racist attitudes was a federal health officer named Joseph Kinyoun, a brilliant bacteriologist with poor interpersonal skills. He recognized the threat posed by plague but lacked the political instincts necessary to organize the city's efforts to combat the disease. His mission was further complicated by the press and governing officials, who ridiculed Kinyoun and even denied the existence of the plague for fear that "any acknowledgment of the disease would narrow their city's future." Randall takes pains to show how this short-sighted logic contributed to the rising death toll. One of the themes of *Black Death at the Golden Gate* is the collision between economic interests, political interests and the public good. Concerned about negative reaction to the quarantines, California's governor "announced that he would back legislation that would make it a felony to publish anything that suggested that bubonic plague was present in the state." Randall writes: "Under his proposals, the whole of public health... would be moved out of the realm of fact and into politics...."

The story of the bubonic plague outbreak serves as an excellent lead-in for Randall to examine the advances that created modern cities. In *Black Death*

at the Golden Gate, the focus is on the relatively new concept of sanitation. The germ theory of disease was not yet fully accepted, and the danger posed by rats was not understood. A public health campaign was needed, but Kinyoun was not the man to do it. His de facto replacement, Rupert Blue, becomes the hero of the book. Blue was not a brilliant scientist, but he was skilled at winning people's trust. He lacked Kinyoun's arrogance and domineering nature, and he was willing to build relations with the local Chinese community. Blue instituted a successful campaign to cull the city's enormous rat population and improve the conditions that allowed them to prosper. While his efforts were intended to curb the spread of the plague, they also represent an important step forward into the modern era of sanitation. The outbreak was eventually contained--for the most part--by Blue and a healthy dose of luck. The plague spread relatively slowly in the United States thanks to the prevalence of a particular type of rat flea. Randall emphasizes how close the nation came to an epidemic that might have killed millions. Perhaps as dangerous as the plague itself, however, was the public response. Misinformation, racism, incompetence and short-sighted leadership all contributed to the spread of the disease. Even with the development of better sanitation and vaccines, the human factors that helped create the crisis remain. The hero of San Francisco, Rupert Blue, himself fell short when faced with the enormous challenge posed by the Spanish Flu. The book closes with an epilogue titled "How Close We Came." Here, Randall sounds a note of warning, reminding the reader that "plague has never been fully eradicated from the country" and that some researchers worry that the continued use of antibiotics might lead to a drug-resistant plague. While *Black Death at the Golden Gate* recounts a crisis from our nation's past, it carries clear implications for our future. When the next outbreak occurs, we will need to defeat our own worst instincts as well as the disease. --Hank Stephenson

David K. Randall: *Uncovering the Plague in San Francisco*

Journalist David K. Randall is the author of [Dreamland: Adventures in the Strange Science of Sleep](#) and [The King and Queen of Malibu: The True Story of the Battle for Paradise](#). His third book, [Black Death at the Golden Gate: The Race to Save](#)

[America from the Bubonic Plague](#) recounts a dangerous episode in America's medical history. At the turn of the 20th century, San Francisco faced an outbreak of bubonic plague that was exacerbated by racist attitudes and pseudoscience. The hero of the book is a federal health officer named Rupert Blue who eventually succeeded in containing the disease, potentially saving millions of lives.

I imagine many people have never heard of the story you cover in the book. What led you to it?

The fact that few people know that the bubonic plague once threatened to kill millions of Americans is one of the things that drew me to the story. I grew up in California and once lived in the Bay Area, but I still had never heard of it until I was working on my last book, [The King and Queen of Malibu](#). I uncovered a letter written by one of the main characters in that story that called San Francisco the wickedest place that he had ever seen. That piqued my interest into what was happening in the city at the time, and I soon discovered newspaper articles calling Joseph Kinyoun a fraud for insisting that there was plague in Chinatown and that the whole country was in danger. It was such a pivotal moment not only in the number of lives threatened by the disease, but because of all the issues surrounding it--a fight over federal versus local power, racism, immigration and the inability of scientists to communicate the scale of danger to the public--that are still with us today. *The outbreak's initial discovery in Chinatown fed into widely held racist preconceptions. How did racism influence the response to the outbreak?*

One of the things that made the outbreak of plague seem so relevant to today is how much racism and a backlash against immigration was a driving factor in the story. Asian-Americans in California at the time faced widespread bigotry, due in part to pseudo-scientific theories that held that Asians were a less advanced "race." At the same time, this was just a generation or so after the Gold Rush, and white men in California were for the first time facing a future in which sudden wealth did not seem right around the corner. Anti-immigrant groups like the Workingmen's Party harassed and attacked Asian-American workers, with the leader of the party, Dennis Kearny, often ending his speeches with the invective "The Chinese Must Go."

Into that powder keg you had an outbreak of a terrifying disease in a population that was widely thought of as being unsanitary. The threat of the disease soon became an excuse to implement racist measures like a quarantine of Chinatown and a travel ban that specifically targeted Asian Americans, regardless of where they lived or whether they were exposed to plague. The white population of San Francisco refused to take the plague threat seriously because so-called experts claimed that those with European ancestry could not become infected, allowing the disease to continue to spread. It was only when the disease broke out in majority-white neighborhoods of the city that San Francisco finally confronted the danger it was in.

How did you go about re-creating the lives of relatively obscure people, like plague victim Yuk Hoy? Was it important that you treat victims of the disease like individuals?

I was fortunate to be able to draw from scholarship that focused on the plague outbreaks in Honolulu, San Francisco, Los Angeles and New Orleans, as well as local records, the annual reports of the Public Health Service and materials from the National Archives that together provided some basic biographical aspects like the age, occupation and last known address of each victim. I only wish that I could have had more. Most of the Chinese American victims were poor and illiterate, leaving few records like letters or diaries that would have given more insights into their day to day lives. Treating each victim with dignity seemed like one small way to show that the population of Chinatown was not just the faceless bloc that the press and politicians at the time often treated it as, but instead a community of people whose lives were upended and cut short by a disease that they could not defeat on their own.

Some of Blue's methods of combating the plague seem surprisingly commonsense. Do you think we take for granted the great advances in hygiene in American cities?

One of the things I'm always fascinated by is how the world transitioned into what we recognize as the modern age. Many of those amazing jumps in human progress --the invention of the telephone, the recognition that germs cause disease, the use of electric lights in homes, the development of high-speed long-distance travel like the transcontinental railroad--all came during the lives of one

generation that spanned roughly the end of the Civil War to the start of World War I. Blue's focus on hygiene was just one of the revolutions taking place in America at the time, and it directly influenced how we conceive of life as something that should be long and meaningful. Before, hygiene didn't seem all that important because there was little understanding of how germs spread disease. Blue's work in stopping the spread of plague in San Francisco through what now seem like commonsense means--chiefly, making the city less hospitable to rats--was a powerful demonstration that sanitation could save and extend lives. At the time, an abundance of rats was an accepted part of living in a city largely because it had always been that way and no one knew the extent to which they spread disease.

