

## Director's Welcome

The world is a shrinking place. The internet, global media, world commerce, and travel have all made information and other kinds of human contact so much easier on the one hand, and so much riskier on the other. The ease is apparent to anyone who has ever opened web browser. The risk might seem more indistinct, except when we think about the errors of assumption we make of one another, both locally and abroad.

For example, in a poll ABC News conducted in 2003, respondents ranked themselves on two scales: their familiarity with Islam, and their perception of whether or not Islam is a peaceful religion. The poll showed that only one-third of Americans felt they had a “good basic understanding” of Islam; of those who said they understood it, 59 percent called it peaceful. In contrast, of the two thirds of Americans who said they were “basically unfamiliar” with Islam, only 40 percent called it peaceful. Even fewer of those people thought that Islam teaches respect for others’ beliefs.

This is but one set of misunderstandings that are all too common in our society. Our hope in the Institute is that our teaching, creative work, and research can help remedy this situation in some small way. An examination of ways that cultures define themselves or transform themselves in new contexts is but one approach that you will encounter in this issue of *Colloquium*. We have been inspired and encouraged to assemble this group of thinkers by an already abundant set of initiatives at Yale to think globally, from Yale Divinity School’s historic and longstanding commitment to the study of the Christian missionary movement, to the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, and the World Fellows Program (our near neighbors located in the Betts House next door), all in keeping with President Levin’s overarching vision of Yale as a global university.

The world may be shrinking, but knowledge is expanding exponentially. Understanding needs to expand, too—and so we reach out to understand religions and cultures that are not our own.

We hope that you will find insight and information within these pages that will enlighten your own interpretations of our world.

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## FOREWORD

### Colloquium: Music, Worship, Arts

“The World in Pieces” —so Clifford Geertz entitled his lecture in 1995 to the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in Vienna. We used to be able to study culture and inculturation with some sense that we knew what we were talking about, especially when it came to the spread of Christianity throughout the world: Christianity was embodied in the cultures of Western Europe, and carried easily spotted valises with it wherever it went, trunks that were unpacked in various stages, their contents reused, reappropriated, and often thrown out. Now, as the essays in this volume demonstrate in a variety of ways, we know too much simply to look at how a faith tradition must and will be transformed as it moves from one set of “cultural norms” (who could even think in such terms anymore?) to another. To paraphrase Geertz in his lecture cited above, the pervasive raggedness of the world, the shattering of larger coherences, has made relating local realities with overarching ones extremely difficult. “In a splintered world, we must address the splinters.”

There could be no better introduction to this volume of essays presented first as lectures to the ISM community in 2004-05, than that provided by the ethnomusicologist Jeffers Engelhardt. He, like Geertz and other anthropologists today, studies what once would have been termed splinters, and so too do musicologists, literary critics, theologians, liturgiologists, art historians, and historians in general. At present there is a rampant need for many to try to define, explain, hold onto the religious values they were inculturated with as children, and people who aren’t academics often ask those of us who are why we are saying more and more about less and less, or reifying people and places so foreign to them: “What about us?” But who are you?

The Christianity that was sent by missionaries throughout the world is now returning to the West, bags repacked with music, languages, prayers, and expectations, and in the company of other faith traditions as well.

In a world splintered by trauma, and complexified by massive demographic shifts, Engelhardt suggests that we speak about and study processes of change on the edges between peoples who are in fundamental disagreement about their beliefs. This could be a medievalist watching the NASCAR opening ceremonies on a treadmill in the gym, or a Mexican family on its way to their first church service in New Haven. What do these have in common when the people are so different? Some things, perhaps, are human: expectations, different though they may be; reactions to alterity, across a spectrum; the nature of fear of an alien culture appropriating what one knows or of familiar rituals being turned inside out—it is these kinds of things that we look to now, and our authors offer many ways in which to do this, and many ideas about what is learned when we do. As we in the West sing world hymnody while being challenged to the scalps of our own comfort zones by stripes of Christian beliefs we do not recognize, we will change, like it or not; and even if we retreat, it will not be to our familiar hobbit holes in the Shire.

This new issue is packed with many ideas about religion, ritual, music, culture, and change. Take

it with you wherever you may travel and become a student of these processes yourself as you go.

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