

Editor's introduction

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This new issue explores a rich variety of contemporary expressions of religious activity, some strongly challenging the limits between the secular and the spiritual and are extremely stimulating.

In “‘Nothing Tastes as Good as Skinny Feels’: Kate Moss and the Role of the ‘Extraordinary Body’ in Cult Formation,” Zoe Alderton analyses the fascination for the body of the famous model Kate Moss of pro-anorexia websites and participants. Though nothing proves that she suffers herself from anorexia, her extreme thinness has turned her into a cult icon, in the spiritual sense, a phenomenon that deserves the in-depth analysis provided here.

In “‘Psychologically Kidnapped!’: ‘Secular’ Deprogrammings, the Category of Cult, and Fear of Social Change,” Jacques Parker takes a somewhat different slant to the usual treatments of brainwashing and deprogramming. By focusing on the 1981 deprogramming case of Stephanie Riethmiller, a lesbian and not a cult member, he shows that the main conflicts were between cultists and their families who feared a disruption of the social status of American families, and that this spilled into the current Culture Wars.

In “‘His Life is Like a Folklore Legend’: MF DOOM as Both a Consumer and Producer of Occultural Reenchantment,” Dario Pizzuto bases on the concept of “occulture” the phenomenon of hip-hop as expressed by MF DOOM who began performing in the late 1980s. Through a comprehensive analysis of his music and performances, Pizzuto demonstrates the mythic reenchantment allowed by such a hip-hop artist thanks to its inclusion of occultural references which create a totally new world view.

In “An atypical base-community: research findings and corrected perspectives for the Icelandic Ásatrúarfélagið,” Mark Nemes explains how the specific features of this neo-pagan movement have made it popular in Iceland and overseas. Its inclusiveness provides social and religious involvement and avenues of self-expression that are hard to find elsewhere, so much so that the group has been mystified as was shown by the inflamed reactions to the construction of the first temple of the group.

The five book reviews that complete this issue of our journal demonstrate the constant richness of our field of study.