The book ends with a somewhat ominous note about the disease's continued existence in rodent populations throughout the West. Are you concerned that a drug-resistant version of the disease might again prove a major threat? Would we turn again to Blue's methods?

Plague continues to be a major threat. Though it's considered an ancient disease on a human scale of time, the bacteria that causes the plague is only about 3,000 years old, making it still very early in its evolution. While we currently have drugs that can combat it, the disease could easily mutate to the point where those drugs offer less and less resistance. At the same time, climatic change is contributing to outbreaks of the plague in places like Algeria and Angola where it has not been historically found, increasing the chances of human transmission. Blue's breakthrough was focusing his efforts on the rats that spread the disease rather than punishing the people who contracted it, and if there is another major outbreak-- whether by chance or by bioterrorism--we would likely continue in his footsteps. --Hank Stephenson <>

[LeAnne Howe at the Intersections of Southern and Native American Literature: LeAnne Howe's Native, Interstate, and Global South](#) by Kirstin L. Squint [Southern Literary Studies, LSU Press, 9780807168714]

With the publication of her first novel, [Shell Shaker](#) in 2001, Choctaw writer LeAnne Howe quickly emerged as a crucial voice in twenty-first-century American literature. Her innovative, award-winning

works of fiction, poetry, drama, and criticism capture the complexities of Native American life and interrogate histories of both cultural and linguistic oppression throughout the United States. In the first monograph to consider Howe's entire body of work, [LeAnne Howe at the Intersections of Southern and Native American Literature](#), Kirstin L. Squint expands contemporary scholarship on Howe by examining her nuanced portrayal of Choctaw history and culture as modes of expression. Squint shows that Howe's writings engage with Native, southern, and global networks by probing regional identity, gender power, authenticity, and performance from a distinctly Choctaw perspective—a method of discourse which Howe terms "Choctalking." Drawing on interdisciplinary methodologies and theories, Squint complicates prevailing models of the Native South by proposing the concept of the "Interstate South," a space in which Native Americans travel physically and metaphorically between tribal national and U.S. boundaries. Squint considers Howe's engagement with these interconnected spaces and cultures, as well as how indigeneity can circulate throughout them.

This important critical work—which includes an appendix with a previously unpublished interview with Howe—contributes to ongoing conversations about the Native South, positioning Howe as a pivotal creative force operating at under-examined points of contact between Native American and southern literature.

Kirstin L. Squint is associate professor of English at High Point University. Her articles have appeared in *MEL US*, *Mississippi Quarterly*, *Studies in American Humor*, and elsewhere.

Choctalking and Code Talking in the South(s)
Native stories are power. They create people. They author tribes. —LeAnne Howe, "The Story of America: A Tribalography"

Choctaw verbs have a much broader application, which shades the meaning in ways that English verbs cannot.—LeAnne Howe, *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*

Choctalking
Renowned Spokane/Coeur d'Alene author Sherman Alexie has described Choctaw writer LeAnne Howe as a "genius poet-professor" and said this of her work: "For years, I've hoped that we Native writers will build a 21st century rocket and blast off into

brand new space. LeAnne Howe (along with Adam, Eve, the Three Stooges, the Lone Ranger and Tonto, Crazy Horse and Custer, and the entire cast of Gilligan's Island, along with Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, and five or six smiling Indian elders) has done exactly that" ("Back Cover"). Howe is one of the most diverse and complex writers in American literature today. She writes novels, short stories, poems, plays, documentaries, literary criticism, and memoirs, and it is often the case that multiple genres exist within one of her texts. Her works are funny, tragic, historically informed, and wildly imaginative. In the same way that one cannot easily classify her literary production, one cannot easily classify LeAnne Howe, the writer. She is a college professor now, but she has also worked as a waitress, a journalist, and a government bond trader. She is an enrolled citizen of Oklahoma's Choctaw Nation, deeply invested in the well-being of her family and her communities. She is also a world traveler, giving readings and lectures in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East and was a Fulbright professor in Amman, Jordan, during the 2010-11 academic year.

As Alexie suggests, LeAnne Howe is considered to be a twenty-first-century author, given that her first book-length work was published in 2001. Yet, her literary production began in the mid-1980s when she was a member of an American Indian arts scene in and around Dallas—Fort Worth, Texas. This was part of the literary period dubbed the "Native American Renaissance" by scholar Kenneth Lincoln, an era stretching from 1968 to 1995 (Cox and Justice 3). Many renowned Indigenous authors of this era, including Paula Gunn Allen, Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday, and Simon Ortiz, wrote about their relationship to homelands in the Southwest, while James Welch and Louise Erdrich depicted the lives of tribal peoples on the United States—Canada border. Though a few writers, including Louis Owens and Geary Hobson, wrote compellingly about southeastern Indians, none attempted to dive deeply into colonial-era southeastern Native life and then juxtapose it to contemporary life as LeAnne Howe did in her tour-de-force novel [Shell Shaker](#) (2001).

I decided to embark on a single-author study of LeAnne Howe's work after completing a dissertation at Louisiana State University on representations of American Indian spirituality as

resistance to European and US settler colonialism. One of my dissertation chapters dealt with ceremonies, and it was during my research that I read [Shell Shaker](#). When I began writing that chapter in 2006, there was very little scholarship on Howe's work, even though she had also published a coauthored play, [Indian Radio Days: An Evolving Bingo Experience](#), which had been performed throughout the Midwest in the 1990s; a collection of stories and poems, *Evidence of Red* (2005); individual works in journals and edited collections, and she had written and narrated a PBS documentary, *Indian Country Diaries: Spiral of Fire*, that aired in 2006. In fact, her first play had been performed nearly twenty years before. As a non-Native scholar whose interest in American Indian literature partly stemmed from my own experience teaching in a high school on the Navajo Nation in the 1990s, much of the Native literature I had read was by southwestern writers. I was stunned by the historical and narrative complexity of [Shell Shaker](#) and deeply moved by its depiction of southeastern Natives.

