

Lánská, Anna

Editorial board's recommendations

Sacra. 2025, vol. 23, iss. 2, pp. 75-86

ISSN 2336-4483 (online)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/digilib.83122>

Access Date: 15. 12. 2025

Version: 20251203

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

Editorial Board's Recommendations

Anna Lánská, FF MU, Ústav religionistiky
email: 526277@mail.muni.cz

For the second time, our editorial team has prepared a section in which editors recommend interesting articles, books, films, podcasts, and video games. The aim of this section is not only to inspire readers to engage in various forms of cultural and scientific practice, but also to introduce the editors themselves, show what interests them, and illustrate how they think about the world. In this issue, alongside traditional formats such as books, articles, and films, there are also unconventional spaces for thinking about culture, such as pointing out the materiality of religion through a fashion collection. In this way, we aim to broaden the scope of what can be inspiring for the academic environment and show that sources of inspiration can be found even where they might not be expected at first glance. These recommendations were collected during the summer of 2025. Each member of the editorial board added three tips, some accompanied by annotations and others only by personal comments. We hope that you will find inspiration in this section, whether in the specific tips or in the perspective our editors offer on current cultural and scientific production.

Roman Galovič

Roffe, J. (2020). *The Works of Gilles Deleuze I: 1953-1969*. Melbourne: re.press. [Book]

The spectre of Gilles Deleuze has been haunting humanities for several decades. While he is indubitably a fascinating and inspiring philosopher, he is also infamously impenetrable. Both he and his compatriot Guattari quite often presuppose that the reader has every PhD ever conceived from geology through molecular biology to linguistics, and many works inspired by him do not make it easier, when they simply use his highly specific concepts (“hello”, “body without organs”, and “plane of consistency”) in almost an esoteric way, without much of an explanation. A good piece of secondary literature, therefore, becomes a necessity, and from what I have read, Jon Roffe’s book is one of the best introductions available. He refrains from creating an overall summary of Deleuze’s philosophy but goes meticulously through his works and introduces key ideas and concepts. And in my opinion, he succeeds; his book is clear and readable and intellectually thorough at the same time, without resorting to banalization or simplification.

Wittgenstein, L. (1977). *Remarks on Colour*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Book]

My second book recommendation will stay in in the philosophical lane, but now in a more off-topic and relaxing way for a change. After all, who does not like colours? So, if one ever wondered why we cannot imagine transparent white in the same way as green or brown in glass bottles are transparent, or why we cannot imagine

reddish green or yellowish blue, one can wonder together with Wittgenstein (and read some funny jabs at Goethe as a bonus). Besides the overt appeal of colours and hues, I recommend it generally as an inspiration when it comes to the implicit humble attitude of the writing. Since Wittgenstein wrote down these remarks for himself, he managed to display a truly philosophical stance, when he genuinely asks questions and contemplates, and does not pretend to have it all figured out, which is a refreshing and highly sympathetic perspective, since philosophical classics are more often than not rather known for their know-it-all arrogance.

Owlcat Games (Developer). (2021). *Pathfinder: Wrath of the Righteous*. META Publishing. [Video game]

Finally, I would like to propose one gaming recommendation from the realm of isometric CRPGs. Thanks to the massive success of *Baldur's Gate 3*, this genre experienced a resurgence in popularity, and for people who enjoyed it, I would call to attention this hidden gem. It does not have such high production value, but surpasses BG3 both in complexity and scope.

What is the appeal through the perspective of Religious Studies? Well, besides the overt premise of the crusade against demons, the narrative core concerns the emergence of a mythical semi-divine being. This emergence is brilliantly rooted in the story, not in one, but in several possible ways. The player chooses what kind of mythical being they become – from an angel or a demon, through a guardian of the cosmic order, to a trickster (which is an extraordinarily funny option, the writers understand the trickster archetype). And the whole narrative then changes accordingly. So, if you would like to explore such a story of truly cosmic proportions, this CRPG is a programmed dream.

