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Reflections in the Waves: What Interreligious Studies Can Learn from the Evolution of Women's Movements in the U.S.*

Rachel S. Mikva

P R E C I S

As colleges, universities, and seminaries innovate programs in Interreligious Studies while the academic field is just taking shape, Women's Studies and now Gender Studies provide fruitful models for analysis. The fields share a critical mix of theory and praxis, a commitment to seek understanding across lines of difference, contemporary relevance, and intersectional and interdisciplinary complexity. Using the "waves" of women's movements as a mirror, the essay discusses sequential but not separate developments that emphasize equality, difference, diversity, and intersubjectivity. This lens sharpens our view of the learning curve for Interreligious Studies and Engagement and illuminates some future directions for the field.



As colleges, universities, and seminaries innovate programs in Interreligious Studies while the academic field is just taking shape, where do we look for theoretical and pedagogical models? Although one can trace the modern study of *Religionsgeschichte* ("history of religions") to the nineteenth century and examine the field of Comparative Religion that emanated from it, these academic foci do not necessarily provide the

*This essay is based on the author's presentation in 2015 at the American Academy of Religion.

best foundation for our work. As Paul Hedges points out, such approaches generally seek an ostensibly “objective historical or phenomenological account of similarities or points of meeting between religious traditions,” whereas Interreligious Studies “is more expressly focused on the dynamic encounter between religious traditions and persons.”¹ When we recognize also the critical mix of theory and praxis within Interreligious Studies, the commitment to seek understanding across lines of difference,² the intersectional and interdisciplinary complexity, the contextual urgency of the issues and particular challenges that arise, we may discover it is more fruitful to examine the development of a field that shares all these qualities, such as Women’s Studies (and now Gender Studies).

To explore the potential of this association, I outline “waves” within the women’s movements and identify parallels that illuminate the interreligious project, with its headwaters in *Religionsgeschichte* but its own directional flows. This broad sketch is a heuristic framework, leaving aside for now much of the complexity that typifies both Gender and Interreligious Studies.³ While it is a historical perspective, I do not chart the waves by decade; one wave does not end as the next one begins. If we think of waves as forces within the ocean that have mass and momentum before they arrive on shore, and continue to move about in the waters after defining their particular outline in the sand, and if we recall that there is never only one wave moving at a time—then we can examine the sequential but not separate waves that emphasize equality, difference, diversity, and intersubjectivity. This lens sharpens our view of the learning curve for Interreligious Studies and Engagement and illuminates some future directions for the field.

Two qualifications are in order. The first recognizes that examination of feminism’s waves delineates a Western, especially American-focused, analysis. Although it is a limited perspective on global questions of gender

¹ Paul Hedges, “Interreligious Studies,” in Anne Runehov and Luis Oviedo, eds., *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religions* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2013), p. 1077.

² The phrase draws from Diana Eck’s working definition of religious pluralism; see <http://www.pluralism.org/what-is-pluralism/>.

³ Many works within gender studies both utilize and problematize the “wave” framework. See, e.g., Cathryn Bailey, “Making Waves and Drawing Lines: The Politics of Defining the Vicissitudes of Feminism,” *Hypatia* 12 (June, 1997): 17–28; and Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford, eds., *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

justice, it suits *this* discussion of the development of Interreligious Studies that has a similar geographical/cultural focus. Second, there is ongoing debate about the influences and most essential qualities of each wave in the women's movements; the current study selects those elements that provide the most salient comparisons.

I. Equality

The modern women's movement began with a fight for equality.⁴ In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women campaigned for suffrage and for labor protections; they demanded the right to own property, enter restricted professions, serve on juries, divorce their husbands, and receive custody of their children. They sought freedom to speak in the public square and enter male domains of education and leadership.

Yet, the theory underlying this drive for equality addressed human nature as androgynous, and thus the standard was still a male one. Women fought to vote and to attend school on the grounds that they could be as rational as men. Working class women advocated for their rights as part of the universal (male) proletariat. Even Sojourner Truth's phenomenal speech, "Ain't I a Woman?"—which insisted that "woman" didn't mean "white woman" and challenged the patriarchal construction of women as delicate flowers to be protected and controlled by men—contested that narrative by comparing her labor and her toughness to men's.⁵ Equality became sameness, a fact that helped to sustain patriarchal privilege at the same time that women's movements sought to challenge it.⁶

There are numerous parallels with the development of interreligious engagement during the same period. Christian privilege pervaded multiple aspects of society—in "blue laws" that restricted commercial enterprises on Sundays, in religious tests for state and local public office, in the Protestant

⁴ The beginning of the "first wave" is often attached to the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention in 1848, organized by Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and others, and its impetus is generally assigned to the abolitionist movement. One might alternatively cite Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1793; repr., New York: A. J. Matsell, 1833).

⁵ Ohio Women's Rights Convention in Akron, 1851; see sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/sojtruth-woman.asp.

⁶ See, e.g., Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge, U.K.; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press: Polity Press, 1988); and Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

tone of public education, and in repeated calls to amend the Constitution explicitly to declare the United States a Christian nation.⁷ Despite the First Amendment's protection of religious freedom, adherents of minority traditions in the U.S. were often engaged in struggles for equality.