Though I was born in Texas, I grew up in Kentucky, where my family is rooted, and like many non-Natives of the region, I perceived Native peoples as "vanished," despite the occasional references to Cherokee relations within my community. I was in the final stages of completing my dissertation during the spring of 2008 and concerned about the dearth of scholarship on Howe's work, so I decided to take a chance and see if she would grant me an interview. Howe graciously agreed to speak with me at the Society for the Study of Southern Literature conference in Williamsburg, Virginia, where she was an invited readers Muskogee Creek critic and novelist Craig Womack and poet Allison Hedge Coke (of Huron and Cherokee descent) also spoke at the conference, and the experience began to make me think about a discipline that has become increasingly known as the "Native South." Though I presented my own research, it is not a stretch to say that the main reason I went to Williamsburg that year was to interview LeAnne Howe. What I left the conference with, however, was a new way of thinking about American Indian and southern literatures and a desire to spend more time writing about Howe's work. In the years since I began my dissertation, Howe published another novel, *Miko Kings: An American*

Indian Baseball Story (2007), a memoir/travelogue, *Choctalking on Other Realities: New and Selected Stories* (2013), and many scholarly articles. The body of criticism on her work is growing, including articles and interviews, as well as discussion in a number of recent monographs. Dean Rader's *Engaged Resistance: American Indian Art, Literature, and Film from Alcatraz to the NMAI* (2011) provides the most comprehensive study of Howe's work to date, including analysis of all of her book-length publications at that time. Howe's theory of tribalography has also taken hold as a significant critical model within American Indian studies, being both employed and analyzed to the extent that the summer 2014 issue of *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, edited by Joseph Bauerkemper, is entirely devoted to the subject. This is a positive trend, one that I hope keeps growing. In *Activism in the American Novel: Religion and Resistance in Fiction by Women of Color*, Chanette Romero argues that the lack of scholarly attention to [Shell Shaker](#) "is the result of [its] move away from identity politics toward a more complex understanding of the historic and contemporary power of interracial alliances". I agree, but I would also extend this idea to Howe's body of work, arguing that the intricate view of the past she presents, as well as the alliances depicted, need unpacking for readers unfamiliar with Choctaw culture and history, as well as with American Indian culture and history more broadly. The title of my introduction plays on a neologism introduced by LeAnne Howe in "Choctalking on Other Realities," a story in her collection *Evidence of Red*, first published in 2005; the story metamorphosed into a one-woman performance of the same name at the University of Illinois in 2009; the short story then became the title of her 2013 memoir/ travelogue. The proliferation and recycling of Choctalking suggest the import of the idea and the story within the author's oeuvre.¹ I borrowed Howe's word for my own title because I think it suggests a central position from which she approaches critical and creative production. Choctalking can be easily parsed as "Talking Choctaw," which is not the same as speaking Choctaw. How, then, does one "talk Choctaw" in English? Citing Ngugi wa Thiong'o on the relationship between language and culture, Cherokee scholar Jace Weaver concludes,

"Language as the bearer of culture and worldview is undisputed" (That the People Might Live). Ngugi's decision to forswear English, writing only in Kikuyu and Swahili, is an act of resistance to the legacy of colonialism and one of cultural recovery. Given the violent erasures of Indigenous languages through Indian boarding schools and the lack of publishing opportunities for works in Indigenous languages, very few Native writers write in Native languages. Though David Murray argues that Native Americans writing in English are "involved in an ambiguous area of cultural identity", Womack takes issue with the idea of English as a colonizer's language, suggesting that a perception of English only as an oppressor's tool is a victimized stance: What about when Indians have enthusiastically taken up English and reading? Before there were ever federal Canadian residential and U.S. boarding schools, for example, forcing Indian students to learn English, there were several thousand New England Indians reading and writing by the time Sam Occom penned his autobiography in 1770. I am willing to venture that not all of them were forced to speak English, that they were not all victims of literacy.

Womack wants his reader to consider the very definition of English and its relationship to European hegemony by citing the syncretic nature of the language, in particular its influence by—not on—Indigenous languages of the Americas: "Literally, there are thousands of Indian words in English. Maybe Indians colonized English instead of the other way around".

Womack's argument evokes Chinua Achebe's claims in his well-known essay "English and the African Writer" that "[the African writer] should aim at fashioning out an English that is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience ... [but] it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings" (29-30). One way to think about "Choctalking" is that it is a "new" Choctaw-infused English. The Choctaw language is ubiquitous throughout Howe's works, such as the *huksuba* (chaos) that results when colonial and Indigenous worldviews collide in "The Chaos of Angels," the color *okchamali* (both blue and green) that signifies life in Miko Kings, or the Choctaw phrases that bookend *Shell Shaker*. These and many other examples from her writings make it clear that

Howe's approach to the English language is one inflected with Choctaw language and epistemologies.

"Choctalking," or "Talking Choctaw," then, is about cultural coding, the way in which one can speak or express through a Choctaw worldview. In Howe's "Choctalking" neologism, the "Choc" precedes the "talk," emphasizing her tribal affiliation. My conviction that tribal specificity should be a central component when analyzing Native American literature is informed by the writings of literary nationalists such as Weaver, Womack, Robert Warrior, and LeAnne Howe herself. In his seminal *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, Womack argues for more tribal peoples analyzing tribal literatures, and much excellent work has been done along this vein in the years since *Red on Red*'s publication, including the important *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*. As a non-Native scholar of American Indian literature, I do not come from a culture that would inform my work in the same way as American Indian scholars do; however, I think that it is imperative to attempt to analyze a text from within its cultural, political, and historical milieu. For LeAnne Howe, that context is often specifically Choctaw, but it can be intertribal, and it can be trans-Indigenous.

I am also placing Howe's work at the intersection of southern and American Indian literary studies, engaging in a cross-disciplinary endeavor that requires conversation with work being done in both fields and positioning the author as a representative of a Native, interstate, and global South. Native and global Souths are well-known lenses in the field of southern studies; I am introducing the term "Interstate" South as a paradigm both for the in-between national identity of Indigenous south-eastern peoples and for the circulations of these cultures into, within, and outward from the South. Attempting such a cross-disciplinary effort can be tricky, and I appreciate the comments of historian Robbie Etheridge, one of the founders of the journal *Native South*, who has argued that "we ... need to quit patrolling the disciplinary boundaries so much and give each other leeway for making mistakes ... since obviously once one crosses the disciplinary boundary one is bound to make some mistakes" (Howe and Etheridge). Though I attempt to thoroughly discuss LeAnne Howe's oeuvre and her approach to

storytelling, there will be oversights, especially given my comparative approach. One of my goals is to make LeAnne Howe's complex, insightful, comedic, and poignant literary productions more accessible to audiences unfamiliar with the wellsprings from which she draws inspiration. Yet, I am also taking up a call to action by Native Southern literary critic Eric Gary Anderson in his 2007 *Southern Spaces* piece, "On Native Southern Ground: Indigenous Presences and Countercolonial Strategies in Southern Narratives of Captivity, Removal, and Repossession":

I would like American and Southern Studies to reimagine their own provocative presences and absences within Native Studies, to rethink—really rethink—the tenets and governing assumptions of these disciplinary "regions," and to be mindful of their own non-Nativeness, the ways in which they remain settlers, assuming a southern sense of home but at the same time remaining, even today, far from home on living Native ground.