Eva Götzingerová

Mallinson, J. (2024). *The Dattātreya yogaśāstra*. (Collection Indologie No. 162; Haṭha Yoga Series No. 5). Pondicherry: Institut français de Pondichéry & École française d'Extrême-Orient. [Book]

This book introduces, edits and translates the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra*, a Sanskrit text on yoga composed in about 1200 CE in South India. It teaches four types of yoga practice but devotes the majority of its 193 verses to *haṭha yoga*, which it divides into two varieties, one which consists of the eight auxiliaries first taught by Patañjali and one which has nine physical methods.

During my trip to Oxford in November 2024, I was fortunate enough to receive this book from the author himself, James Mallinson, in person. The parts I found most interesting in this text were the sections on controlling the elements (verses 112–123) and on *vajrolī mudrā* (verses 151–183), as these practices are said to bring immortality to the *yogin*.

Urban, Hugh B. (2024). *The Path of Desire: Living Tantra in Northeast India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Book]

Tantra, one of the most important religious currents in South Asia, is often misrepresented as little more than ritualized sex. Through a mixture of ethnography and history, Hugh B. Urban reveals a dynamic living tradition behind the sensationalist stories. Urban shows that Tantric desire goes beyond the erotic, encompassing such quotidian experiences as childbearing and healing. The result is a provocative new description of Hindu Tantra that challenges us to approach religion as something always entwined with politics and culture, thoroughly entangled with ordinary needs and desires.

I recommend this book by Hugh B. Urban, the prolific writer on tantra, because it contains the most up-to-date information on the field of tantric studies. It contains a lot of ethnographic data, particularly concerning the Kāmāhyā temple in Assam. The author also employs some textual data, and I was interested to see his use of *Kāmaratna Tantra* in chapter two, “The Land of Black Magic”, because I had already encountered this kind of a magical text.

Bäumer, B. (2007). *Vijñāna Bhairava: The practice of centring awareness. Commentary by Swami Lakshman Joo* (2nd ed.). Varanasi: Indica Books. [Book]

The Vijñāna Bhairava is one of the most important Tantras of Kashmir *Śaivism* as far as the practical aspect of yoga of this school is concerned. It teaches 112 *dhāraṇās* or ways of centring awareness and entering divine consciousness, which include ordinary and extraordinary experiences, as well as Tantric methods of spiritual practice such as *kuṇḍalinī*, *mantra* and *mudrā*. The present edition, translation and commentary is unique since it contains the oral teaching of the last great master of the Kashmir *Śaiva* tradition, Swami Lakshman Joo.

“It is filled internally with the bliss of one’s own experience, and it is beyond the realm of thought. This state, which is always full, is the state of Bhairavī who is Bhairava himself.” (verse 15). I was reading this Sanskrit text during the spring semester of 2025. Even though the syntax is not as complex as, for example, in *kāvya* (Sanskrit poetry) that I had been reading before, there is a lot of doctrinal context behind each verse that often needs to be explained. For this reason, I recommend this edition, as it contains a lot of doctrinal explanation.

Simona Hendrychová

***New Books Network*. (2010–present). Retrieved [8.7.2025] from <https://newbooksnetwork.com/>. [Podcast]**

The New Books Network is a consortium of author-interview podcast channels dedicated to public education. Covering 100+ subjects, disciplines, and genres, we publish 70 to 100 episodes every week.

This podcast network presents new tips on academic books on a extensive variety of topics. The authors themselves talk about their book, their motivations, and future plans. They offer a great summary not only about the book but about the field itself. Therefore, it is a great way to keep up with any field. You can find specifically your podcast topic. I personally follow the New Books in Critical Theory, Human Rights, Intellectual History, Religion, LGBTQ+ Studies, Middle Eastern Studies or African Studies.

Emezi, A. (2018). *Freshwater*. New York: Grove Press. [Book]

Ada has always been unusual. Her parents prayed her into existence, but something must have gone awry. Their troubled child begins to develop separate selves and is prone to fits of anger and grief. When Ada grows up and heads to college in America, a traumatic event crystallises the selves into something more powerful. As Ada fades into the background of her own mind, these 'alters' - now protective, now hedonistic - take control, shifting her life in a dangerous direction.