Jews, for example, were excluded from social clubs and hotels; they could not buy property in certain areas or purchase insurance for their businesses. They were regularly denounced in publications of the era and were suspect as witnesses in judicial proceedings. Quotas were imposed on university admissions and, after the 1924 Immigration Act, on admission to the country as well—disguised as limits based on countries of origin.⁸ Significant communal energy was devoted to combatting such discrimination; one example is the Anti-Defamation League, which was founded in 1913 “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.”⁹ In 1923, the Federal Council of Churches established a committee to reduce anti-Jewish and anti-Catholic prejudice, as an extension of its ecumenical commitments.

A key strategy in the fight for equality was to emphasize similarity with mainline Protestantism, the dominant faith of the nation. Many Reform synagogues moved their primary worship to Sunday and increasingly modeled the service in a Protestant style.¹⁰ The movement's Pittsburgh Platform, ratified in 1885, emphasized Judaism's “universal” teachings of monotheism and minimized Jewish particularity, rejecting all rituals that “are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.”¹¹

The birth of the modern interfaith movement is sometimes traced to the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, convened parallel to the Columbian

⁷ Naomi Cohen, *Jews in Christian America: The Pursuit of Religious Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 65–92. See Warren J. Blumenfeld, Khyati Y. Joshi, and Ellen E. Fairchild, eds., *Investigating Christian Privilege and Religious Oppression in the United States* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2008), for an examination of the more secular manifestations of Christian privilege that often avoid detection, circumventing the constitutional requirements for separation of religion (more commonly identified as “church”) and state.

⁸ Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁹ See <http://www.adl.org/about-adl/>.

¹⁰ This process began in Germany; see Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, 1995).

¹¹ See http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourch/Judaism/pittsburgh_program.html. Subsequent platforms of the movement reclaimed a number of rituals and increasingly valued Jewish particularity; they can be understood within the second wave, which made more space for difference.

Exposition in Chicago; it was an axial event in shaping attitudes toward religious diversity.¹² As the first time that many Americans came into contact with Eastern religions, there was a commitment to portray “the substantial unity of many religions in the good deeds of the Religious Life.”¹³ Yet, this universal vision of common ground was self-consciously located in Christian territory. The Rev. Dr. John Henry Barrows, president of the Parliament, was sincere in his desire to examine the shared principles of the world’s religions, but

[i]t became clear that even Barrows’ conception of the “universal” was but a larger and more expansive Christianity. . . . “The Christian spirit,” he wrote, “pervaded the conference from the first day to the last. Christ’s prayer was used daily. His name was always spoken with reverence. His doctrine was preached by a hundred Christians and by lips other than Christian. The Parliament ended at Calvary.”¹⁴

Academic trends that followed in the Parliament’s wake, such as the growth of the Chicago School, attempted to “dislodge . . . the study of other religions from its missionary moorings and set it free as a discrete academic specialty.”¹⁵ Yet, Joachim Wach, putative founder of the school, reinforced Christianity as the norm against which other religions could be measured. He sought “to describe the landscape of world religions such that Christianity is the ultimate truth” and “felt that his normative project was leading toward the realization of a Christian telos that he thought already properly described the ultimate religious experience.”¹⁶

¹² Eric J. Ziolkowski, ed., *A Museum of Faiths: Histories and Legacies of the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 3.

¹³ Charles Carroll Bonney, *The World To-day: A Monthly Record of Human Progress*, vol. 3 (World Review Company, 1902), p. 1501.

¹⁴ Diana Eck, “Parliament of Religions, 1893”; available at pluralism.org/encounter/historical-perspectives/parliament-of-religions-1893/. Other inequities were also evident; many African-Americans, including Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, and Fannie Barrier Williams, severely criticized the Exposition (and the Parliament) for its near exclusion of blacks from the list of speakers and from the shaping of American history; see <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1495.html>.

¹⁵ Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying toward Zion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 77.

¹⁶ Charles S. Preston, “Wach, Radhakrishnan, and Relativism,” in Christian Wedemeyer and Wendy Doniger, eds., *Hermeneutics, Politics, and the History of Religions: The Contested Legacies of Joachim Wach and Mircea Eliade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 94.

Scholarship of the era may not have been subservient to Christian evangelical commitments, but it was still in their service. Religions were seen to have value to the extent that they paralleled the norm. While monotheistic traditions fared relatively well, tribal religions were deemed primitive, and Eastern practices were exoticized. Theology of religions meant Christian theology, and categories of study were Christian categories.¹⁷

Community-based interfaith efforts reflected these dynamics. Interreligious prayer modeled white mainline Protestant worship, and dialogue emphasized sameness. (*Look at all we have in common!*) In 1965, the Second Vatican Council issued *Nostra aetate*, a paradigm-shattering statement of kinship with diverse religionists that expanded interreligious engagement exponentially. It, too, was based on similarity between the traditions:

In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.¹⁸

This became the grounds for equality. Such efforts bore fruit but also sustained Christian privilege, leaving its normativity substantially unchallenged.

As in the women's movements, the struggle for equality is not over. Some religious individuals, especially Muslims, suffer overt discrimination in the U.S. As of this writing, forty-three states have introduced anti-shariah legislation, and the Trump administration has repeatedly attempted to ban foreign Muslims from entering the country (again trying to pass Constitutional muster by obscuring its religious bias and identifying specific countries of origin). Native Americans have endured a long history of court cases denying their First Amendment free exercise claims, and they continue to witness the violation of their sacred lands, as with the

¹⁷ See Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹⁸ *Nostra aetate*, no. 1; available at www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html. Other documents from Vatican II portrayed the positive value in other religions as *praeparatio evangelica*, preparation for the Gospel. See Gavin D'Costa, *Vatican II: Catholic Doctrines on Jews and Muslims* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 99–107.