I keep Anderson's cautionary language in mind, as well as James Cox's sober argument in *Muting White Noise: Native American and European American Novel Traditions* that the "most serious scholarly transgression [in the study of Native American literature] involves writing about Native literature without privileging, or even acknowledging, the work of Native scholars and other Native creative writers" (3). Both authors cite works by Osage scholar Robert Warrior on American Indian intellectualism as instrumental to their arguments. Similarly, my study of how LeAnne Howe's "Choctalking" stories, novels, poems, and plays can be read within the genre of southern literature will proceed from the framework of American Indian literary nationalism.

Weaver has argued that American Indian literary nationalism comprises two main agendas: classifying American Indian literatures as a distinct field, rather than a subfield, and criticizing those literatures as such, while also ensuring the work's relevance to Native American communities and their continued struggles for sovereignty ("Splitting the Earth"). LeAnne Howe has been clear about her stance as a literary nationalist on several occasions, such as in her essay in *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective* when she claims she is "writing the red history of [the Choctaws] and illuminating the dynamic nature of Choctaw time".

Her best-known contribution to Native American critical theory is her conception of "tribalography." Tribalography is an Indigenous methodology, an aesthetic approach, and a political position concerned with how American Indians tell stories: Native stories, no matter what form they take (novel, poem, drama, memoir, film, history), seem to pull all the elements together of a storyteller's tribe, meaning the people, the land, and multiple characters and all their manifestations and revelations, and connect these in past, present, and future milieus (present and future milieus mean non-Indians). I have tried to show that tribalography comes from the Native propensity for bringing things together, for making consensus, and for symbiotically connecting one thing to another. ("The Story of America")

Tribalography has proven to be a malleable tool, as employed by scholars such as Bauerkemper, Doerfler, and others. Howe's initial example of tribalography linked Haudenosaunee and US history, relating the creation of the US Constitution to the unification of the six tribes of the Haudenosaunee confederacy. This linkage, in addition to other stories that Indigenous peoples shared with colonizing Europeans, such as how to plant their crops, leads Howe to the conclusion that "our stories made the immigrants Americans", defining the word "American" in a clearly Indigenous way. Ultimately, Howe believes that American Indian storytelling is "foundational" to American culture and identity and is akin to Craig Womack's searing claim in *Red on Red*:

I say that tribal literatures are not some branch waiting to be grafted onto the main trunk. Tribal literatures are the tree, the oldest literatures in the Americas, the most American of American literatures. We are the canon. Native people have been on this continent at least thirty thousand years, and the stories tell us we have been here longer than that, that we were set down by the Creator on this continent, that we originated here. For much of this time period, we have had literatures. Without Native American literature, there is no American canon.... I am saying with all the bias I can muster that our American canon, the Native literary canon of the Americas, predates their American canon. I see them as two separate canons.

Howe's vision of tribalography stresses unification, unlike Womack's separatist stance in *Red on Red*;

however, similar to Womack, Howe asserts that narrative form in American literature is taking its cue from Native American literature, "not the other way around" ("Choctawan"). Howe demonstrates more specific concerns with a Choctaw national literature in her essay "Ohoyo Chishba Osh," exploring the story of how corn came to the Choctaws and its function as "national [narrative]" (O'Brien, ed., *Pre-removal Choctaw History*). Howe describes how Ohoyo Chishba Osh, or "Woman Who Stretches Way Back," brought seeds that "made it possible for the Choctaws to grow into one of the largest Indian confederacies in the Southeast".

In "Ohoyo Chishba Osh" LeAnne Howe undertakes to demonstrate a Choctaw literary tradition that extends back to the earliest oral stories, yet her work can also be viewed as part of a lineage that is traceable through nineteenth- and twentieth-century Choctaw writers and intellectuals including Israel Folsom, David McCurtain, Ben D. Locke, and James L. McDonald. There are direct connections between Howe's work and that of Muriel Hazel Wright, an acclaimed historian and popular writer who served as editor of the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, a scholarly journal published by the Oklahoma Historical Society, for eighteen years (Littlefield and Parins, "Muriel Hazel Wright"). In particular, Wright's piece "Legend of Nanih Wayah" can be read as a literary antecedent to the eighteenth-century scenes in [Shell Shaker](#). Both Wright and Howe have a gift for humanizing their historical characters, placing people in convincing ancient locales and conveying believable fears, joys, triumphs, and losses. In the case of "Legend of Nanih Wayah," a young man who is called the Dreamer of the Chahta comes into conflict with a hunter who is the son of Talking Warrior. This young hunter chastises the Dreamer for killing a panther that he claims should have been his own prize and calls him "bone picker" as an epithet. The Dreamer is disheartened and ruminates on his sense of marginalization from his peers. He consults the Prophet Chief who tells him the story of how bone gatherers became important figures to the Choctaw because of their "sacred duty of caring for the dead". The Dreamer is a descendent of the bone gatherers who were chosen "because they were intelligent, trustworthy and had open countenances". Wright's theme of Choctaw internal

conflict over the role of bone gatherers presages Howe's own circulation of that theme in both her earliest cowritten play, *Big PowWow*, and in [Shell Shaker](#). The Prophet Chief in Wright's story explains to the Dreamer that "bone picker" was the name that the Nahullos (white people) called the Na Foni Aiowah (bone gatherers), suggesting that the young hunter had internalized a negative colonial stereotype of the Choctaw. This type of internalized colonialism is demonstrated in Howe's later characters Blossom (*Big Pow Wow*) and Delores ([Shell Shaker](#)).

Phillip Carroll Morgan's essay on nineteenth-century Choctaw literary criticism in *Reasoning Together* provides another bridge connecting LeAnne Howe to a Choctaw literary and intellectual tradition. Morgan's archival digging in the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma yielded a pre-Removal Choctaw text by James L. McDonald called "The Spectre and the Hunter, a Legend of the Choctaws." Morgan calls the piece the "Spectre Essay" because the original title suggests a mere transcription and translation of oral tradition, but as Morgan delineates, it is much more than that. In addition to the translated oral narrative, McDonald comments on and contextualizes the text. Morgan argues that the "essay represents the earliest example yet found of Choctaw literary criticism and that [McDonald's] 'performance' of oral traditional forms in the new literacy presuppose what have become some of the defining features of late-twentieth and early-twentieth century Native American literary criticism". Morgan describes McDonald's approach as "formalist" in that its critique focuses on the form of the oral narrative more so than the content. He notes that such an approach is common in contemporary American Indian criticism because "the forms and structures of the oral stories duplicate themselves to varying degrees in the written texts". Yet, Morgan is cautious to distinguish such work from traditional formalism: "Considering the paradigms of the culture studies era we find ourselves operating within in twenty-first century English departments, a critical revolution or two removed from the formalisms of the early- and mid-twentieth century, one might describe some of the propensities of current Native scholars as a neo-formalism, or more specifically, Native formalism".

