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Editorial board's recommendations

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Editorial Board's Recommendations

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The following pages bring an innovation to the journal – the list of works selected by each member of our Editorial Board. The main purpose of this section is to offer inspiration from a wide variety of topics related to religion. What are our editors interested in? Which new information “shook their world” a little bit recently? It can be a film, a book, a podcast, a conference, an album, a game, an article, or even a person. We want to broaden the range of what can be inspirational in an academic setting. The recommendations are vivid and personal, yet educational.

The suggestions were curated during the early months of 2024. Each editor provided three recommendations, consisting of quotations of the official annotations (if available) and commentaries of individual importance. For the reasons of space constraints, the annotation quotations can be abbreviated. We hope you will find inspiration and new perspectives in the whole *Sacra* volume, and especially in this section.

Roman Galovič

Braude, A. (2001). *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. [Book]

In *Radical Spirits*, Ann Braude contends that the early women's rights movement and Spiritualism went hand in hand. Her book makes a convincing argument for the importance of religion in the study of American women's history.

This is a double recommendation paired with *Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (2004) by Alex Owen. *Radical Spirits* and *Darkened Room* are “twin” seminal works of feminist anthropological studies on spiritualism. By their very nature, they deconstruct the grand narrative of secularism which depicts a fight between secular progressive forces against dark and conservative forces of religion.

Among complex analyses of gender roles and notions, the books show the role of the spirit medium as the first one in strict Victorian hierarchies that enabled women to leave the domestic sphere and become public authorities.

Graeber, D. (2015). *Radical Alterity Is Just Another Way of Saying “Reality”*: A Reply to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 5(2), pp. 1–41. [Academic article]

As a response to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's critique of my essay ‘Fetishes are gods in the process of construction,’ this paper enters into critical engage-

ment with anthropological proponents of what has been called the ‘ontological turn.’

We read this article at my seminar about the ontological turn and several of my students were thrilled about it: and for a good reason. Graeber writes without any trace of ironic or intellectual bile. He treats the authors he critiques with respect, while making clear and insightful points.

He also strikes a balance between the personal and academic and thus comes across not only as an academic expert but also as a relatable human being, which results in a lucid and pleasant style of writing. I would recommend it as a staple of an excellent anthropological article, even if readers are not interested in the current anthropological debates.

Genesis. (1973). *Selling England by the Pound*. Charisma Records. [Album]

From a completely different sort of recommendation, I would mention one of my beloved albums from one of my most beloved bands. The relevance for the study of religions is arguably loose, but I think few bands were so brilliant in “mythological presentation of the present” as early Genesis.

Selling England by the Pound is a prime example of this ability to compose contemporary social critique in tones and contours of fairy tales and myths of old, while keeping the humorous edge and bite of the satire. Whether it is supermarket puns intertwined with explicitly mythological Greek and Shakespearian themes throughout poetic and wistful melodies grieving for disappearing English pastures, or a gang war performed as a romanticized Robin Hoodian battle, *Selling England by the Pound* remains in my ears as one of the most captivating tellings of a traditional “English myth of vanishing England” both in music and in lyrics.

Eva Götzingerová

Glücklich, A. (2001). *Sacred Pain: Hurting the Body for the Sake of the Soul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Book]

Physical pain ranks as one of the great evils of human life, not far behind death. Yet, religious individuals and groups around the world and throughout history have inflicted pain on themselves and on others in pursuit of religious goals. Despite this, no broad explanation for the uses of pain has emerged, and this book seeks to remedy this lack. Glücklich shows that a ritually controlled regimen of pain can produce a transformation of consciousness in which personal identity gives way to identification with God, Truth, or other spiritual ideals. [...] This book helps us to understand “sacred pain” from the perspective of its practitioners, opening a window onto a mysterious world of experience.

The first chapter of this book was a study material for one of the classes within the course *Religion and Senses* at Universität Leipzig taught by Junior Professor Mariam Goshadze. The course was focused on the various sensory perceptions by

which religion can be experienced and personally, it introduced me to the new, and more emic approaches.