Dakota Access Pipeline project that threatens the ancient burial grounds (and the water) at Standing Rock reservation. Atheists have a hard time getting elected to public office. These are not acts of isolated individuals but represent broad-based social bias.

In the ongoing construction of Interreligious Studies and Engagement, where nominal equality is a given, representation and voice emerge as key issues, and there are always new battles on the horizon.¹⁹ Secular humanism and other nonreligious lifestyles²⁰ are only beginning to be addressed in North American interreligious efforts, because they are not sufficiently “like” the norm. This bias has had consequences for funding for campus spiritual life offices, invitations to the interfaith table, inclusion in textbooks, and analyses. It is also powerfully reflected in the continuing inadequacy of the field to account linguistically for such lifestyles other than by what they are not (that is, “nonreligious”). New religious movements, individuals who identify with multiple traditions, the spiritual but not religious, and pagan or indigenous cultures are often still invisible in scholarly discussions and applied contexts.²¹

II. Difference

A subsequent wave of feminist theory emphasized difference. Women recognized that it was not helpful to default into maleness as the norm and began to take seriously the category of “woman.” Theorists also looked at

¹⁹ See Rachel S. Mikva, “Six Issues that Complicate Interreligious Studies and Engagement,” in Eboo Patel, Jennifer Peace, and Noah Silverman, eds., *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2018), pp. 124–136.

²⁰ “Lifestance” (also life stance) was coined to open up religious and interreligious discourse to include nonreligious perspectives around matters of ultimate concern (see Harry Stopes-Roe, “Humanism as a Life Stance,” *New Humanist* 103 [October, 1988]: 19–21). Although it caught on more in Europe than in North America, the recent expansion of Interreligious Studies to include secular humanism, atheism, etc., presses for a similarly inclusive term.

²¹ Harvard University had a humanist chaplain in 1974, but it was highly unusual until recently; Jason Heap is currently involved in a lawsuit to become the first humanist chaplain in the U.S. armed services. For other “invisibilized” orientations around religion, see Grove Harris, “Pagan Involvement in the Interfaith Movement: Exclusions, Dualities, and Contributions,” *CrossCurrents* 55 (Spring, 2005): 66–76; Karla Suomala, “Complex Religious Identity in the Context of Interfaith Dialogue,” *CrossCurrents* 62 (Fall, 2012): 360–370; and Michelle Voss Roberts, “Religious Belonging in the Multiple,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26 (Spring, 2010): 43–62.

how sexual difference is socially constructed and symbolically fraught (for example, women's roles historically undervalued, women's qualities seen as undesirable, etc.) due to the enduring power of patriarchy.²² Eventually, this wave washed into religious studies as well, even though there was often tension between the fields; Letty Cottin Pogrebin said she frequently felt "like a double agent for two sacred causes, Judaism and feminism, neither of which necessarily believes the other deserves a place in heaven."²³ Nonetheless, (mostly female) theologians grew sensitive to the impact of male imagery for God, of women's erasure from scriptural exegesis and religious history, and of religious authority's preserving patriarchal structures.²⁴

In the process, however, feminist efforts tended to essentialize woman as a singular creature—a white, middle-class Christian woman at that. *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave*, proclaimed Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith—the title of their groundbreaking 1982 book on Black Women's Studies. Even though Ida B. Wells and Mary Church Terrell had been arguing since the turn of the twentieth century that the linkage of sexism and racism stood at the root of white male dominance, even though women of diverse races and classes and religions had struggled with the pain of invisibility, even though the fight for civil rights highlighted the different experience of African-American bodies in America, even though Alice Walker was probably right when she famously wrote "womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender"²⁵—suggesting that womanism is in fact the richer, larger project because it addresses multiple forms of domination and self-consciously

²² Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is often identified as the early voice of the second wave; it was first published in French in 1949. The period is generally defined as beginning in the 1960's, continuing into the 1980's in the U.S.; one classic text of the time is Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman*, tr. Gillian C. Gill (1974 in French; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

²³ Letty Cottin Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda, and Me: Being Female and Jewish in America* (New York: Crown Publishing, 1991), p. xi.

²⁴ See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1983); Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1990); and Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), based on doctoral work completed in 1989.

²⁵ The fourth definition in Walker's definition of womanist, appearing in the frontispiece of *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).

makes room for the diverse relationships that shape women's lives—white feminists like me still struggle to decenter the white experience, and Christian feminists struggle to decenter their own religious perspective.

While second-wave feminism recognized that women were not simply men in disguise, the tendency was to essentialize perpetuated injustice. “Such universalizing claims about women are always false, and function oppressively to normalize particular—socially and culturally privileged—forms of feminist experience.”²⁶

Parallel progress and problems are also evident in the development of interreligious learning. It increasingly recognized and dignified difference, liberating study and encounter from lowest-common-denominator equations. Dialogues were reimagined to learn about the uniqueness of each tradition.²⁷ Just as feminist theology tried to affirm the voice and experience of women (or at least white women), these encounters tried to affirm the voice and experience of diverse religions. Such approaches contested what Asma Barlas has called “the pervasive (and oftentimes perverse) tendency to view differences as evidence of inequality.”²⁸

One could see a shift as the field of Religious Studies took shape in the 1960's, distinct from Theology in its nonconfessional approach. Explicitly interdisciplinary and comparative, with deep study of religious difference, it experienced a rapid expansion of degree programs and academic positions. Ninian Smart, a key figure in the popularization of such nonsectarian study, introduced a highly influential methodology that attempted to break free of Western or Christian conceptions of how to think about spiritual worldviews. Making room for nontheistic traditions, for instance, he identified doctrinal, mythological, ethical, ritual, experiential, institutional, and later material “dimensions” of religion.²⁹ Similarly, Wilfred Cantwell Smith's 1962 controversial but now classic book, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, asserted that the very concept of religion was a modern

²⁶ Alison Stone, “On the Genealogy of Women: A Defense of Anti-Essentialism,” in Gillis, Howie, and Munford, *Third Wave Feminism*, p. 16.