Such an example of Native, or in this case, Choctaw formalism, can be found in LeAnne Howe's "Ohoyo Chishba Osh," in which she details the story of how corn came to the Choctaws. The story was transcribed by Horatio Bardwell Cushman in 1899, a white man Howe describes as "an invited tribal guest" because of his lifelong relationship with the Choctaw homelands and his support of the Choctaw Nation. Though Howe's analysis of the piece does investigate content, such as the significance of the setting, she also focuses heavily on the formalistic element of call and response, ultimately adding her own response to the piece, a play called *Unknown Women*, an oral literary form, embedded within her own critical analysis. Similarly, Howe begins her contribution to *Reasoning Together* with a contemporary story about a character named *Embarrassed Grief* whom she connects to *Ohoyo Chishba Osh*, with the claim that they both "came from far away only to leave behind a strange gift that would benefit the people". Howe makes the point that her theory of tribalography is based in engaging in a "conversation with the past and the present to create a future", much like McDonald's own work. Morgan describes the "lively body of prerule removal correspondence between [McDonald] and his young Choctaw intellectual peers—Peter Pitchlynn, Henry Vose, David Folsom, and others", noting that McDonald wrote the "Spectre Essay" at the request of Peter Pitchlynn within a couple of months of the signing of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, which resulted in the Choctaws' relocation to Indian Territory. Morgan argues that the timing suggests Pitchlynn's own concern "that if the Choctaws failed to develop their own school curricula, much would be lost in terms of Native epistemology, belief, and practice". Thus, the relationship of the "Spectre Essay" to past, present, and future suggests its tribalographic nature.

As Weaver has noted, literary nationalism entails a commitment to Native communities, and this can certainly be demonstrated in LeAnne Howe's writing. Events involving Choctaw tribal government corruption, as depicted in *Shell Shaker*, are partly derived from Howe's own involvement with an advocacy group, Choctaws for Democracy, in the 1990s (Howe, "The Native South"). She has stated that she hopes *Shell Shaker* will "help other Choctaws remember their own stories so that they might bring more of the past back into existence"

("Choctawan"). Much of her work concerns the impact of European and US settler colonialism on Native communities, such as depictions of Indian Removal (*Shell Shaker* and *Indian Radio Days: An Evolving Bingo Experience*), the General Allotment Act of 1887 (*Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*), and cultural stereotypes (*Indian Radio Days* and *The Mascot Opera*, a Minuet). The documentary she coproduced with Jim Fortier, *Playing Pastime: American Indians, Softball, and the Politics of Survival*, investigates the importance of fast-pitch softball as a means of community-building for Oklahoma tribes. Howe's work has the same kind of potential "to forge a progressive social space" that Alexander Hollenberg suggests is possible in his discussions of *Red on Red*, because of "its very separation from the conventional non-Native canon". For Howe, that "progressive social space" is a continued struggle for sovereignty that is intricately connected to storytelling, as she argues in *Reasoning Together*: "We are people of specific landscapes, and our specific stories are told about our emergence from a specific place".

Code Talking

In the spring of 2004, LeAnne Howe's coauthored article "An Ensemble Performance of Indians in the Act: Native Theatre Past and Present" appeared in *Studies in American Indian Literatures*. The article focused on the question of "insider knowledge", that is, how do oral traditions and tribal histories inform contemporary Native American theater? Howe's section of the article concentrated on Choctaw oral tradition and performance and what she learned from staging the second play she cowrote with Roxy Gordon, *Indian Radio Days*. She describes how, in 1993, during her tenure at the University of Iowa, she organized a number of American Indian student actors from Oklahoma's south between condition forced upon southeastern Natives through US settler colonial law that creates a manifold relationship to place. The reunification of Oklahoma and Mississippi Choctaws in *Shell Shaker* comes in the form of the funeral ceremony, led by Delores Love, who has been called back to Mississippi by the land itself, the literal mud of Nanih Waiya, which manifests in a bowl of bread dough she mixes for her family. The mud gives her a vision of her people's birth at the Nanih Waiya, which she interprets as a message to bury Redford McAlester's body there in order to "placate his

troubled spirit". The funeral ceremony comprises women from Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, and Oklahoma, leading to what Delores describes as "a miraculous beginning as she and the other Chahta women of the Southeast join hands and sing", a hopeful ending of return and reunification. Like the Nanih Waiya mud in Delores's bread bowl, the Interstate South operates as a nexus of relationships to place, spiraling outward from Choctaw origin stories on southeastern land.

The first three chapters of LeAnne Howe at the Intersections of Southern and Native American Literature play around and through these ideas of Native and Interstate Souths, resisting "mainstream, familiar concepts of a bordered South" (Anderson, "South to a Red Place"). The first chapter, "Choctaw Homescapes on the Gulf Coast," investigates LeAnne Howe's representations of southern spaces/places, specifically in Louisiana and Mississippi, the ancient and contemporary homelands of Choctaw peoples. The analysis spans both of her novels, [Shell Shaker](#) and *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*, her play [Indian Radio Days: An Evolving Bingo Experience](#), and her collection *Evidence of Red: Poems and Prose*, considering Choctaw relationships with physical spaces and the epistemological implications of those relationships, particularly within the context of European and US settler colonialism. The concept of "Indigenous groundwork at colonial intersections" introduced by D. Anthony Tyeme Clark and Malea Powell forms the theoretical framework for the chapter, taking into account both physical spaces and theoretical possibilities for what space may mean in light of a history of removals, treaty making and breaking, reservation creation, and continued struggles for recognition, rights, and land. In addition to Clark and Powell's work, I discuss the ways in which Martyn Bone's postsouthern study of place is both useful and problematic for an analysis of the Native South. The chapter first examines the selected primary sources and their representations of actual physical places in the Southeast such as trade routes, emergence mounds, and ancient stickball fields. Since "Indigenous groundwork" is also about the theoretical meaning of space, the analysis explores struggles against and for hegemony on southeastern land within Indigenous-Indigenous relationships, Indigenous-

European relationships, and cross-cultural alliances against oppression. In addition, "Indigenous groundwork" is concerned with the interconnectedness of land to spiritual beliefs and the implications of disconnection from that land; thus, discussion of Indian Removal and Howe's depictions of its impact on the Choctaws historically and in the present plays a valuable role in my argument. Lastly, I connect the American Indian nationalist concerns of "Indigenous groundwork" to work being done in the new field of Native Southern literary studies, establishing links between the two. Though this chapter's focus on southeastern space and place suggests that it falls within my classification of Howe as writer of the Native South, it also introduces the intertwined relationship of a Native and Interstate South.