Goldman, R. P. & Sutherland Goldman, S. J. (2011). *Devavāṇīpraveśikā: An Introduction to the Sanskrit Language*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. [Book]

The purpose, in writing this book, is to provide a self-contained primer, workbook, and reader for teaching first year Sanskrit students with no previous linguistic training. The author has tried throughout the work to introduce, explain, and illustrate the most significant features of the language through verses, quotations, and readings. To these ends the grammar has been, in several areas, simplified to prevent the beginner from being more hampered than is absolutely necessary by relatively insignificant paradigms, rules, and exceptions.

This book is used to teach Sanskrit at Universität Leipzig. The readings are composed of Rāmāyana prose and besides this, the book provides a lot of popular verses for remembrance. I think that, for the study of languages, it is useful to have a broader number of didactic grammar sources. In this particular book, I like the usage of the traditional Sanskrit grammar notions too.

Kopf, D. (1985). *Sexual Ambivalence in Western Scholarship on Hindu India: A History of the Idea of Shakto-Tantrism, 1800–1970*. *Comparative Civilizations Review*, 13, pp. 143–157. [Academic article]

There is probably no other facet of Hinduism which has been treated with so much ambivalence by Westerners, or remains so ambiguous in definition, as Shakto-Tantrism. The extreme response to Hinduism by Western scholars and by the popularizers of Western scholarship on India appears to have been prompted by strong values on what was held to be the proper relationship between sexuality and religion.

I became interested in this article while working on my bachelor's thesis as it was particularly relevant to one of my research questions. The article begins with the birth of Oriental studies in Bengal, mapping its main discourses, and introduces the marginalizing of Tantra through the establishment of Tantric studies by John Woodroffe. The text then continues with an interesting discussion about the established historically contextualized scholarly output.

Simona Hendrychová

Mäkelä, I. *On Humans Podcast*. (2022–present). Retrieved [1.8.2024] from <https://on-humans.podcastpage.io>. [Podcast]

Conversations with leading scholars about human nature, human condition, and the human journey. From the origins of war to the psychology of love,

each topic brings fresh insights into questions such as: Where do we come from? What brings us together? Why do we love? Why do we destroy?

This podcast is of prevalent interest for the followers of Cognitive Science of Religion, as it focuses on evolutionary approaches, but also on psychology, philosophy, biology, and anthropology. The guests are highly regarded in their fields and the interviewer Ilari Mäkelä is incredibly well-informed and offers surprising insights. The podcast is not focused exclusively on religion but offers various new approaches and prisms to specific issues related to the study of religions.

De Las Casas, B. (1992). *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. London: Penguin Classics. [Book]

Bartolomé de Las Casas was the first and fiercest critic of Spanish colonialism in the New World. An early traveler to the Americas who sailed on one of Columbus's voyages, Las Casas was so horrified by the wholesale massacre he witnessed that he dedicated his life to protecting the Indian community. He wrote *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* in 1542, a shocking catalogue of mass slaughter, torture and slavery, which showed that the evangelizing vision of Columbus had descended, under later conquistadors, into genocide.

The book bears an important and also utterly absurd message that “Indians” are people as well and they should be treated as people. This message may seem absurd because we usually deem it obvious but what is actually absurd is that we are in an ongoing struggle to convince everyone about this universal message in the face of strong dehumanizing statements that can be seen currently most evidently with Palestinians.

I have studied three editions – English (cited above), Czechoslovakian (from 1954) and Spanish (from 2005). They all contain a vibrant preface which is also a reflection of the times in which it was released. This historic book is the 101 course on colonialism and what we now call “human rights”. The events fuelled by desire for goods and salvation of the “otherwise lost souls” also laid the groundwork for struggles for human rights, including the American Civil Rights Movement four centuries later or the face of capitalism nowadays with overabundance of exploitative practices.

Hampton, H. (Executive Producer). (1987–1990). *Eyes on the Prize*. Blackside Production. [Documentary TV series]

Eyes on the Prize tells the definitive story of the civil rights era from the point of view of the ordinary men and women whose extraordinary actions launched a movement that changed the fabric of American life.