²⁷ See, e.g., Leonard Swidler and Marc H. Tanenbaum, *Jewish-Christian Dialogues* (American Jewish Committee, January 1, 1966); available at www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=14018.

²⁸ Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002), p. 5.

²⁹ Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969).

Christian European invention. He proposed an alternative framework to examine the diverse “cumulative traditions” and multiple modes of expressing “faith.”

The study of difference revealed additional challenges. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said argued that Christian privilege and its associated geopolitical power distorted perceptions of difference, leading to patronizing conceptions of the “East” and making scholarship a tool of Western imperialism.³⁰ In addition, Religious Studies and Comparative Religion often operated as though one could establish a singular Judaism, Islam, or Buddhism. They did not account for diversity within or the ways lived tradition might vary from the reified “ism” of a particular religion. Although more recent scholarship has attempted to avoid such essentialism,³¹ pedagogy frequently still falls into these patterns. A quick scan of textbooks used to teach about multiple religious traditions illustrates how difficult it is to capture the dynamism, eclecticism, and diversity within each one.

In Interreligious Studies and Engagement, there is still a tendency to focus on religious traditions that are theistic, scriptural, and global, as well as on communities that have recognizable hierarchies, clergy, and organizational structures. Leonard Swidler’s pioneering work in the field illustrates the early imprint of this frame: The *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (founded in 1964 as an intra-Christian endeavor and evolving to become the first academic journal to address Interreligious Studies) and the Dialogue Institute (founded in 1978) focused for many years on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. His still-cited rules of interreligious dialogue are known as the “Dialogue Decalogue,” a reference that is more evocative for faithful readers of the Bible. One of its principles is that a person must come to the table “significantly identified with a religious community,”³²

³⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

³¹ Even though Smart cautioned in 1978 that scholars had to pay more attention to “religion on the ground,” the more essentialized approach remained the rule. He published the concept in *Religion and the Western Mind* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 50, but had earlier discussed it at academic conferences. See senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/_files/inmemoriam/html/roderickniniansmart.htm. Regarding the eventual shift, Gustavo Benvides wrote in Gregory D. Alles, ed., *Religious Studies: A Global View* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 243: “Terms taken for granted just a scholarly generation ago—for example, ‘Hinduism’ or ‘Gnosticism’—are now being questioned; . . . it is no longer uncommon to find references to ‘Christianities’ rather than to just ‘Christianity.’”

³² Leonard Swidler, “The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious Dialogue,” *J.E.S.* 20 (Winter, 1983): 1. He has since added the term “Inter-Ideological” to make room for atheism and other orientations that might not be termed “religious.”

potentially excluding individuals who are agnostic, interspiritual, or spiritual but not religious, and raises questions about who owns traditions, etc. Despite increasing awareness of these complexities, the undertow of old habits lingers.

There is still also a tendency to center Christian experience. The locus of many interreligious degree programs, for example, is in Christian (or historically Christian) theological and divinity schools. While this development flows naturally from their historical dominance as well as seminaries' special interest in "dynamic encounter between religious traditions and persons," it means that many interreligious programs have majority-Christian faculty and student bodies, curricular structures that best fit Christian learning goals, and the power dynamics of serving as host. What does a secular humanist or other student without a scripture do with the concentration on sacred texts? Preaching and leading worship are not universal roles for religious leaders, yet they remain requirements in most programs. How does pastoral care (note the language) change in a Hindu context, and can a classically trained Christian practical theologian incorporate it in more than token fashion?

Another example: A frequent exercise in Interreligious Studies involves developing a theology of religions, so that students are self-aware of the terms with which they engage religious others. Yet, the analysis still revolves around the classic trinity of pluralism, inclusivism, and exclusivism—essentially Christian categories flowing from Christian questions about salvation. Even though they have been problematized for lacking sufficient nuance or capacity for diversity, the tweaks still make the most sense for a tradition that has (or had) universal aspirations. Some lifestances do not really need to create a "theological" account for people who orient around religion differently.³³ Beyond the framing of comparative questions in Christian terms, there is also the potentially oppressive identification of Christian values as normative. Its privileging of that which is eternal and universal, for example, marginalizes traditions that emphasize the temporal

³³ See, e.g., Paul F. Knitter, ed., *The Myth of Religious Superiority: A Multifaith Exploration, Faith Meets Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), especially Perry Schmidt-Leukel, "Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism: The Tripolar Typology—Clarified and Reaffirmed," pp. 13–27; and Rita M. Gross, "Excuse Me, but What's the Question? Isn't Religious Diversity Normal?" pp. 75–87. See also Seung Chul Kim, "How Could We Get over the Monotheistic Paradigm for the Interreligious Dialogue?" *Journal of Interreligious Studies* 13 (February, 2014): 20–33.