The second chapter, "Gender and the Sacred: Healers, Prophets, and Ceremonies," offers more examples of the braided relationship between Native and Interstate Souths. This analysis of [Shell Shaker](#), *Miko Kings*, and *Evidence of Red* considers the ways that men and women in a matrilineal Choctaw society operate as *alikchi* (healers) and other spiritual practitioners. Though the research in this chapter relies heavily on the work of Choctaw historian Michelene Pesantubbee, who has attempted to rectify the dearth of scholarly inquiry on the roles of Choctaw women, it also aligns my approach with the movement toward gender analysis within the field of southern literary criticism. The chapter begins by examining the relationship between the feminine, the earth, and the corn plant for the Choctaw. I explicate Howe's depictions of Ohoyo Osh Chisba, Corn Woman, and Ohoyo Ikbi, First Woman, in the creation stories of the Choctaw peoples in *Evidence of Red*, arguing that they are spiritual matriarchs to Howe's strong women healers, Shakbatina and Delores Love of [Shell Shaker](#) and Ezol Day of *Miko Kings*. The chapter also discusses a male healer in *Miko Kings*, Kerwin, an Ohoyo Holba ("like a woman but not"), specific to Choctaw cultural traditions (Howe, "Choctawan"). Another significant spiritual role played by men in both novels is *hopaii* (prophet), a figure who can communicate with spirit beings. Because of the spiritual aspects of these characters, they enact a variety of ceremonies to heal themselves, other individuals, and their communities. Ultimately I argue that the numerous ceremonies in

both of Howe's novels create larger ceremonial events, the novels themselves; I support this idea with evidence about the way Howe uses language to frame each narrative. In addition, I claim that the Choctaw-specific gender roles discussed in the chapter disrupt a Western tradition of patriarchy and gender binarism and recuperate cultural and spiritual practices overrun by colonialism. The third chapter, "Interstate Simulations and Postindian Warriors," mostly shifts away from direct representations of Choctaws within southeastern landscapes to engage more deeply in how indigeneity circulates to create an Interstate South. It aims its lens at the ways that "Indianness" is performed in [Shell Shaker](#); Miko Kings; Evidence of Red; [Indian Radio Days](#); The Mascot Opera, A Minuet; Indian Country Diaries: Spiral of Fire; Choctalking on Other Realities; and Howe's unpublished play, Big Pow Wow, including the material gains and emotional losses that result from such simulations. These performances resist dominant cultural ideology, both by parodying stereotypes and by portraying a number of characters I read as "postindian warriors" (Vizenor Anishinaabe author Gerald Vizenor's neologism describes those who defy simulations of Indianness in culture and in its artifacts, such as Western movies, sports teams' mascots, and new age spiritualism, by arming themselves with "humor, new stories, and survivance". Vizenor's concern with simulated Indianness parallels Scott Romine's study of simulated southernness, and I draw the two together through an analysis of Howe's representations of Native and Interstate Souths. The chapter begins with a deconstruction of the European Enlightenment creation of the "Noble Savage" as depicted by Howe in a series of satirical poems that also feature characters including Indian Mascot and Pocahontas and continues to track the way Howe ironically resists stereotypical representations of Native peoples by giving them new life across the spectrum of her work. The chapter also investigates Howe's depictions of Indians "playing Indian," in California, Oklahoma, or among the Cherokees of North Carolina, demonstrating that such performances can have detrimental emotional effects on American Indians. My argument concludes with the ways that Howe's characters, and LeAnne Howe herself, as playwright and performer, act as "postindian

warriors" through their humorous resistance of the construct of Indianness which has been attached to the Indigenous peoples of the Americas since Christopher Columbus's original misnomer. Chapter 4, "Choctalking Global (Dis)Connections," addresses representations of global culture by Howe in [Shell Shaker](#), [Indian Radio Days](#), Evidence of Red, Choctalking on Other Realities, and the blogs written during her tenure as a Fulbright professor in Jordan during 2010-11. I situate these representations within contemporary theoretical discussions regarding globalization, in particular, James Peacock's arguments about the global South, Chadwick Allen's ideas about trans-indigeneity, and Jace Weaver's conception of a Red Atlantic. The chapter begins with an analysis of global economic connections/disconnections by first interrogating capitalist elements of Indian gaming as depicted through the machinations of the corrupt casino chief in [Shell Shaker](#) and the possibility of intra—solar system Indian gaming in [Indian Radio Days](#). The analysis continues with an examination of the commodification and appropriation of Native American cultures such as the global use (and abuse) of the sacred corn plant in Evidence of Red. The chapter then turns to global political and cultural connections/disconnections through its analysis of the short story "Choctalking on Other Realities," expanding upon my early, tribally specific definition of the term "Choctalking" and investigating its cross-cultural dimensions. This argument is extended through my analyses of Howe's travel essays "I Fuck Up in Japan" and "Yaa Jordan, Yaa 'Ayouni." Howe's work also represents life-affirming cultural cross-currents such as the intersection of Choctaw spirituality and Sufism in [Shell Shaker](#) and the Jordanian birds singing in Arabic that connect her to Choctaw birds in her homelands which she details in her travel blogs. The chapter closes with a return to Howe's claims as an American Indian literary nationalist and puts them in conversation with current theories about cosmopolitanism and trans-indigeneity, in light of the author's (and her characters') global outlook and adventures.

The concluding chapter places my analysis within the larger field of Native Southern literary studies. Though at this point, only one other monograph of this nature has been published, Melanie Benson Taylor's *Reconstructing the Native South: American*

Indian Literature and the Lost Cause, several scholars have been publishing essays and organizing conference panels on this topic, especially in the last ten years. In this chapter I make links between my study of LeAnne Howe, her forthcoming works, and the works being done by others in the field; one example is her theorization of "embodied tribalography" in *Choctalking on Other Realities*, which is integral to the new play she is cowriting with Kuna/ Rappahannock actress and playwright Monique Mojica called *Sideshow Freaks and Circus Injuns*. This new work intersects with innovative research being done by Eric Gary Anderson on southeastern earthworks. I also argue for more approaches to Native Southern literary studies, including additional single-author studies of Native Southern writers, comparative analyses of works by Native Southern and southern authors, investigations of nineteenth-century and other archival materials, and discussions of the impact of institutionalizing Indigenous studies in the New South, such as Native American studies programs at major universities in Georgia, Florida, and North Carolina.

My second interview with the Choctaw author, which appears here as the appendix, "The Native South, Performance, and Global TransIndigeneity: A Conversation with LeAnne Howe," took place on March 23, 2013, at the Native American Literature Symposium (NALS) in Minneapolis. The interview begins with an exploration of Howe's perception of herself and her work within a southern cultural context, as well as her frustrations with the fields of southern literature and southern studies for what she views as a longstanding disregard for Native Americans' presences in the South. Howe's anger comes from the significance of land to Choctaw cultural and spiritual traditions and the history of ethnic cleansing that accompanied settler colonialism. Howe also connects Oklahoma's culture to the South because it became the space occupied by relocated southeastern Indigenous peoples. The conversation then turns to Howe's coauthored play-in-progress, *Sideshow Freaks and Circus Injuns*. The authors' hope is that the play will revitalize Native performance strategies, and Howe explains how such strategies are connected to ancient southeastern ceremonies. I also ask Howe about her other in-progress work, a novel about a Choctaw missionary who travels to the Middle East in 1913

and stays through the Arab Revolt. Her description of the novel leads to a comparative analysis of tribalism in the United States and in the Middle East, an interest of Howe's for a number of years. The conversation then turns toward formal strategies in Howe's current works, including the use of mixed media, and her own differentiations between story and history. The interview ends with a brief discussion of humor and how the author uses it both in her writing and in her life.