This documentary TV series looks closely at the American Civil Rights Movement from 1954 till the 1980s. The material consists only of historical footage and interviews with people from the footage. Next to all of the highly involved individuals,

you can follow the story and influence of the Baptist minister Martin Luther King Jr., and also the rise of the Nation of Islam with Malcolm X and other important figures. The story is not centred around religion explicitly, but religion is involved in every aspect of the struggles for liberation. The full-length 14 episodes are available on YouTube.

Aleš Hodes

Jäger, A. & Vargas, D. Z. (2023). *Welfare for Markets: A Global History of Basic Income*. Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press. [Book]

The idea of a government paying its citizens to keep them out of poverty—now known as basic income—is hardly new. [...] An incisive, comprehensive history, *Welfare for Markets* tells the story of how a fringe idea conceived in economics seminars went global, revealing the most significant shift in political culture since the end of the Cold War.

Anton Jäger and Daniel Zamora Vargas trace basic income from its rise in American and British policy debates following periods of economic tumult to its modern relationship with techno-populist figures in Silicon Valley. I found the book by Zamora and Jäger to be a great insight into the field of political economy, especially because, unlike the many descriptions of detached economic mechanisms, it presents a broader transformation of political culture, or reinterpretations of central concepts of the subject and its sovereignty, which lead to the rise to prominence of certain consequential ideas. Herein also lies an important aspect of the book for the scholars of religion in contemporary society. The ideological constraints which establish the dominant order, where we are forced to think about social problem solving, are also legitimized by religious traditions, among other sources of cultural production, while the emergence of dominant ideas such as “sovereign consumers” in turn transforms the substantive content of religious worlds and their institutions.

Pontecorvo, G. (Director). (1966). *The Battle of Algiers*. Igor Film; Casbah Film. [Film]

A classic film that is considered by many to be one of the gems of 20th-century film production, not only for its powerful storyline depicting one of the tales of the bloodiest decolonization struggles of the 20th century but also for its uniquely realistic portrayal of the events surrounding the explosive torrent of violence as the ultimate plunge from the humiliation and despair. With the events in Palestine, the hideous face of the Western political class, concealed behind the imagination of a righteous and modern civilization, once again uniformly comes to the surface, and less and less can it be dismissed as a contingent pathology of individuals, under the weight of an endless series of hypocrisies and contradictions.

As one of the few films I have been drawn back into after a long time due to the new events of the present, I recommend the piece as a means of finding continuity and meaning for anyone, whether they've been stupefied by these events and

turned their timid recognition of rights into a bloodthirsty cheerleading of carnage or for those who, ashamed, knowing the despair, abandoned support of the oppressed because of their non-chivalrous resistance.

Kulwin N. & James, B. (2020–present). *Blowback*. Retrieved [1.8.2024] from <https://blowback.show/>. [Podcast]

A podcast about American Empire.

Blowback is one of the most detailed independently funded documentary retellings of modern U.S. history, narrowly focused on crucial geopolitical actions pursuing an imperial logic that is often denied or actively obscured by the power itself. Publicists Noah Kulwin and Brendan James, through their detailed research into the background of micro-political decisions in particular, but also via guests from academia, are not only outlining the socio-political context of the endless American frontier. Finally, they also provide insights into the particular experiences of individuals who either played a crucial role, or represented potential victims that, like others less fortunate, came close to a fate where they could only figure as a secret service statistic to be uncovered decades later after history had long since been written, which allowed them to chart the ever-reverberating American forays into Iraq, Cuba, Korea, and Afghanistan.

The four-part podcast has been my travelling companion in the empire itself, which, due to lighting fires all over the world in the interests of a few, forces fires under the bridges of hundreds of thousands without homes in its backyard.

Petra Houserová

Ornan, T. (2019). *The Throne and the Enthroned: On the Conceived Human Image of Yahweh in Iron II Jerusalem*. *Tel Aviv: Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University*, 46(2), pp. 198–210. [Academic article]

A seal impression found on a bulla from the City of David depicting a throne and two winged discs may corroborate the assumption that the conceived image of Yahweh in Iron II Jerusalem was of a human-like form. Through a succinct description on the emergence of the hegemonic concept that negates any (conceived) material aspects of Yahweh, a distinction is made between the practical-cultic nature of the biblical Image Ban and the Bible's ontological perception of the god of Israel as a human-like entity in form and 'nature'.