This book challenges Western psychiatry and psychology by taking indigenous spirituality seriously. The novel is a manifestation of decolonial writing by sharing an experience of a Nigerian queer author who identified as an *ogbanje* – an evil spirit of the Igbo belief tradition. As a western white reader, you will ask yourself what it means to be queer, what it means to have a mental illness and what it means to dismantle your normativity. This year, I've decided to only read books by FLINTA (female, lesbian, intersex, non-binary, trans, and agender) authors. I am having an amazing year, and Emezi's testimony really stands out. It is also available in Czech translation as *Zřídlo*.

Langrová, T. (Ed.). (2024). *Jestli mám zemřít, ať je to příběh* [*If I must die, let it be a story*]. Praha: Utopia Libri. [Book]

As of October 2023, it may seem that there is no room for broader context or empathy in the Czech debate. With this anthology, we fight together against a deep sense of alienation. We explain our positions, critique the status quo, and think through alternatives in order to create understanding in the face of the ongoing catastrophe in Palestine.

Utopia Libri, with the editorial supervision of Tereza Langrová, introduces positions authentic Palestinian voices to the Czech context. This book won the award of the Best documentary book at the Jihlava Film Festival 2024. The title is a homage to a poem by Refaat Alareer, who was killed by Israeli airstrike on 6.12.2023 along with 6 members of his family. It should be emphasized that it is a book written in the Czech language by Palestinians living in Czechia and by Czech academics. They provide the so much-needed Czech context to the ongoing Czech support for Israeli apartheid, occupation, and genocide. The second book *Na této zemi je pro co žít* provides more translated views on how to strive for Palestinian liberation.

Aleš Hodes**Carles, P. (Director). (2001). *La sociologie est un sport de combat* [Sociology Is a Martial Art]. France. [Documentary film]**

The aim of this film, which condenses three years of filming of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in the late stages of his public life, is to construct a sympathetic image of intellectual craft practised as a special type of ‘service to the dominated’, as he conceived it. Bourdieu uncompromisingly presents his combative conception of sociology in his interactions with the media and his colleagues, but its limitations are most evident in his exchanges with the alienated strata of French society’s peripheries. The most interesting part is not the informative content of “thinking in action” explaining symbolic violence or the origins of inequalities among members of wider society. Nor the idyllic profession of sociologist, which here, at the end of his life, long after the protagonist had to face academic pressures and struggles for position, is more reminiscent of a “great thinker of the 19th century”. On the contrary, it is Bourdieu’s cumbersome relationship with the objects of his lifelong research, in which he is confronted with the difficult tension arising from the academic’s ambition to ‘change things’. Bourdieu – a sociologist who embodies a certain ideal type of reflective intellectual and wields theoretical weapons to defend scientific integrity and empirical rigour – clashes with the reality of the poor communities of Val-Fourré, for whom these criteria inspire neither respect nor hope. It is precisely at this remarkable moment, which sociologists rarely find themselves in, when they are directly confronted with the purpose of their expert knowledge and its compatibility with the experiential basis of lived worlds. At this precise point the self-described fighter becomes a victim of anti-intellectualism and, from the lofty position of science, preaches about the dynamics of inner-city society that are apparent only to him.

Zetkin Forum. (20.–22. June 2025). *Fascism Back In Europe?* Berlin, Germany. [Conference]

From 20 to 22 June, I attended a conference in Berlin that brought together social theorists, economists, historians, anti-fascist activists, trade union leaders, and political representatives. This event was the result of organisational efforts by a social science centre and educational initiative named after the prominent German politician Clara Zetkin. Structural analyses of the socio-economic conditions for the rise of reactionary movements and political science reflections on their far-right roots did not end with the topic fading away into the distant heights of political theory or specific historical curiosities. The event thus went beyond the usual reassuring answer to the urgent question in the conference title. Avoiding this all-too-frequent subtext of meditation on the critical situation of the European political order was made possible by practical elaborations of strategic steps taken by left-wing parties and trade unions and activist organisations in response to changing conditions in political cultures, workplaces and universities.