My approach to Howe's body of work defies the expectations of traditional literary criticism because I circle back to the same texts again and again as my lens widens from the local to the global. This methodology mirrors traditional Indigenous American conceptions of time and space in the Southeast and elsewhere. In chapter 2, I discuss Paula Gunn Allen's assertion that American Indians perceive time cyclically and space spherically. Howe's character Ezol Day in *Miko Kings* notes the circular nature of ceremonies such as stomp dances and ball games. Yet my approach is more of a spiral than a circle, a land-based analysis that moves from the Choctaws' traditional home in the Gulf South to the lands that become their home in Oklahoma to their global presence as represented in the works of LeAnne Howe. This spiraling metaphor can be found at the beginning of her documentary about the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, *Indian Country Diaries: Spiral of Fire*, when Howe connects the language of her first essay on tribalography, "The Story of America: A Tribalography," to the Cherokee belief in a sacred fire: "Native stories have power. They create people. They author tribes. They burn through our lives like a sacred spiral of fire." This Cherokee cultural reference is important for Howe because the documentary combines her own desire to learn more about her Cherokee birth father with the tribe's contemporary lifeways. She ends the documentary with the image of a Cherokee double-weave basket in which "one story [is] woven within another story inside another and another" In addition to using a set of spiraling frameworks to investigate Howe's work, I am also attempting to demonstrate the ways Howe's stories are interwoven, creating cyclic patterns as she has moved through time as a writer.

I chose to embark on a single-author study of LeAnne Howe's work because I am fascinated with

the connections she makes between cultures, the intellectual rigor that underpins all of her creative and critical works, and her ability to use humor in the most difficult of situations. I also see her writing as a model for Native Southern literary studies: Howe is the daughter of a Choctaw woman and a Cherokee man, who was adopted into a Cherokee family, and who has spent her life's work examining and envisioning the world through her identity as a Choctaw woman and as a southeastern Native. Howe tells a poignant story in *Indian Country Diaries: Spiral of Fire* which seems synecdochal of her own position: she recalls a conversation with her aged Cherokee mother, a painter. One of her last paintings was of a girl on the Trail of Tears looking back to the mountains she was leaving. The image contains both the interstate movement of southeastern Natives and the commitment of those removed to find ways to maintain their ancestral homelands, in this case through art. The girl depicted in the painting is LeAnne Howe. Like her representation in the painting, Howe is dynamic, adapting to the situation at hand; yet, she will not forget her ancestors. No matter what the subject matter, Howe makes clear that she is Choctalking to her reader, a cultural process that was born on southeastern tribal lands and that continues to exist in and circulate throughout and beyond the colonial boundaries imposed on them. <>

[Savage Conversations](#) by LeAnne Howe, with a foreword by Susan Power [Coffee House Press, 9781566895316]

May 1875: Mary Todd Lincoln is addicted to opiates and tried in a Chicago court on charges of insanity. Entered into evidence is Ms. Lincoln's claim that every night a Savage Indian enters her bedroom and slashes her face and scalp. She is swiftly committed to Bellevue Place Sanitarium. Her hauntings may be a reminder that in 1862, President Lincoln ordered the hanging of thirty-eight Dakotas in the largest mass execution in United States history. No one has ever linked the two events—until now. *Savage Conversations* is a daring account of a former first lady and the ghosts that tormented her for the contradictions and crimes on which this nation is founded.

Critical Appraisal

From our reviewer's provisional comments: "A haunting play that evokes the guts of horror and guilt in the insanity of Mary Todd Lincoln: where

madness is the only sanity in an America of exception, opulence and power. Simple in its setting, Mary Todd, isolated in her sanitarium room, shut away alone in her anguished of dream of redemption, haunted in the presence of only two characters, an Amerindian man and a rope in the shape of a hangman's noose, that wreaths as a chorus for Abe's distraught widow confronted by the solitary native American conscience. A powerful read and a play I want to see produced and performed."

Excerpt: I still remember my surprise when reading, *The Insanity File: The Case of Mary Todd Lincoln* by Mark E. Neely Jr. and R. Gerald McMurtry (1986). I'd recently visited the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois, and purchased a few books, including *The Insanity File*. I was reading along when the words "attributed the fiendish work inside her head to an Indian spirit," leaped off the page. Mary Todd Lincoln said an American Indian spirit caused the anguish and pain she was experiencing each night in 1873. Why hadn't I known this, I wondered. At the time I was teaching at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the American Indian Studies and English departments. Over the next seven years, I read more about Mrs. Lincoln and conferred with colleagues and friends about why she believed an American Indian was haunting her. Many books were important to my research: *The Madness of Mary Lincoln* by Jason Emerson (2007), *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography* by Jean H. Baker (1987), *House of Abraham: Lincoln and the Todds, a Family Divided by War* by Stephen Berry (2007), and *Lincoln's Melancholy: How Depression Challenged a President and Fueled His Greatness* by Joshua Wolf Shenk (2005). I also read local and state newspapers of the nineteenth century that helped contextualize the era the book is set in.

Susan Power: LeAnne Howe was living and teaching in Illinois in 2008 as the state was on the cusp of celebrating Abraham Lincoln's two hundredth birthday the following year. As scholars delved into well-traveled Lincoln archives in search of fresh perspectives on old stories, LeAnne was intrigued by all the fuss.

Being Native American in this country means often having a very different take on American history and historic figures generally accepted as national

heroes. Just because they're your heroes doesn't make them automatically ours, since what benefited non-Native settlers was often dangerously harmful to indigenous communities. So from the very outset of her investigation, LeAnne's analysis of Lincoln history was brilliantly original, innovative, and fascinating. She drew conclusions that were wildly different from those that came before, yet she made a good case for her astonishing insights. I was honored to take the journey with her, hear what new theories leaped to mind while she sorted through old papers and familiar stories. As she read biographies, letters, and diaries, she became increasingly interested in the former First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln. Perhaps because Mary's own story is compelling, perhaps because LeAnne is Choctaw—a tribal nation following matrilineal kinship ties that invest Choctaw women with enormous political power—LeAnne focused on this troubled woman who was the mother of a nation while its territories were awash in the blood of a vicious civil war. And what she thought of Mary Todd Lincoln was riveting.