The author presents new findings and analysis in the field of imagery in ancient Israel. Of course, it is difficult to confirm the hypothesis that we can indeed find a depiction of Yahweh on the seal, but this study will be appreciated by all those interested in anthropomorphic depictions of the Israelite god.

Frey, A. & Mutter, M. (Producers). (2022). *Pentiment*. Obsidian Entertainment. Xbox Game Studios. [Video game]

Step into a living illustrated world inspired by illuminated manuscripts and printed woodcuts in a time when Europe is at a crossroads of great religious and political change. Walk in the footsteps of Andreas Maler, a master artist who finds himself in the middle of murders, scandals, and intrigue in the Bavarian Alps. Conduct your own investigation to decide the fate of the community, but each decision will have lasting consequences and inexorably draws Andreas closer to the center of an underlying conspiracy.

Immerse yourself in the world of the 16th century reminiscent of a tome of medieval illuminations as if it were a narrative adventure game with RPG elements. There's no right or wrong option here and if you like murder investigations, Latin, history and everything about the medieval period, this game is for you. The game is definitely worth an analysis from the study of religions beyond just the basics regarding Reformation and the controversy surrounding Martin Luther's *95 Theses*.

Tweel, C. et al. (Executive producers). (2020). *Heaven's Gate: The Cult of Cults*. Campfire. [Documentary TV Mini Series]

A comprehensive analysis of the UFO cult. The disappearance of 20 people, and the largest suicide on U.S. soil. Forever changing the face of modern era religion. A thorough examination of the infamous UFO cult through the eyes of its former members and loved ones. What started in 1975 with the disappearance of 20 people from a small town in Oregon, ended in 1997 with the largest suicide on US soil and changed the face of modern New Age religion forever.

The series is well made, has an in-depth history about the two founders and we can see both sides of the story. It does not take on the views of other documentaries in which it is implied that if one sect is evil, so are the others.

Matyáš Lednický

BeDuhn, J. D. (2000). *The Manichean Body: In Discipline and Ritual*. Baltimore – London: The John Hopkins University Press. [Book]

Reconstructing Manichaeism from scraps of ancient texts and the ungenerous polemic of its enemies (such as the ex-Manichaean Augustine of Hippo), BeDuhn reveals for the first time the religion as it was actually practised. He describes the Manichaeans' daily ritual meal, their stringent disciplinary codes (intended to prevent humans from harming plants and animals), and their secretive religious procedures designed to transform the cosmos and bring about the salvation of all living beings.

Probably the best introduction to Manichaeism that I've encountered. First and only concise and comprehensive work on the religion that talks about the Man-

ichaeans as actual people and not just proponents of a dogmatic system and focuses on what they did and what constructed their identity.

Weiss, A. (2023). *Buddhismus v židovských náboženských textech 18.–21. století* [Buddhism in Jewish Religious Texts of the 18th–21st Century]. Praha: Karolinum. [Book]

The monograph *Buddhismus v židovských náboženských textech 18.–21. století* traces Jewish religious thematization of Buddhism from the late 18th century to the present. It does so with the help of a detailed textual analysis that aims to show the main axes of the contextualization of Buddhism in Jewish religious texts and its place in modern Judaism. The author presents three interrelated models of the functioning of Buddhism in Jewish religious literature. Buddhism as an instrument of polemic and self-definition, as a form of spirituality fully compatible with Judaism, and as a religious competitor to Judaism posing a threat to its social and ideological integrity. While there is a rich academic literature on various aspects of Jewish religious thematization of Christianity or Islam, the role played by Buddhism in various forms of modern Judaism has so far been either overlooked by academics or at best reduced to the phenomenon of JUBU (Jewish Buddhists). The present paper aims to contribute to filling this gap.

One of the very few opportunities to read a book written in Czech that represents the work of a world-leading scholar on the subject. Highly recommendable to anyone interested in contemporary Judaism, the role of Buddhism in the West or questions of religious identity and syncretism. The book is, however, beneficial to read for all students of religion.