(“this-worldly”) and particular.³⁴ Embedded deeply in the cultural context of the U.S., Christianity dominates even “secular” values; there is no neutral space for interreligious engagement.³⁵

III. Diversity

None of these dynamics completely vanishes in theory or practice, but we now shift to delineate waves with imprints that are still more recent on the shoreline, alongside the rising tide of Interreligious Studies as an identifiable field. “The personal is political” was a rallying cry of second-wave feminism, recognizing the connection between individual experience and larger social structures. As the theoretical claim becomes populated by the stories of diverse individuals in the third wave, real multiplicity becomes visible. We each come with our own narrative, an identity that is itself multiple and in flux, with accounts of race, class, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, gender, and religion. We cannot presume the primacy of gender or religious identity, demand an individual represent his or her entire tradition, or expect that a person’s embodiment of gender or religion is precisely what we read in a book. Stripping away essentialist constructions reveals a richer diversity.

It takes a while for the wave of diversity to wash over Women’s Studies and Interreligious Studies, a theoretical approach that presents no master narrative of oppression or experience and no single, static view of liberation or religion. “Third-wave” feminism does not simply advance more inclusive ideas of women’s experience, but it also explores different methodologies. Chela Sandoval wrote of a “differential consciousness” in third-world feminism, one that is “vital to the generation of a next ‘third wave’ and provides grounds for alliance with other decolonizing movements for

³⁴Judaism has frequently been denigrated for its more particular focus. See Anders Runesson, “Particularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity? Some Critical Remarks on Terminology and Theology,” *Studia Theologica*, vol. 53 (1999), pp. 58–60; Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002); and Rosemary Radford Ruether on the “schism of particularism and universalism” in her *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

³⁵See Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

emancipation.”³⁶ Along with womanist and *mujerista* thought, they pave the way in addressing manifold forms of domination, theorizing intersectionality and hybridity, and speaking about *lo cotidiano*—the significance of quotidian details in our lives.³⁷ Queer theory also helps to deconstruct assumptions about categories of man/woman, as in Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990), facilitating more fluid, nonbinary deliberations. In recognition of the fact that we are all impacted by the social construction of gender and its inequities, Women’s Studies is reorganized as Gender Studies in some schools, and its interdisciplinary foundations are deepened.³⁸ Rebecca Walker emphasized alternative dimensions of the third wave in her 1992 *Ms. Magazine* article, in which she was more conscious of generational difference and focused on noninstitutional change, personal agency, and iconoclastic expressions of self.³⁹ Collectively, these developments stake out a larger and more inclusive tent.

Many of these trends are reflected to some extent in Interreligious Studies, as the field begins to cultivate some disciplinary maturity. Multiple ways of thinking about religious difference emerge out of each religious and nonreligious particularity, pressing the field to account for lived religion beyond the “isms” and how that shapes actual engagement. For example, the 1965 Immigration Act opened the doors wider to individuals from Asia, and subsequent decades brought more substantial religious diversity

³⁶ Chela Sandoval, “U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World,” *Genders*, vol. 10 (1991), p. 4. Other important works pointing toward third-wave issues, but without the terminology, include bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* (Brooklyn, NY: South End Press, 1981); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984); and Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 1981). The earliest invocation of the third wave may have been in the 1980’s, when M. Jacqui Alexander, Lisa Albrecht, and Mab Segrest planned a volume, “The Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives and Racism,” but the publisher (Kitchen Table) was struggling, and the project did not come to fruition (with a broader array of editors and slightly amended title) until 1994.

³⁷ See Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the 21st Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996); Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43 (July, 1991): 1241–1299; and Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

³⁸ See, e.g., <http://womensstudies.berkeley.edu/about/history/>.

³⁹ Rebecca Walker, “Becoming the Third Wave,” *Ms. Magazine* 11 (January, 1992): 39–41. See also Jo Reger, ed., *Different Wavelengths: Studies of the Contemporary Women’s Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2005); and Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

to college campuses. Consequently, encounters with diverse Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh persons eventually transformed ideas about Eastern traditions from exotic, essentialized religions of far away into dynamic, homegrown multiplicities. Transnational identity and cross-cultural influences add complexity to analysis. Investigation of our multifaith context reveals the hybridity of social identity construction, as majority and minority religious cultures necessarily shape each other.⁴⁰ Emphasizing the individual story, Interreligious Studies also clarifies that one speaks *from* a lifestance rather than speaking *for* the whole of it.⁴¹

Encounter with post-colonial theory and its global perspective challenge theonormativity. Alongside rapidly growing religious diversity in the U.S., they expand interfaith engagement beyond the “trialogue” of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. They also prompt a critique of theological pluralism as the universal standard for religious enlightenment, with its potential to become yet another imperialist project that imposes Western values: Must one affirm the sufficiency and efficacy of other lifestances, and the value of multiple paths in the world, as the “new truth”?⁴²

The field of Interreligious Studies and community engagement efforts are now grappling with a certain lack of diversity in their ranks. In a realignment of spiritual communities, “progressive” traditions and individuals often find more in common with each other than with conservative perspectives in their own religious group; few people who identify as religiously conservative have been active in the field or movement. It is beginning to change, however, due to global events that demonstrate the

⁴⁰ See, e.g., E. Allen Richardson, *Strangers in This Land: Religion, Pluralism, and the American Dream*, rev. ed. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2010; orig.: *Strangers in This Land: Pluralism and the Response to Diversity in the United States* [New York: Pilgrim Press, 1988]); Diana Eck, *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Became the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002); and Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁴¹ See, e.g., Jennifer Howe Peace and Or Rose, eds., *My Neighbor’s Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012); and Mary C. Boys and Sara S. Lee, *Learning in the Presence of the Other* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2006). Some textbooks for religion in America courses have become more cognizant of intrafaith dynamism and variation, such as Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*, 5th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2012).