Martin, C. (2014). *Capitalizing Religion: Ideology and the Opiate of the Bourgeoisie*. London – New York: Bloomsbury. [Book]

Although Craig Martin's book also provides a rich analysis of the relationship between spirituality and the dominant economic system in the intellectual cultural production of the English-speaking world, its fundamental contribution lies primarily in its theory of the debate on the critical study of religion. The fundamental aim of the book, which permeates both parts, is to historicize the ideology of individualism, which is identified with the spiritualism of individualistic religions that reify social inequalities and alienation in political-economic systems. Through his historicizing work with concepts, the author denaturalizes the anti-structuralist, emic vocabularies that are part of academic conceptualizations of religion and mystify the collective constitution of individuals.

Petra Houserová

Bonnet, C., Galoppin, T., Guillon, É., Lätzer-Lasar, A., Lebreton, S., Luaces, M., Porzia, F., Rubens Urciuoli, E., & Rüpke, J. (Eds.). (2022). *Naming and mapping the gods in the ancient Mediterranean: Spaces, mobilities, imaginaries, Volume I*. Berlin: De Gruyter. [Book]

This edited volume focuses on the names of gods and the places connected to them in ancient Mediterranean cultures. It shows how naming and mapping were important parts of religious practice, not only in temples and sanctuaries but also in everyday life. The book brings connects chapters from different disciplines, such as archaeology, philology, and the history of religion. It also includes digital methods like the ERC MAP project. As someone working with QGIS and mapping epigraphic data on Attis and Magna Mater, I found this volume especially useful for thinking about how to combine spatial data and epigraphic sources in the study of religion. It is a helpful resource for anyone working with concepts such as sacred space or divine presence.

Moore, S. D. (2001). *Sex and the single apostle*. In Id. *God's beauty parlor: And other queer spaces in and around the Bible* (pp. 23–44). Redwood City: Stanford University Press. [Academic article]

This chapter offers a critical reading of Paul's views on sexuality and gender. Stephen D. Moore uses literary and queer theory to analyse the apostle's voice, and he does so with irony and a clear sense of style. The result is both funny and serious. Moore shows how Paul creates a certain image of himself as both celibate and deeply involved in questions of desire. For students of religion and gender, this text is a good example of how modern theory can help us think about early Christian writings. In the course Religion and the Body, this text was assigned for the lecture on Jewish and Greco-Roman views of homosexuality, which is unfortunately no longer taught. I believe this chapter deserves to be preserved and recommended, at least as a small consolation.

Howard-Arias, T., & Howard, A. (2023). *Slay the Princess*. Black Tabby Games. [Video game]

This short horror game builds its story around a paradox: you are instructed to kill the princess, even though you do not know why. The player soon learns that the story can change with every decision, and that the characters are not stable. This creates a strong feeling of uncertainty and forces the player to rethink what is true and who to trust. The game explores how people act when the story of the world keeps changing, and how belief works in unstable situations. What makes this indie game particularly relevant for scholars of religion is its resonance with questions of self, authority, and ritualized action — why do we obey voices that claim narrative control? Why does a player believe their actions “matter” in a story that keeps rewriting itself? These questions could be relevant for research in cognitive approaches to religion, such as those explored at the LEVYNA research centre. Although the game is not about religion directly, it offers a good example of how narrative structure shapes belief and action.

Anna Lánská

Pamuk, O. (2025). *Morové noci [Nights of Plague]*. Praha: Argo. [Book]

The book presents itself as a literary-historical experiment by a young historian who, based on letters from the daughter of the deposed Sultan Murad V, reconstructs the events of 1901, when the plague spreads on the Ottoman Island of Minger and the island falls into quarantine. The island is, of course, fictional, but its fictionality is apparent, to the point that in places it becomes an experimental model for thinking about what nonfiction is. Pamuk, as a persistent postmodern experimenter with narrative strategies, very cleverly constructs the story in such a way that when the reader is most drawn into the plot, the narrator/historian enters the text, delaying the story and changing its direction. Thematically, Pamuk returns to his essential themes, such as Turkey between East and West. The central layer of the story revolves around the role of conflict, tension, and the fulfilment of ideas about disease and quarantine between Muslims (Turks, Mingerians) and Christians (Greeks), as well as the influence of the imperial powers of the British, French, and Russians on the fate of the island of Minger.