Cooper, M. M. P. (2019–present). *Fall of Civilizations*. Retrieved [1.8.2024] from <https://fallofcivilizationspodcast.com/>. [Podcast]

A history podcast looking at the collapse of a different civilization each episode. What did they have in common? Why did they fall? And what did it feel like to watch it happen?

One of the best podcasts about history found on Spotify. Each episode is packed with very well-researched information. Each episode is also better than the last. The last episode on Egypt is 4 hours long!

Tereza Menšíková

Havelka, J. (Director). (2022–present). *Vykouření* [Smokeout]. Theatre Husa na provázku. [Theatre performance]

Jesus playing European culture. An actor who plays Jesus. Actors who have nothing to do with the actor playing Jesus. Theatrical provocateurs and free speech preachers for whom nothing is sacred. Faithful Christians and muscular defenders of the true faith, interpreters of the law, media prophets...

This production follows the events surrounding the notorious 2018 performance of *Our Violence and Your Violence*. *Vykouření (Smokeout)* is shedding light on the multiple symbols and roles connected to religion, the process by which they gain and lose meaning, and how they gave birth to the famous theatre piece in Brno.

Cookson, R. & Radford, M. (Executive producers). (2023). *India: The Modi Question*. BBC. [Documentary TV Mini Series]

Tensions in the world's largest democracy. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been dogged by accusations over his attitude to the nation's Muslim minority. What's the truth? [...] *India: The Modi Question* is a 2023 two-part documentary series aired by BBC Two about the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his relationship with the Muslim minority in the country. The first episode tracks Narendra Modi's first steps into politics, including his association with the right-wing Hindu organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and his appointment as chief minister of the state of Gujarat. [...] The second episode examines a series of his controversial policies – the removal of Kashmir's special status and a citizenship law that many said treated Muslims unfairly – which has been accompanied by reports of violent attacks on Muslims by Hindus.

The document was labelled by the Indian government as treasonous, banned, and censored on social media all over India. This led to a series of public screenings at several Indian universities and caused a Streisand effect with massive public attention to it.

Pawar, U. & Moon, M. (2014). *We Also Made History: Women in the Ambedkarite Movement*. Translated by Wandana Sonalkar. New Delhi: Zubaan Books. [Book]

Originally published in Marathi in 1989, this contemporary classic, details the history of women's participation in Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Dalit movement for the first time. Focusing on the involvement of women in various Dalit struggles since the early twentieth century, the book goes on to consider the social conditions of Dalit women's lives, daily religious practices and marital rules, the practice of ritual prostitution, and women's issues. Drawing on diverse sources including periodicals, records of meetings, and personal correspondence, the latter half of the book is composed of interviews with Dalit women activists from the 1930s.

One of the very few English-written books by the Dalit women authors about the role of women in Dalit activist movements. The captured narratives show a hidden part of the history of anti-caste movements and present the ways and strategies of the women who were part of them but were often unseen and unrecognized.

Matouš Mokrý

Whatmore, R. (2016). *What Is Intellectual History?* Cambridge: Polity Press. [Book]

What is intellectual history? [...] In this engaging and refreshing introduction to the field, Richard Whatmore begins by examining the historical development of intellectual history, before dissecting its various methodological debates. He presents various alternative ways in which we should think about intellectual history, as well as presenting his own very clear definition of the field. Drawing on a wide range of historical examples, Whatmore shows how ideas – philosophical, political, religious, scientific, artistic – originated in their historical context and how they were both shaped by, and helped to shape, the societies in which they originated. He ends by casting a critical eye over the current state of intellectual history, and a brief discussion of how it might develop in the future.

After a brief discussion on the approaches of Conceptual History, Michel Foucault, Leo Strauss, and Arthur Lovejoy, the bulk of the book is devoted to the Cambridge School associated with John Pocock, John Dunn and Quentin Skinner. For me, the book represented a highly motivating Christmas read which provided me with a useful reflection on approaching past discussions in order to uncover for today not only their historical depth and alienness but also their freshness and inspiration potential for research and other needs.