⁴² Kwok Pui-lan and Stephen Burns, *Postcolonial Practice of Ministry: Leadership, Liturgy, and Interfaith Engagement* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016); also see Paul Knitter, “Is the Pluralist Model a Western Imposition?” in Knitter, *Myth of Religious Superiority*, pp. 28–43.

urgency of interreligious understanding, aided by a more clearly articulated distinction between *theological* pluralism and the more fundamental commitment to religious pluralism as seeking understanding across lines of difference.⁴³ As with the shift from Women's Studies to Gender Studies, recognition that all of us are impacted by the social construction of religion and the encounter with difference draws a broader range of participants into Interreligious Studies, including theologically conservative voices. Yet, the bigger tent can also complicate issues of gender, LGBTQ rights, and even the question of Christian privilege in interreligious space, since evangelicals experience that claim very differently than do mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics.

While the academic field builds its institutional infrastructure, with the creation of degree programs, the establishment of an American Academy of Religion "Interreligious and Interfaith Studies" group, an increase in dedicated journals and consortia, etc., it is simultaneously expanding the space for individuals' noninstitutional perspectives—people who are "spiritual but not religious," who do not identify with mainstream articulations of their faiths, or who claim multiple religious belongings.⁴⁴ Queer theory helps to "trouble" the categories of religious identity. These more iconoclastic lifestyles begin to reshape some of the working foundations of Interreligious Studies; for example, what does interspirituality do to assumptions about appropriation? How do we challenge gatekeeping that marginalizes individuals who do not fit tidily inside traditions, while still recognizing the value of boundaries for theological coherence and community cohesion?

The "third wave" shift toward noninstitutional action is also evident. Nonexperts share stories in books and blogs about their transformative

⁴³ See "On Evangelicals and Interfaith Cooperation: An Interview with Tony Campolo by Shane Claiborne," *Crosscurrents* 55 (Spring, 2005): 54–65; Nicholas M. Price, "All Nations before God's Throne: Evangelicals in the Interfaith World," *Crosscurrents* 55 (Fall, 2005): 404–413; and Neil J. Young, *We Gather Together: The Religious Right and the Problem of Interfaith Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁴⁴ See Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual but Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). On multiple religious belonging, see Manuela Kalsky and André van der Braak, "Introduction to the Topical Issue, 'Multiple Religious Belonging,'" *Open Theology*, vol. 3, no. 1 (January, 2017); and Catherine Cornille, ed., *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010).

encounters with religious difference. They create independent networks of people who want to build bridges. They launch crowd-funding campaigns to assist *someone else's* religious community in distress.⁴⁵ Misinformation abounds in some “lay” spaces, but the world of interreligious learning grows larger.

In moving from the encounter of religions to the encounter of persons, an amazingly rich chorus of diverse voices emerges, yet the theoretical emphasis on diversity also has its limitations, sometimes becoming mired in identity politics and undercutting possibilities for connection. Backlash against a focus on diversity, regarding both gender justice and interreligious understanding, is only part of the problem. As the rhetorical assault on women and Muslims in the 2016 presidential campaign gives way to legal assaults against their rights, the backlash is profoundly consequential. While it highlights the suppleness of social power and privilege, however, emphasis on the strategic problem obscures a philosophical one.⁴⁶

I do not join with critics on the right who would reduce “diversity” to special interests and political correctness, but I am mildly sympathetic to the critique that identity politics sometimes devolve into oppression Olympics or into a self-destructive squabble for scraps of time, attention, and resources. Suffering and scarcity are not imagined, and identity politics provide reservoirs of knowledge essential for social change. However, identities are themselves socially constructed and are often used to divide and control populations; one can argue that we should strive to diminish “the salience of identity in everyday life, not institutionalize it.”⁴⁷ That is not to say that it can or should be eliminated entirely, since

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Ranya Idliby, Susanne Oliver, and Priscilla Warner, *The Faith Club: A Muslim, a Christian, a Jew—Three Women Search for Understanding* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006); Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom, at <https://sosspeace.org/>; Muslim campaigns to rebuild black churches destroyed by arson and Jewish cemeteries attacked by vandals, at https://www.launchgood.com/project/rebuild_with_love_rebuild_black_churches_support_victims_of_arson_across_the_south#/, and https://www.launchgood.com/project/muslims_unite_to_repair_jewish_cemetery#/.

⁴⁶ Social movements of the marginalized are never popular; they disrupt our understanding of ethics, society, and ourselves. It is only in hindsight—after turning the tide—that they acquire a normative glow.

⁴⁷ See Linda Martin Alcoff and Satya P. Mohanty, “Reconsidering Identity Politics: An Introduction,” in Linda Martin Alcoff, Satya P. Mohanty, Michael Hames-Garcia, and Paula M. L. Moya, eds., *Identity Politics Reconsidered* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 3.

identity—however constructed—is also foundational to the human psyche and to society.

