

The Journal of Interreligious Studies

Published by Hebrew College, Boston University School of Theology, & Hartford International University for Religion and Peace

**Issue 41 - The Art of Interfaith: A Festschrift in Honor of Lucinda Mosher on Interreligious Engagement and the Arts
March 2024**

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We remain grateful to Dr. Stephanie Varnon-Hughes and Rabbi Joshua M. Z. Stanton for their vision and commitment to interreligious engagement by founding the Journal under its original title, the Journal of Interreligious Dialogue, in 2009.

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From the Editor-in-Chief



Axel M. Oaks Takacs

Journal of Interreligious Studies
March 2024, Issue 41, 1-3
ISSN 2380-8187
www.irstudies.org

Issue 41 is a special issue in honor of my friend and colleague, Lucinda Mosher, who expertly serves as this journal’s Senior Editor. Her experience and commitment to the field of interreligious studies is not unknown to many of our regular readers. She is seemingly involved in numerous edited volumes, book projects, journals, conferences, and panels all at once at any given moment that it would not be extraordinary if we assumed she could bilocate—perhaps even trilocate! Alas, as far as I know she has no such supernatural powers but rather is enabled to be involved in so many activities precisely because of her deep vocation to the field.

As editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, I am grateful to have her as a colleague. Without her time and experience the JIRS would not have grown as much as it has in the last several years. It seemed more than appropriate to craft a call for papers honoring her career. “The Art of Interfaith: A Festschrift in Honor of Lucinda Mosher on Interreligious Engagement and the Arts,” features a collection of articles concerning the theme of interreligious/interfaith studies and the arts. Many authors know Lucinda well, others have at least met her or engaged her scholarship; however, there are a few who do not know her but who nonetheless were attracted to the theme and submitted articles. These are all presented in this issue in her honor. All in all, this issue comprises an impressive 179 pages, a testament both to the number of scholars wishing to honor Dr. Mosher and the desire of many others to contribute to such an important and sometimes overlooked topic.

Hussein Rashid frames this special issue in Dr. Mosher’s honor. He is no stranger to religion and the arts and likewise is a prominent voice in the field of interreligious/interfaith studies, religious literacy, and especially Muslims and American popular culture vis-à-vis music, comics, and film. His brief introduction is followed by ten articles and three scholarly reflections.

It seems appropriate to begin the issue with three articles that were originally part of an AAR panel on comparative theology and music, a panel in which Dr. Mosher participated. Thomas Cattoi opens with “Sounds of the End: Music and Eschatology in Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time* and the Tibetan Practice of *gCod*,” which brings into conversation the musical vision of the French composer Olivier Messiaen (1908–92) and the role played by music in the Tibetan practice of *gCod* (spelled phonetically as *chöd*), a traditional tantric ritual aimed at the

suppression of negative influences and the recovery of primal awareness. Distinctive soteriological and cosmological visions emerge even while shared goals of transformation and transcendence are mutually illuminated. Pim Valkenberg follows with “How Easily Things Get Broken: Leonard Bernstein and Osvaldo Golijov on the Body and Blood of Christ,” in which he offers a theological interpretation of two musical works on Christian themes by Jewish composers, Leonard Bernstein’s *MASS* (1971) and Osvaldo Golijov’s *La Pasión según San Marcos* (2000); drawing on living Jewish traditions in dialogue underscores certain theological implications of the music. The third in this triptych is Lucinda Mosher’s own “Is It ‘Praying Twice?’: An Anglican Christian Comparative Theological Consideration of Chanting and Hymn-singing in Bhakti Hindu, Sikh, and Sufi Muslim Traditions,” wherein she explores the role of “sonic theology” in comparative theology and the arts, particularly sacred music.

In the piece co-authored by Melanie Barbato and Hans-Jürgen Gerung, “One Sees Oneself in the Eye of Another: The Creative Processes Behind a Musical Composition on Interreligious Themes,” the composer and lyricist reflect together on the process of creating a musical composition through the intersecting frames of comparative theology, interreligious studies, and interreligious art. This is followed by Aloys Budi Purnomo’s “Art and Interreligious Dialogue: Knitting Harmony in the Indonesian Context,” wherein he reflects on the role art played in promoting and sustaining interreligious dialogue in the Archdiocese of Semarang (Indonesia).

We then move from music and interreligious dialogue to explorations of poetry. Preeta M. Banerjee’s “Being Experienced and Experiencing the Divine: An Interplay of Womanist and Shakta Traditions” explores Alice Walker’s poem “There is a Flower at the Tip of My Nose Smelling Me” and the Bangla Shama Sangeet (or Ma Kali devotional song) “Mayer Payer Jaba Hoye.” Banerjee reveals the nondual experience of the divine in these traditions. In “Nazrul’s Gift: Illustrating the Promise of the Third Space in the Aesthetic Dialogue of Nazrul Islam,” Rachele Elizabeth offers an “interdisciplinary project of aesthetic interreligious dialogue” to illustrate the power and potential of the third space through the poetry of Nazrul Islam.

We move from music and poetry to material objects and artwork in the next two articles. Joanna Homrighausen, in “Liturgical Letters: Jewish and Christian Calligraphic Art and Comparative Theology,” explores the possibility of comparative theology when the objects of comparison are not texts but calligraphic arts from multiple traditions—some of which are formed out of hybrid traditions. Paul Hedges offers a theoretical and critical essay, “Art and/as Religious Syncretic Border Crossing: Beyond the World Religions Paradigm and the Religion/Culture Divide in Museums and Interreligious Studies,” wherein he applies the critique of the World Religions Paradigm to museum curatorial choices in placing certain works of art in one religious category over another.

The last article is a reprint from the *Georgetown Companion to Interreligious Studies* (edited by Lucinda Mosher). Timur R. Yuskaev’s “A Contrapuntal Discipline: Through the Landscape of ‘Inter-’ and ‘Religious’” puts into relief the proliferation of landscape metaphors deployed in the discipline of interreligious studies and seeks to conceptualize the discipline musically.

These articles are followed by three scholarly reflections. Amir Hussain offers us “‘Don’t Let Us Lose This Memory’: American Muslims, American Service,” Jenny Peace offers us “Bearing,” and Laurie L. Patton offers us three poems from *House Crossing*.

These are followed by six book reviews.

- *Religion, Populism, and Modernity: Confronting White Christian Nationalism and Racism*, edited by Atalia Omer and Joshua Lupo (reviewed by Shaunesse’ Jacobs Plaisimond)
- *With the Best of Intentions: Interreligious Missteps and Mistakes*, edited by Lucinda Mosher, Elinor J. Pierce, and Or N. Rose (reviewed by Thomas W. Goodhue)
- *bell hooks’ Spiritual Vision: Buddhist, Christian, and Feminist*, by Nadra Nittle (reviewed by Matthew Maruggi)
- *The Paradox of Trauma and Growth in Pastoral Care: Night Blooming*, by Mary Beth Werdel (reviewed by Aizaiah G. Yong)
- *A Śākta Method for Comparative Theology: Upside Down, Inside Out*, by Pravina Rodrigues (reviewed by Preeta M. Banerjee)
- *What Would Jesus See? Ways of Looking at a Disorienting World*, by Aaron Rosen (reviewed by Lucinda Mosher)

This festschrift special issue closes with an Afterword by its honoree, Lucinda Mosher.

I hope you enjoy the various articles, reflections, and book reviews in this special issue in honor of Lucinda Mosher. We have many more issues lined up for 2024 and early 2025 and look forward to your continued interest.

Axel M. Oaks Takacs, Th.D.
Editor-in-Chief
Journal of Interreligious Studies

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