Yoshiko Reed, A. (2014). *From Sacrifice to Slaughterhouse: Ancient and Modern Approaches to Meat, Animals, and Civilization. Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 26(2), pp. 111–158. [Academic article]

This essay uses a focus on meat and animals to illumine ancient and modern discourses about sacrifice and “civilization.” It suggests that attention to recent research on meat-production and the “sociology of the slaughterhouse” might open new perspectives on the range of ways in which the sanctified ritual slaughter of animals has been understood by its proponents, critics, and theorists – both ancient and modern. It begins by historicizing the rise of modern scholarly interest in animal sacrifice, with reference to dramatic shifts in the production and consumption of meat in modern European societies. Then, it looks to the Vedas and the Torah/Pentateuch to reflect upon the place of meat and animals in two of the best documented of ancient sacrificial systems. Lastly, it considers some trajectories in their *Nachleben* with an eye to the value and limits of dominant narratives about the cessation, interiorization, or spiritualization of sacrifice.

According to the author, the emergence of academic views on animal sacrifice as a key signifier of primitive, irrational and violent customs is best to be seen in the light of industrialization and urbanization processes during the ‘long nineteenth century’, which have severed the experience of meat consumption from its production for large strata of urban population and enabled to perceive slaughter as something unclean and potentially uncivilized and barbaric. However, even if you

are not interested in modern discussions of sacrifice and the history of the study of religions, the essay is filled with thought-provoking points, insightful for the study of this ever-debated feature of religiosity.

Aasland Ravndal, J. (2023). From Bombs to Books, and Back Again? Mapping Strategies of Right-Wing Revolutionary Resistance. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 46(11), pp. 2120–2148. [Academic article]

This article begins by outlining four post-WWII strategies of right-wing revolutionary resistance: vanguardism; the cell system; leaderless resistance; and metapolitics. Next, the article argues that metapolitics became a preferred strategy for many right-wing revolutionaries during the 2000s and early 2010s and proposes three conditions that may help explain this metapolitical turn: limited opportunities for armed resistance; a subcultural style shift; and new opportunities for promoting alternative worldviews online. Finally, the article theorizes about the types of threats that may emerge in the wake of this metapolitical turn and speculates about the likelihood of a new and more violent turn in the near future.

“Imagine yourself as an ardent right-wing revolutionary living in a Western democracy today. How would you create revolutionary change?” (p. 2120). Unlike the anthropologists posing similar hypothetical “if I were a horse” criticized by E. E. Evans-Pritchard, this opening question of the article does not lead to unempirical speculations, but to an engagement with a large body of statistical and textual data. To the scholar of esotericism, the text provides useful data for long-term contextualizing of the interest in esoteric ideas in the anti-democratic right.

Jana Nenadalová

Sheldrake, M. (2021). *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds, and Shape Our Futures*. London: Vintage Publishing. [Book]

In the first edition of this mind-bending book, Sheldrake introduced us to this mysterious but massively diverse kingdom of life. This exquisitely designed volume, abridged from the original, features more than one hundred full-color images that bring the spectacular variety, strangeness, and beauty of fungi to life as never before. Fungi throw our concepts of individuality and even intelligence into question. They are metabolic masters, earth makers, and key players in most of life’s processes. They can change our minds, heal our bodies, and even help us remediate environmental disaster. By examining fungi on their own terms, Sheldrake reveals how these extraordinary organisms – and our relationships with them – are changing our understanding of how life works.

A book pointing to the interconnectedness of all living organisms, the deconstruction of bodily boundaries and the importance of symbiosis, including overlaps to the ecological basis of mushroom cultivation or the construction and deconstruction of individual identities.

Pálmason, H. (Director). (2022). *Vanskabte land [Godland]*. Snowglobe. [Film]

In the late 19th century, a young Danish priest travels to a remote part of Iceland to build a church and photograph its people. But the deeper he goes into the unforgiving landscape, the more he strays from his purpose, his mission and morality.

A slow, poetic art film about a Danish priest's journey to Iceland and his slow mental decay. For all lovers of slow-burn films.

