

## Editor's Introduction

***Jane Barter***

In the spring of 2015, my home department—the Department of Religion and Culture—inaugurated a student colloquium. I had just returned from a conference, and was struck by how our students at the University of Winnipeg were presenting papers that were as sound academically (if not more so) as many of the graduate essays I had heard that week in Britain. What accounts for the University of Winnipeg's success in training writers and researchers? My guess is that our famously intimate class size has a lot to do with it. As faculty, we have the occasion to mentor students, to take an active interest in their arguments, and to move initial research questions toward exceptional research papers in the humanities and social sciences.

But another thing struck me as I listened to our students. Our students are profoundly engaged in the world. Their academic interests are often inspired by their activism—a culture that the University of Winnipeg helps to awaken and foster. Their critical awareness ensures not just an academic interest in the subject matter, but a keen sense that ideas matter and that ideas have the capacity to shape the world for the better. At Arts Council that spring, several of us discussed the possibility of starting a journal that would provide a forum for student research. With the support of several senior bodies and with the dedication and commitment of several generous faculty members, librarians, and students, *Crossings* was born.

From the outset, *Crossings*—as the name suggests—was determined to be interdisciplinary. We sought to show the connections between the various disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences, connections that are not always evident in our various disciplinary homes. We also

sought to trace the intersections between the academy and the public. We knew that many of our students were engaged in the City and beyond as student activists and often as professionals. We wanted to provide a forum in which student research was linked to the contexts in which they lived and worked. Several essays in this volume reflect the commitment and the context of the student researchers. Several essays also reflect the manner in which the intersection of the academy with their lives had dramatic, and life-changing consequences. Throughout, readers will find that the crossings reflected in this volume suggest, if not a hidden unity to our academic disciplines, then recurring themes and problems that are addressed from a variety of academic vantages. Each of these essays suggests a broadening of horizons, beyond initial experience, but also beyond disciplinarity itself.

Rebecca Hume's essay offers a first-hand account of the manner in which travel becomes a means of questioning one's previously-held assumptions about the world and one's place within it. In her « *Journal de voyage en France: représentations d'une identité plurielle*, » Hume offers pictorial and narrational representations of her journey to France, a journey which enabled her to grow beyond the protected identity which she once held. Dylan Jones' essay, "Exploring the Social World of Distance Runners: An Auto-Ethnographic Study," is likewise interested in the expansion of personal identity. In his auto-ethnography, Jones examines how runners construct and maintain a sense of self while also contributing to a larger communal identity. Victoria King also engages in auto-ethnography as she explores the culture of CKUW radio. She argues convincingly that ethnographic study of media culture helps to emphasize and showcase the work being done in sectors of independent and alternative media. Such accounts are invaluable not only in documenting the culture, but also in testifying to its multidimensional value.

Several of the essays in this volume represent an effort to understand human atrocity and its aftermath. Amanda Buhse's essay, "The Treatment of Women during the Holocaust," explores the specific forms

of suffering experienced by women during the Shoah—including sexual violence, forced abortions, and sterilization. Another essay, “Nazi Medical Experiments” by Madison Loewen, explores the ethical problem that Nazi medical experiments engender: because of the unethical origins of the experiments, is it unethical to use their research findings? Loewen provides a framework for use of their scientific findings that seeks also to respect the victims.

Some theoretical papers in this collection ask questions about the end—or aim—of representation. In his paper, “Hegel, Danto, and the Content of Art,” Tony Weeler contrasts G.W.F. Hegel’s and Arthur Danto’s perspectives on the ends of art. Tapji Garba’s paper, “Deactivating Use, Deactivating Theology,” examines the ways in which theological formulations are re-presented unwittingly in contemporary politics, the end result of which is the glorification of certain bodies and certain humans and the deprecation of others. Garba engages Giorgio Agamben’s recent work to think beyond the “glorious body.”

Other essays speak to both the oppressive and the emancipatory potential of artistic representation. Jade DeFehr’s essay, “Queer Crip Porn: Celebratory and Reimagined Representations of Disability, Sex and Gender,” argues that queer crip porn has the potential to offer a powerful and effective tool for disabled people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations to celebrate their own sexuality and to challenge the limitations of mainstream sexual representation. Rachel Epp’s essay, “The Axes of I Spit on Your Grave: Gender, Class, and Racial Trouble in Meir Zarchi’s 1978 Original and Steven R. Monroe’s 2010 Remake,” looks at the ways in which the rape revenge sub-genre perpetuates classist and racist biases even as it seeks to address (predominantly white) feminist issues. Adrienne Tessier examines the phenomenon of hip-hop music—particularly music produced during the Arab Spring—and how it functions as the voice of a global subaltern. Tessier argues that rap artists are, in fact, “intellectual freedom fighters” who articulate their political beliefs in an accessible and revolutionary way.

A number of essays in this volume challenge gender stereotypes and commonplace assumptions about gender binaries. Taylor Daigneault's paper is a systematic examination of the latest research on gender dysphoria, which provides a challenge to teachers, administrators, and policymakers to make appropriate adaptations for students who do not conform to binary gender norms. Jamie Pfau's paper, "What Makes a Good Parent in the Age of Intensive Parenting? The Pivotal Role of Sacrifice," was originally written for her honours thesis in Psychology and investigates the degree to which personal sacrifice plays an important role in people's perceptions of parenting "goodness," and how such perceptions of parental sacrifice are themselves gendered.

Questions of gender and identity are also explored through the nexus of religion. Shanae Blaquiere's paper, "Ultimate Victim, Ultimate Aggressor: Media Depiction of Muslim Identities," looks at the way in which Muslims are constructed as the "Other" by Western media, which defines Muslim woman as victims and Muslim men as aggressors. In a similar vein, Jordyn Sheldon argues that discourse surrounding multiculturalism—particularly as it is deployed by Canadian anti-terrorism strategies—often serves as a tool which measures cultural difference against the norm of Canadian identity, which is "whiteness." Annie McBay's essay, "A Religious Campaign Inspired by Secular Values," examines the manner in which conflicting identities—those of religious feminists, secular feminists, and traditional Orthodox Judaism—contend over a specific site, the Western Wall in Jerusalem. McBay's analysis situates this struggle in historical context, particularly the context of secular values.

The significance of social media as a site for critical reflection was a theme raised by many of our authors. Kelby Loeppky's paper, "Raising the Bar: Women Bodybuilders' Agentic Potential on Instagram," examines the ways in which women bodybuilders use online spaces to challenge gender norms and exert agency. Christina Hajjar explores how Selfies and Selfie-making, such as those of the "Art Hoe Collective," can be a form of creative and emancipatory meaning

making. Alexandria Echavarria sounds a more critical note about social media as she analyses the demise of privacy in an information age as exemplified by the Ashley Madison breach.

The final essay in this collection is a timely one as the University of Winnipeg embarks upon its first year with the Indigenous Course Requirement (ICR). Rebecca Ward's essay, "A Settler's Journey of Decolonization: Unlearning and Learning," takes readers through the difficult process of decolonization. In her essay, Ward interweaves critical studies on the process with a narrative account of her own journey toward decolonization. It is our hope that our future editions will offer further theory and testimony to the manners in which Indigenous knowledges are transforming research and student experiences.

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Walter Benjamin once observed that “all human knowledge, if it can be justified, must take on no other form than that of interpretation.”<sup>1</sup> It is a great privilege to work with those who have handed down the delicate and difficult task of interpretation. It is also a deep honour to chronicle the nuance and the acuity of this particular work of interpreting.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910–1940*, eds. Gershom Sholem and Theodor Adorno, trans. Manfred and Evelyn Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 125.