LeAnne phoned me one day to share an exciting revelation she'd had as she tracked the various illnesses of the Lincolns' four children, only one of whom survived to full adulthood. She said the boys seemed to revive when they were in the care of people other than their mother, but would often fail again soon after Mary returned to nurse them, dose them. LeAnne suspected Mary Todd Lincoln might have suffered from Munchausen syndrome by proxy. I gasped at her words, how unexpected yet profoundly sensible they were given what I knew of Mary and her desperate need for attention—first from her father, as a worshipful daughter having to compete with fifteen siblings, and then from her husband with his brutal schedule and professional obligations. While Mary absolutely supported her husband in his political ambitions, she was often left alone to manage their affairs. Munchausen syndrome by proxy is a rare disorder whereby a parent or caregiver seeks the sympathetic attention of others by exaggerating the symptoms of their children, or inventing symptoms, or making the children ill, sometimes fatally. LeAnne couldn't be positive of this diagnosis, but as her version of Mary Todd Lincoln began to develop, this possibility informed the world of [Savage Conversations](#).

Through LeAnne's research I learned that after the assassination of President Lincoln, Mary's mental health continued to decline, and by the 1870s, she was complaining to her doctor of nightly visits from a violent "Indian," who she said scalped her, cut bones from her cheeks, made slits in her eyelids, sewing them open. Who was this "Indian"? LeAnne wondered. Why did he haunt Mary's imagination? Another intuitive leap told her he was Dakota, one of the thirty-eight Dakota men hanged in a mass killing the day after Christmas in 1862. Mary's husband signed the order of their execution. LeAnne told me this news in a whisper, respectful, tactful, aware that these murdered men were members of my own tribal nation, my relatives, mindful that I grew up hearing stories of all the damage that was done to my people by President Lincoln, his administration, his troops and generals. The terrible impact he had on the Dakota nation is usually omitted in Lincoln biographies and films. The president lives on through worshipful legends and scholarship, while Dakota people and their stories are overlooked, ignored by mainstream society. LeAnne's character Savage Indian asks Mary, "Who says Abe is dead?" I shivered at the question, realizing that Abe will never be dead, not while his story lives on. And were it not for LeAnne's discovery of the Dakota character whose voice she resurrects from a mass grave, and for the dedicated work of Dakota writers and educators, his would be the ultimate death—an erasure of his experience.

When I first heard LeAnne perform excerpts of [Savage Conversations](#), I was awed by the power of her dialogue. Her emphatic words singed my breath. With a few deft lines she introduced the dark history I'd grown up hearing from my Dakota mother and grandmother, passed down from my great-great-grandfather, Chief Mahto Nunpa (Two Bear). He was living in Dakota Territory in 1862 but had heard of the hard times our relatives were suffering in Minnesota. They were going hungry, their children starving, yet money owed to them by treaty was delayed, and the trader whose store carried all the supplies the Dakota needed to survive refused to extend them credit. He offered them nothing but the most cruel words: "If they are hungry, let them eat grass or dung." Our relatives rose up in their misery and killed white settlers who feasted off our territory like greedy locusts,

refusing to honor treaty agreements they said they would never break. In retaliation for the violence in Minnesota, Northern generals declared war on all Dakota people, whether they were part of the desperate uprising or not. Ultimately hundreds of Dakota people were massacred, including many members of Two Bear's village. And on a startlingly beautiful morning in 1862, thirty-eight Dakota men passed through a mob of four thousand jeering white people. They ascended with great dignity a scaffold that was built for the purpose of hanging them simultaneously. After the order was given to release the platform, many took a long time to die. One man's rope broke and he fell to the ground. A new rope was summoned in order to hang him again. Once all the Dakota were gone, a cheer burst from the crowd. This is the terrible story I hear LeAnne's Savage Indian reference in his remarks, this man whose name is lost to Mary, who sees him as nothing more than a caricature dreamed up in her nightmares.

LeAnne was well into writing an early draft of *Savage Conversations* when a new character arrived, seemingly from nowhere: The Rope. The Rope cannot contain his anger, his violent work; he "seethes." He appears as a noose. He tells us, "I come when I'm called," and "This is how I make brothers and sisters." He begins to fashion another noose with his hands, creating relatives, his brothers and sisters. The words sound so innocent, but the action tells all: as he winds more rope into another noose, I can't help thinking of all the rope that in human hands has viciously strung up so many people of color—the horrific tradition of lynching in America. The Rope is a merciless truth-teller. The Rope's appearance in LeAnne's project confirmed for me that this was sacred work. To underscore this conclusion I soon learned from LeAnne that the same week The Rope manifested in her text, one of the original nooses used in the mass execution of 1862 had been unearthed at Fort Snelling in Minnesota. The instrument of Savage Indian's death had been preserved as a curiosity, then was hidden for countless years only to reemerge as LeAnne's story developed on the page.

LeAnne Howe has been my favorite writer since I first came across her work in the late 1980s. She is always a step ahead of nearly everyone else's ideas. She is fearless. Her characters break my heart and then mend it. Her vision is utterly unique.

Her Savage Indian character tells Mary, whose eyes he has skewered open to make her look at everything she never wanted to see: "With your eyes sewn open you still see nothing." Mary isn't able to see beyond the madness that will ultimately claim her, but I am the grateful beneficiary of LeAnne's perceptive vision in this book that burns through accepted stories like fire, calling me to look harder. We create the world and unmake it with our stories. There are times when only imagination can save us.

Excerpt: CATAFALQUE

June 1875

Bellevue Place Sanitarium, 333 S. Jefferson Street, Batavia, Illinois

Midnight, Mary's bedroom. The underarms of her nightdress are badly soiled. Her small feet are swollen, the skin paper-thin. She speaks to Mr. Lincoln as if he's in her room.

Savage Indian has a small box on his lap filled with her jewelry. He fingers each piece and finally fastens a pearl necklace around his neck.

MARY TODD LINCOLN

Nightly, I examine our ruined heads in my hand mirror: yours and mine.

Our eyes dangle like dull grapes on a broken vine. Is it the candlelight?

SAVAGE INDIAN

Watches her with menacing eyes but does not move.

MARY TODD LINCOLN

I touch the blemish on your face, finger your blood-stained shirt; a drop of spittle has escaped your tight lips, your bare feet clammy as fish, all there, and here; I kiss the mirror, beg you to wake, fight to catch your attention through some mad, theatrical gesture, remember? My bed, always a catafalque to you: oh let fly my flesh, hair, and eyelash; pay the nightjar who regularly serenades and, like us, steals the milk of goats.

Here, at last, I'll tell it all: I did wish you dead, sir, eight thousand thirty-nine times for all the days you ran sideways from our home, whistling a nightjar's tune. Pay them all now, sir, before dawn's light.

SAVAGE INDIAN

Reads aloud the inscription of her wedding ring.

Love Is Eternal.

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