The intersections are challenging to navigate. Many Jewish anti-racism activists are angry about the plank in the Black Lives Matter platform that endorses the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement against Israel and that accuses Israel of genocide against the Palestinian people. Feminist and womanist voices sometimes reflexively view *hijab* and *niqab* as oppressive, despite Muslim women's divergent accounts. Interreligious space can be constricted, as people refuse to sit with others who will not stand with them. We need a more capacious language of and platform for encountering difference, one that can transcend the potential for division in diversity.

IV. Intersubjectivity

Suggestions that a *fourth* wave of feminism has begun often highlight the impact of online communication and activism, creating national and transnational social networks. It is queer, sex- and body-positive, anti-misandrist and trans-inclusive. It tries to live into the ecology of commitments that intersectional theory brought to the fore. Continuing the micro politics of the third wave, it challenges the sexism that appears daily in television, advertising, media, etc., and the multiple contexts of women's lives—with the added power of generating instant campaigns.⁴⁸ From the #MeToo Movement to Pantsuit Nation (the Facebook group born during the 2016 presidential election with its perplexing match-up of the first woman to head a major-party ticket and a candidate who spoke about the privilege of groping women at will), it tries to harness the power of women's stories through the Internet.

Some of these qualities appear in the world of interreligious learning and engagement. Certainly, cyberspace has become an increasingly important venue for interreligious discourse, for good and for ill; people get an increasing percentage of their information (and misinformation)

⁴⁸ See the varied emphases among these online postings: Ealasaid Munro, <http://www.psa.ac.uk/insight-plus/feminism-fourth-wave>; Martha Rampton, <http://www.pacificu.edu/about-us/news-events/four-waves-feminism>; Jennifer Baumgardner, <http://www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/genwom/baumgardner2011.html>; and Kristen Sollee <http://www.bustle.com/articles/119524-6-things-to-know-about-4th-wave-feminism>.

about religion from the Internet, and even individuals who live in homogeneous communities can “meet” people who orient around religion differently.

Recognized contexts for multifaith encounter continue to multiply. The Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) capitalizes on the unusual diversity on college campuses to nurture student-led service-learning projects with participants who are actively seeking engagement with religious difference; these efforts are also fashioning a new generation of interfaith leaders.⁴⁹ Businesses become more conscious of the need for religious accommodations and interreligious competencies. Advertisements feature Muslim actors and representatives to counter the impact of Islamophobic rhetoric. Arts, families, media—all are increasingly recognized as critical sites of interreligious engagement.⁵⁰ Pedagogical tools such as the Pluralism Project’s case study initiative (since 2008) use religion as a central organizing paradigm to highlight ways in which difference complicates every facet of our lives, even when people come with good intentions.

Another development within the fourth wave of womanist/feminist/*mujerista* thought may be even more transformational for Interreligious Studies, namely, its serious attempt to wrestle with the implications of identity politics. “The elusiveness of this category of ‘woman’ raised questions about the nature of identity, unity and collectivity,” and revealed that a movement hoping for unity based on female identity was too fragile.⁵¹ Emphasis on identity had drawn some in from the margins, but it also risked fracturing the body politic.

⁴⁹ See Eboo Patel, *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2016). IFYC was established in 2002. In the 1980’s and 1990’s, a few campus chaplains and faculty led the way, establishing multifaith councils, interfaith discussion groups, and resources to reimagine interreligious learning and engagement on campus. See Victor Kazanjian and Peter Laurence, *Education as Transformation: Religious Pluralism, Spirituality, and a New Vision for Higher Education in America* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

⁵⁰ See Sapna Maheshwari, “In Year of Anti-Muslim Vitriol, Promoting Inclusion,” *The New York Times* (January 2, 2017), p. B1; and Alison Moodie, “Are US businesses doing enough to support religious diversity in the workplace?” *The Guardian* (January 28, 2016), <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/jan/28/religious-diversity-us-business-muslim-hijab-discrimination-equal-employment-eoc>. Kate McCarthy began to explore diverse contexts of interfaith engagement in her *Interfaith Encounters in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

⁵¹ Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford, “Introduction,” in Gillis, Howie, and Munford, *Third Wave Feminism*, p. 1.

One way to address this problem is to emphasize intersubjectivity, solidarity (*comunidad* in *mujerista* theology), and relationality. These concepts contest old notions that agency derives only from autonomy. What we identify as boundaries are often permeable and mutually constitutive; competing identities are increasingly recognized as intersectional. Nira Yuval-Davis wrote of a process of rooting and shifting: rooting in our particular identity, but also recognizing how the partiality of our positions and selves leads us to need one another.⁵² Therefore, we also shift in diverse and provisional alliances where, in true dialogue with difference, we experience other ways of being.

Interreligious Studies engages this mode as well, lifting up encounters with religious others as ways of deepening our own spiritual formation, of fleshing out our own being: coformation.⁵³ Intersubjectivity is a quality of many theologies already afloat. As a Jew, I hear Martin Buber, who showed us the irreducible relation of I and Thou, and Rachel Adler who pointed to boundaries not merely as barriers but as loci of interaction.⁵⁴ Others might hear Thich Nhat Hanh's exposition on interbeing.⁵⁵ Embedding this kind of relationality as a principle within Interreligious Studies can move beyond identity politics without diminishing the salience of identity.

In the wave of "diversity," the multiplicity and dynamism of identity were increasingly recognized; we all bear notions of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, etc., in shifting balances and contexts. In the current of "intersubjectivity," it becomes evident that efforts to challenge discrimination and resolve conflict will be successful only if we engage the intersectionality of identities and oppressions. More than embodied solidarity or collective agency, it is an embrace of immutable connection with and accountability to one another.