Curtis A. (Director). (2021). *Can't Get You Out of My Head: An Emotional History of the Modern World*. BBC. [Documentary TV Series]

In this six-part documentary series, Adam Curtis explores the processes that have shaped our present. Viewers familiar with his previous documentary series, such as *Hypernormalisation* and *The Century of the Self*, will recognize this as his latest attempt to delve into the waters of individualism, nationalism, and revolution. It must be critically acknowledged that at certain points, the stories merge with his previous documentaries, creating a tightly woven web of Curtis's documentaries. His new mosaic of the 20th century is once again composed of seemingly mismatched pieces, but it serves as a new and fruitful stimulus for a critical approach to contemporary neoliberal hegemony. Through forgotten figures such as Jiang Qing or Michael X, liberation movements such as Fatah, game theory, the return

of nationalism in post-socialist countries, and even the opioid crisis, Curtis's bricolage arrives at Thatcher's *There is no alternative*, to which he adds a question mark. He expresses his feeling that we are stronger, that we have the potential for a new imagination of the future, but only if we remain collectively unified. The conclusion of the documentary is ultimately Graeberian: "The ultimate hidden truth of the world is that it is something we make and could just as easily make differently."

Luehrmann, S. (2013). *The spirit of late socialism and the value of transformation: Brezhnevism through the lens of post-Soviet religious revival. Cahiers du monde russe, 54*(3–4), pp. 543–563. [Academic article]

The study attempts to combine ethnographic and archival research through so-called upstreaming, asking questions in the opposite direction than is conventional in historical research, from the present to the past. Ethnographic research is conducted on cultural workers working in religious organizations who, until 1991, were not affiliated with any religious identity and, on the contrary, were strongly rooted in secular habitus in the culturally hybrid autonomous republic of Mari El. Luehrmann focuses on the fundamental contradiction of Brezhnevism's homage to revolutionary change and commitment to stable state structures, which, according to her, led to the internalization of calls for spiritual change and growth, which found new articulation in the post-socialist space. Luehrmann shows how secular organizations taught these people certain skills that they subsequently use in their new religious careers. Luehrmann creates a vivid picture of the last Soviet generation, which is a subtle polemic with the dominant interpretations of the post-Soviet religious revival.

Matyáš Lednický

Brown, P. (2024). *The World of Late Antiquity*. London: Thames & Hudson. [Book]

Renowned historian Peter Brown examines the changes brought by Late Antiquity and the reactions to them. The result is a lucid answer to a crucial question in world history; how the exceptionally homogenous Mediterranean world of the first century AD became divided into the three mutually estranged societies of the Middle Ages: Catholic Western Europe, Byzantium and the Islamic world. Brown's remarkable study in social and cultural transformation explains how and why the Late Antique world came to differ from the "Classical civilization" of the Greeks and Romans. Originally published in 1971, it is still one of the best introductions to Late Antiquity. The new edition by Thames & Hudson features a new preface and 130 colourful illustrations making it highly stimulating both intellectually and visually.

Bubík, T. (2010). *České bádání o náboženství ve 20. století: Možnosti a meze*. Praha: Pavel Mervart. [Book]

Tomáš Bubík, from the Faculty of Arts at the Palacký University in Olomouc, provides a concise look at the history, role, and problems of the study of religion in the

Czech (pre and post) communist society. The book starts with Otakar Pertold and moves traces the communist era until the establishment of various religious studies departments around Czechia in the 1990s and early 2000s. Although the book does not cover the last fifteen years due to its publication date, it is still valuable and unique look at our discipline in the Czech context.