Hermanova, P. (2023). *In Death's Eyes*. Unguarded. [Album]

This LP features nine tracks utilizing folk and sacred musical technique and instrumentation which drift between song and heavy distorted drones. In a disciplined display of beauty, pain, and astute musicianship, Hermanova brings forth a notable accomplishment of an album. *In Death's Eyes* confronts death from start to finish with a rare fervor that leaves one feeling it was utterly necessary for Hermanova to produce – to survive.

An interesting record contemplating various expressive positions on the phenomenon of death and Christian mysticism inspired by Hildegard of Bingen amongst others. I like the connection between various layers and sides – medieval and current times, life and death, electronic and folk instruments.

Bohumil Sláma

Ayub, K. (Director). (2022). *Sonne*. Ulrich Seidl Film Produktion GmbH. [Film]

Three teenage girls from Vienna twerk in hijab and sing a pop song. A YouTube video of it makes them famous overnight, especially among Kurdish Muslims. Yesmin, the only one of the friends who is Kurdish herself, begins to distance herself more and more from her culture. Nati and Bella, on the other hand, seem fascinated by a world that is strange to them. When the girls meet two young Kurdish patriots, the situation threatens to escalate. A film about young people caught between social media and self-discovery, a story of rebellious young women.

We live in a world where cultures “blend” and intertwine. But what happens when a young Muslim woman distances herself from her family's culture? How is her rebellion received, and how does her reckless act affect her daily life in the community that is (or was?) her home? This is precisely the story we can follow, set in the Austrian metropolis, thanks to the Vienna-based director Kurdwin Ayub, who has received several awards for her work. What I find interesting about the film is how the director conveys the experience of a young Muslim woman in an environment not dominated by Islam. In essence, the film can thus be conceived as a probe into multicultural societies in a rather entertaining and novel way.

Bouška, P. et al. (2018–present). *Balanc*. Retrieved [1.8.2024] from <https://wave.rozhlas.cz/balanc-7595065>. [Podcast]

Balanc is a magazine about self-improvement, a beneficial lifestyle, and the importance of good interpersonal relationships. It serves as a response to challenging times and a society that triggers depression, anxiety, and excessive stress.

Balanc podcast covers a wide range of interdisciplinary topics within the realms of psychology and psychotherapy. The main aim of the podcast is to explore various aspects of human psychology and contribute to the personal growth of its listeners. While the primary focus is not on religious topics, from time to time, the discussion in the podcast extends to matters related to religion and especially to spirituality.

Among the latest episodes that deal with religiously relevant topics, we can include the episode *Encounters with God and the Devil. More and More People Are Using Psychedelics. But How to Deal with Powerful Experiences?*, which explores the use of psychedelics in a spiritual context. What I find particularly interesting about the whole podcast is its format and the wide range of topics covered by the various experts.

Rahman, M. (2010). *Queer as Intersectionality: Theorizing Gay Muslim Identities*. *Sociology*, 44(5), pp. 944–961. [Academic article]

I begin by identifying characterizations of Muslim identities as antithetical to a wide range of western values, including democracy, secularization, gender equality and sexual diversity. I argue that issues of gender and sexuality represent a problematic around modernity and its values but one that is more complex than the putative clash of civilizations discourse. I suggest that gay Muslims represent an intersectional location that productively illuminates this problematic, because their existence challenges the positioning of western and eastern cultures as mutually exclusive and oppositional. I then theorize this intersectionality using queer theory, arguing that there is an affinity between the queer emphasis on deferred ontology and intersectional emphasis on standpoint, suggesting an understanding of intersectionality as productively queer, and queer as necessarily intersectional. In conclusion, I sketch out the implications of such theorizing for research on gay Muslim identities.

Queer theory has long remained outside the purview of Islamic studies and non-heterosexual Muslim identities. This article seeks to fill this gap both theoretically and methodologically. The main result presented by the author is situated towards articulating topics of intersectionality and the complexity of gender both in modern Western and Eastern societies. In this way, the author seeks to articulate the extent to which research on queer identities is problematic, particularly due to the questioning of their embeddedness in “Eastern” and Muslim societies. I find this article particularly useful in its thematic context, since queer theory, at least in the research field of Czech study of religions and Islamic studies, remains relatively untouched.