

The Buddha of Suburbia

edited by
Carole M Cusack, Frances Di Lauro
and Christopher Hartney

Proceedings of the
Eighth Australian and International
Religion, Literature and the Arts
Conference 2004



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FOREWORD

The Religion, Literature and the Arts Society had its inception at the Australian Catholic University and held annual conferences from 1994 to 1998 under the auspices of that institution. In 2000 it moved to the Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney and, since then, has held three conferences, in 2001, 2002 and 2004. The volumes of proceeding from these conferences mark a change of direction in that they are more narrowly focused on a single theme.

This volume, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, developed from the proceedings of the 2004 conference by the same title. That event was organised by Carole Cusack, with assistance from Christopher Hartney who was paid by funds from the School of English, Art History, Film and Media (Seafam) at the University of Sydney. Our thanks are due to the Head of School, Associate Professor Adrian Mitchell, for this generous support. We would like to thank those speakers whose work is not, for various reasons, represented in this volume: Lorraine Bower, Kathleen McPhillips and Peter Mudge, Justine Digance, Amanda Cole, Sarah Penicka, Lynette McCredden, Hazel Burgess, Veronica Brady from the University of Western Australia, Hannah Liddy, Jacinta Rooney, Simon O'Rourke, Douglas Ezzy from the University of Tasmania, Matthew Etherden and David Russell. Appreciation is also extended to two keynote speakers, Gabrielle Carey (author and doctoral candidate at the University of Western Sydney) and Lindy Lee (contemporary Australian artist), who were very well-received.

Anna Hoyle also presented a paper in which she passionately described her artistic penchant; conflating everyday suburban *accoutrements* and 'gadgetry' with 'exotic' symbols and motifs that are representative of *Chinoiserie* in general, and the Eastern spiritual consciousness in particular. These otherwise incongruent objects coexist, seamlessly fused in Anna's art, which appropriately encapsulated the theme of the conference and, in turn, this volume. Anna displayed, along with other works, her "pebblemix a path to nirvana amongst other pleasurable pursuits" (ink on paper 250x76cm, 2004) at the conference. Two details from it are included as appendices to her paper and a third detail lavishes the front cover of this volume.

Other submissions, contributed by Philip Quadrio, Brendon Stewart, Tanja von Behrens, Vassilios Adrahtas, Marius Paul O'Shea, Laura Markwick, John Wu, Olivia Rawlings-Way, Annabel Carr, Robert Williams, Dominique Wilson, Carole M Cusack, Andrew Wearing, Frances Di Lauro, Lydia Saleh Rofail, Chela Weitzel, Milad Milani, Christopher Hartney, Vanessa Crosby and Esther Berry contemplate the popularisation of religion and the manifestation of religion in popular culture, examining a broad spectrum of artistic forms and literary *genres* through various disciplinary prisms, all of which coalesce to harmoniously and faithfully embody the theme of this volume.

The success of the conference was facilitated by the gracious assistance of Lauren Bernauer, Katharine Buljan, Carole Cusack, Vanessa Crosby, Frances Di Lauro, Christopher Hartney, Milad Milani, Sarah Penicka, Tanja von Behrens, Andrew Wearing, John Wu and Dominique Wilson.

This volume has been refereed in accordance with Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) requirements, and thanks are due to the anonymous referees.

Carole M Cusack and Frances Di Lauro
September 2005

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Vassilios Adrahtas holds a BD (Hons), an MPhil and a PhD in Sociology. He has also submitted a PhD thesis on Indigenous Australian religions. He has lectured at St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College and at present lectures on Indigenous Australian religions at the University of Sydney. He translates books from English into Greek and has published extensively. He edits the quarterly *Studies in Religion – Sacred / Profane* (Athens) and is the author of *The Quest: The "Arguments" about the Existence of God* (2001) and *Temptation: The Political History of Christianity* (2005).

Esther Berry is an Honours student in Gender Studies at the University of Sydney. She is interested in postcolonial feminist studies and its exploration of intersecting gendered and racial discourses. She is devoting her Honours thesis to the transnationalisation of human hair from India; in particular, to its discourse surrounding the neocolonisation of the Other, the social construction of 'blackness' and the global trade in cyborg bodies.

Annabel Carr is currently enduring Honours in Studies in Religion, attempting to marry her passion for nineteenth-century literature with her sympathy for meta-narratives of Judaeo-Christianity. Her academic interests include English grammar and etymology; the polemics of ontology; the problem of evil; Christian sectarianism; and notions of the 'Otherworld' in religion and literature.

Vanessa Crosby is a doctoral candidate and lecturer in Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney. Her research is in medieval European religion, particularly the arts and Jewish/Christian/Muslim interactions. Her current work is on apocalyptic visions in Jewish and Christian art in Muslim Spain. Recent forays into twentieth century genre fiction have seen her expand her research interests into the religious aspects of science fiction and fantasy literature.

Carole M Cusack is Senior Lecturer of Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney. She is the author of *Conversion Among the Germanic Peoples* (Cassell, 1998) and *The Essence of Buddhism* (Lansdowne, 2001). Her research and teaching interests include European mythology, conversion and other religious transitions, the secularization process, and contemporary Western religious trends.

Frances Di Lauro is a doctoral candidate and tutor in Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney. Her research interests include Daoist philosophical texts, Celtic Otherworld narratives (*imrrama* and *echtrae*) and mediaeval eschatological dream and vision literature, all of which coalesce in her current research, focused on the eschatological idiosyncrasies in the *Divina Commedia* of Dante.

Christopher Hartney completed his BA and PhD in Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney. In 2005 he lectured at the universities of New South Wales and Sydney. His lecture series, *Civilization: The Art of Being Human*, at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, was the Gallery's most successful series to date. He is treasurer of the Australian Association for the Study of Religion and active in the Religion, Literature and the Arts Society.