Whithouse, T. (Creator & Executive Producer). (2024). *The Red King*. Quay Street Productions. [TV series]

After informing on fellow police officers for assaulting an alleged rapist, Grace Narayan (Anjali Mohindra) is posted as a sergeant to the small Welsh island of St Jory, where she begins investigating the disappearance of a local boy named Cai. Along the way, Grace uncovers local secrets and suspects the involvement of a pagan cult named True Way, which the islanders claim no longer exists. This character-driven mystery-thriller, combining a powerful story of a knotty police investigation with chilling, atmospheric folk-horror is a must-see for any fan of the 1973 folk-horror classic *The Wicker Man*.

Matouš Mokrý

Asprem, E. (2014). *The Problem of Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse 1900–1939*. Leiden; Boston: Brill. [Book]

Asprem's complex study of the 1900–1939 discourse on disenchantment of the world rejects simplistic accounts of disenchantment as a definite state or a straightforward top-down process in modern Euro-American societies. Instead, it operationalizes disenchantment as an undecided problem caused by modern rationalization, to which various spokespersons provided different answers, either accepting it or rejecting it in favor of various visions of spiritualized and/or animated cosmos. This “problem-historical” approach enables Asprem to firmly embed the study of disenchantment into Weberian methodological individualism as well as trace the connections and disjunctions in the positions on disenchantment across various epistemic cultures – science, parapsychology, and esotericism. Rather than being decisively settled and ideologically coherent, each of these intellectual fields contained multiple conflicting perspectives on the worldly presence of spiritual forces and the correct ways to obtain knowledge about the world. Furthermore, a specific position on disenchantment in a given intellectual field could be formed along the lines of a similar position in different fields of knowledge, leading to various interactions between science, parapsychology, and esotericism.

Robertson, D. G. (2016). *UFOs, Conspiracy Theories and the New Age: Millennial Conspiracism*. New York: Bloomsbury. [Book]

Robertson's *UFOs, Conspiracy Theories and the New Age* traces the history of conjunctions between ufology, conspiracy theories, and alternative-spiritual millennialism in the post-Cold War period as claims to knowledge oppositional to epistemic authorities of the Anglophone world. For Robertson, knowledge-making in these intersecting milieux represents claims to “epistemic capital” competing with the established epistemic cultures as a means of accruing power for subjects

who consider themselves socio-culturally disposed and lacking individual agency. Via this “refocussing on the study of epistemologies rather than ‘beliefs’” (p. 210), Robertson describes how the millenarian conspiracy theorists construct themselves as marginalized counter-elite between the ignorant masses and evil conspiratorial cabal. For the counter-elite, “[t]he liberation of the oppressed is reconstructed as being realized through a revolution in knowledge, a seizing not of the means of production but of the *means of cognition*.” (p. 207).

Sunshine, S. (2024). *Neo-Nazi Terrorism and Countercultural Fascism: The Origins and Afterlife of James Mason’s Siege*. New York: Routledge. [Book]

The principal value of Sunshine’s opus lies in the historical description of the American National-Socialist underground from the post-Rockwell era until the beginning of the 2000s. Via meticulous work on the life and work of the extreme-right accelerationist ideologue James Mason (*1952) at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library (University of Kansas) and other archives, Sunshine covers the transformation of American National Socialism from conservative democratic politics to strategizing clandestine revolutionary violence inspired by the 1960/70s left-wing terrorism. *Neo-Nazi Terrorism and Countercultural Fascism* then describes how the countercultural revolutionary reformulation of National Socialism led in the 1980s/90s to discursive and personal entanglements with the avant-garde artistic grouping “Abraxas Circle” intersecting with the Church of Satan. Sunshine’s book thus also contributes to mapping previously overlooked episodes in the history of American Satanism.

Michal Saidl

Šisler, V., Zeiler, X., & Radde-Antweiler, K. (2018). *Methods for Studying Video Games and Religion*. New York: Routledge. [Book]

Eric Zimmerman declares the twenty-first century to be a “ludic century”, characterized by play. In this context Zimmerman is referring primarily to the emerging medium of video games. This book summarizes previous findings on how video games can be studied from a religious studies perspective—an area that remains relatively understudied compared to game studies. It presents a range of approaches and methods proposed by different authors for engaging with video games in the context of religion. Examples include ethnographic methods for studying religion in video game environments, qualitative research using elicitation techniques, and analyses of comments on gaming videos, among others. This book serves as a valuable starting point for anyone interested in exploring video games through the lens of religious studies.