Anna Hoyle is an Australian visual artist working in drawing and print media. She has a First Class Honours degree in fine art from the Victorian College of the Arts and a Bachelor of Education in Visual Arts (University of Melbourne). Currently a Master of Fine Art candidate (by research) at Monash University, Anna is investigating the dialectics of consumerism, spirituality and the natural environment. She was recipient of the prestigious 2004 Robert Jacks prize for drawing. Anna is represented by Brian Moore Gallery in Sydney and Mossgreen Gallery in Melbourne.

Laura Markwick developed an interest in the beliefs expressed by artists about their work while at art college. Having started her studies at Leeds University, in 1999 she moved to Australia to be in the sunshine completing her degree in Art History at James Cook University, where the beliefs of artists became the focus of her writing. An Honours thesis on Kandinsky and spiritual vibrations led to a PhD on the spiritual healing associations of circles in art. Her paper in this volume stems from this research.

Milad Milani is a doctoral candidate and tutor in Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney with majors in philosophy and religion. He successfully completed Honours with Studies in Religion in 2003, focusing on the character and Sufi intimations of the enigmatic fourteenth century poet, Hafiz. His current work is an extension of his earlier interests where the area of focus is now the hermeneutical origins of Persian Sufism.

Marius Paul O'Shea is a doctoral candidate in Fine Art at the University of Newcastle. He researches the hermeneutics of the visual image. He taught in Singapore from 1986 to 2000, first, on the Art Elective Program, a government social engineering experiment, then at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, training art teachers. Prior to working in Singapore, he spent many years involved in art education in inner-city London. Marius Paul O'Shea holds a degree in Fine Art (History of Art) as well as a Masters in Education and Mass Communication.

Philip Quadrio completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Sydney with majors in Philosophy and Studies in Religion. He teaches in both Philosophy and Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney. Philip lives in the Blue Mountains with his partner Carrol, their two children, Raeginn and Darian, and their dog Eddie. He is completing his PhD on Kantian and Hegelian social and political philosophy. His research interests are: Philosophical Idealism, Social Philosophy, Epistemology, Philosophy of History, Philosophy of Culture, Kant, Hegel, McDowell and Idealist Ethics.

Olivia Rawlings-Way is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Indian Subcontinental Studies at the University of Sydney. She is researching the teachings and practices of Vietnamese Zen monk, poet, scholar, and engaged Buddhist activist, Thich Nhat Hanh. From the theological perspective of pluralism, Olivia is analysing Nhat Hanh's attitude towards other religions and will visit his meditation centre in France next year to undertake field research.

Lydia Saleh Rofail is currently undertaking a Master of Philosophy in English at the University of Sydney. She is writing a thesis in the area of postcolonial literature with a particular interest in contemporary Indian literature. Lydia is co-editor of *Philament*, an online journal of the arts.

Brendon Stewart contributes to the Masters program in Analytical Psychology at the University of Western Sydney where he teaches 'Buddhist Practice and Analytical Psychology.' His research encompasses Analytical Psychology, Cultural Studies, Ecological Theory, Creativity, Imagination and Consciousness. Recent publications include 'I Took to Roaming in Cemeteries as a Young Boy' and 'The Blue Hour' in *Changing Places: Re-imagining Sense of place in Australia* (2003).

The Buddha of Suburbia

Tanja von Behrens graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Studies in Religion from the University of Sydney in 2004. A recipient of the G S Caird prize for Studies in Religion and an arts continuing scholarship, she now spends time delving into yogic philosophy and trying to decipher the world beyond the sandstone walls. This is her first academic publication.

Andrew Wearing is a doctoral candidate and tutor in Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney. His research interests include Coptic and Syriac texts, early Christianity, the religions of Late Antiquity and Manichaeism, on the last of which he has written and presented several papers. His current research concerns the self-identity of Manichaeans, in their various diverse environs.

Chela Weitzel is currently studying a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Sydney. She has completed a major in Studies of Religion, with an emphasis on multicultural aspects of Australian religious life. She is completing a Psychology major and plans complete Honours in the area of social psychology.

Robert J Williams completed his doctoral work in Auckland University and Kingseat Psychiatric Hospital. He taught Psychology and Counselling for twenty-five years with research interests in the health psychology of substance abuse, developmental symptoms of eating disorders and the influence of sex-role stereotypes. Robert is now a doctoral candidate in Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney with interests in the secularization of the Western Esoteric, Integral/Transpersonal Psychology, the quest for gnosis and spiritual alchemy as the symbolic representation of the potential evolution of an embodied archetypal process called humanity.

Dominique Wilson is a doctoral candidate, tutor and research assistant in Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney. Her Honours research focused on the esoteric mythic-histories surrounding occult lodges. Her interests include pre-Christian mythology, esoteric and New Age movements. Her thesis explores the archetype of the wise-man figure in comparative religion.

John Wu is a doctoral candidate in Indian Studies at the University of Sydney, in the final year of completing his thesis on Heidegger, Western esotericism and Tibetan Buddhism. He works at Fisher Library during the day. John advocates the fundamental right of the Tibetan people for self-determination.

Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world; it is God's gift to humanity.

George W. Bush

An ordering of society which relegates religion, democracy and good Faith among nations to the background can find no place within it for the ideals of the Prince of Peace. The United States rejects such an ordering, and retains its ancient faith.

Franklin D Roosevelt

America is another name for opportunity. Our whole history appears like a last effort of divine Providence on behalf of the human race.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Introduction: The Interplay Between the Contemporary Sacred and Secular

Philip A Quadio