Beal, T. (2022). *Religion and its Monsters* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge. [Book]

According to Timothy Beal, monsters and religion are deeply intertwined, as monsters are embedded in religious texts and traditions. In his monograph, the author divides the book into two parts. The first part, *Religion and Its Monsters*, explores

creatures rooted in Jewish and Christian biblical traditions—such as Tiamat, Leviathan, Behemoth, dragons, and others. The second part, *Monsters and Their Religion*, examines how the monstrous appears in today’s popular culture, discussing themes such as colonialism, ritual purity associated with Dracula, eco-monsters like Godzilla (reflecting fears of war and nuclear bombs), as well as artificial intelligence and machines. I recommend this monograph to readers interested in these fascinating creatures, horror, or popular culture.

Meurisse, F. (Producer). (2025). *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33*. Sandfall Interactive; Kepler Interactive. [Video game]

Each year, the Paintress awakens and inscribes a number upon her monolith. Year after year, all those whose age appears upon it are erased from existence. Step into Expedition 33 on a nearly impossible mission: to stop the Paintress — a divine being who brings death with every number she paints — so that she may never paint death again.

Clair Obscur: Expedition 33 is a video game with turn-based mechanics and a deeply emotional narrative. This game is definitely for you if you appreciate mature, thought-provoking themes woven into a breathtaking atmosphere. Its story resonates with questions of divine will, eschatology, human defiance, authority, sacrifice, rebirth, and existential uncertainty — offering fertile ground for reflection through the lens of Religious Studies.

Bohumil Sláma

Jahshan, E. (Ed.). (2022). *This Arab is Queer: An Anthology by LGBTQ+ Arab Writers*. London: Saqi Books. [Book]

Can one be (openly) Arab and Queer? What does it mean to live outside heteronormativity in societies and communities shaped by “Islam”? This collection of groundbreaking biographies brings together deeply personal as well as thought-provoking narratives in which queer experience is not a side note, but the very heart of this title. With honesty and complexity, the contributors show how lives are forged at the intersection of tradition, faith, desire, and identity – and how the seemingly impossible, in fact, can be negotiated. These compelling accounts invite readers to question assumptions, broaden horizons, and encounter voices too often silenced not only by Arabs (often Muslims), but marginalized also by White communities – with its own labelled as inclusive towards Queers.

Dolce & Gabbana. (July 2025). *Alta Sartoria Roma*. Retrieved [1.8.2025] from <https://altamoda.dolcegabbana.com/en/alta-sartoria-roma>. [Fashion collection]

This fashion collection called Alta Sartoria by the house of Dolce & Gabbana celebrates the cultural heritage of the city of Rome (and Italy overall). I find it particularly intriguing because it weaves together elements of the imperial cult of the Roman Empire with iconic motifs and symbols of the Catholic tradition, which are

very iconic for Mediterranean space. The fascinating garments offer a spectacular display, highlighting the compelling role of fashion in both liturgical and commercial contexts. I therefore believe it can be an interesting contribution for anyone interested in the anthropology of fashion, as well as religion.

Withers, P. (2024). Mediating queer masculinities through alternative music from Palestine. *Feminist Media Studies*, 25(5), pp. 1063–1079.

[Academic article]

The article analyzes, in unusual and highly engaging way, the ways in which Palestinian artists articulate new forms of masculinity and sexuality through alternative music. It draws on Foucault's theory of technologies of the self – being queer in this context is understood as a specific practice of self-formation in dialogue with the multiple structures of power to which Palestinians are exposed. What is particularly valuable, in my opinion, is that it demonstrates that queer experience and identity – or queerness – are not universal (Western) phenomena, but must be understood in relation to colonialism, (in this case Israeli) occupation, and global (neoliberal form of) capitalism. Analyzing music as a symbol of resistance to heteronormative and colonial orders struck me as deeply enriching.