Intersectionality also requires recognition of the unique ways that individual identities combine in our social context: Just as historically a "woman" has been viewed differently depending on her skin color, so, too,

⁵² Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1997).

⁵³ See Jennifer Peace, "Coformation through Interreligious Learning," *Colloquy* 20 (Fall, 2011): 24–26; available at <http://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/publications-presentations/colloquy/colloquy-2011-fall.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, tr. Walter Kaufmann (1923 in German; repr.: New York: Touchstone, 1971); Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999).

⁵⁵ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1987).

are religious experiences often different, depending on other factors of identity. The field is beginning to pay more attention to the ways in which multiple types of difference, power, and oppression unfold in relation to one another. Interfaith activist movements are more explicit about intersectional commitments and conflicts around gender, race, and sexuality.

As the implications of intersubjectivity are revealed, we recognize both the limitations of individual experience and our privileged understanding of our own perspective, a dialectic that feminist theorist Donna Haraway calls “situated knowledge.”⁵⁶ Coformative engagement with difference, wherein self and other become mutually constituted, opens another avenue for interreligious relationship—the recovery of epistemological humility as a theological position in an encounter of commitments. Interreligious Studies, like Gender Studies, is learning to embrace ambiguity. It creates spaces for difficult conversations. *Coming to terms with irreducible difference yields, not a debate about conflicting truths, but a dialogical necessity.* This inexorable logic makes the field of Interreligious Studies an urgent requirement.

The directions of these waves presses for a different pedagogical model, one that does not treat interreligious programs primarily as a division of Religious Studies. As with Women’s Studies, having the conversation only with those already predisposed to attend to the relevant issues from a particular perspective is of limited value. Expanding diversity illuminates the need for interreligious literacy in multiple professions and contexts. Current events press for interdisciplinary thinking. For example, both the explosion of anti-Muslim bigotry and media attention to religiously driven violence drive the growth of Interreligious Studies and necessarily set it in conversation with Political Science, History, Journalism, etc.⁵⁷ It touches everything. Eboo Patel wrote, “One hundred years ago, the great African

⁵⁶ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14 (Autumn, 1988): 575–599.

⁵⁷ See Cassie Meyer, “Engaging Interfaith Studies across the Curriculum: From Niche to Norm,” *Journal of Interreligious Studies* 13 (Winter, 2014): 72–76. Significant books within the fields of political science and sociology explore ramifications of how people from different religious traditions interact, e.g., Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011) and Robert Putnam’s *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012).

American scholar W. E. B. Du Bois famously said, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line.’ I believe that the twenty-first century will be shaped by the question of the faith line.”⁵⁸

Too often, however, the question is focused on religious violence—and now on “countering violent extremism” (CVE). Current events may make that emphasis seem natural, but, ultimately, it is not adequate for the long-term health of interfaith learning and cooperation.⁵⁹ CVE distorts the range of issues that shape geopolitical conflict, since religious factors are generally secondary, even if they provide a transformative ultimacy to one’s worldview. It also distorts perspectives on Islam, which is the target of most CVE attention. Less obvious are the ways it determines research and pedagogical priorities and shapes the power dynamics of interreligious engagement, as political authorities increasingly impose distinctions between “good” and “bad” religion.⁶⁰

These concerns connect back to the issue of curricular integration, because, if the field operates in a silo rather than as an integral part of our thinking about human community, it will disappear when the violence subsides and the sense of urgency dissipates. Perhaps multiculturalism serves as the best model in this regard, having moved from what Patel has termed “niche to norm” in campus life.⁶¹ It is embedded not only in curricular standards across departments but also in admissions, housing, orientation, training of student leaders, etc. Some campus-based efforts try to

⁵⁸ Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2007), p. xv.

⁵⁹ See Faiza Patel and Meghan Koushik, *Countering Violent Extremism* (Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, 2017) for a critique of CVE. The following array of websites illustrate its presence in interreligious research and projects: <https://www.usip.org/events/can-interfaith-contact-reduce-extremism-among-youth>; <https://medium.com/the-machinery-of-government/violent-extremism-and-the-value-of-interfaith-dialogue-9926b6766d68>; and <https://centerforinterculturaldialogue.org/2016/03/12/countering-violent-extremism-and-interfaith-programming-in-tanzania-grant-us-dos/>.

⁶⁰ See Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015). She also has a provocative blogpost in *Religion Dispatches*, titled “Countering the ‘Countering Violent Extremism’ Program” (April 27, 2016); available at <http://religiondispatches.org/countering-violent-extremism-and-the-politics-of-religion/>.

⁶¹ Eboo Patel, *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012), pp. 82–86 and 119–120.

seed Interreligious Studies throughout the curriculum with different foci,⁶² but there is a long way to go.

The purpose of such cross-fertilization goes beyond self-preservation for the interreligious project. Given the contemporary storm of religious hostility that rages alongside the exponential growth of Interreligious Studies and Engagement, the critical question becomes whether the field can have a social impact—but metrics for evaluation are still largely absent.⁶³ The persistence of Antisemitism, explosion of anti-Muslim bigotry, and continuing suspicion of the unfamiliar all challenge any blithe reassurance one might offer in the meantime. Like sea monsters, they lurk in the depths for a while but continue to resurface. The exercise of religious power in the political arena gathers force, appearing less like trade winds that gently guide us toward our destination and more like hurricanes brewing. If Interreligious Studies is to have any role in healing or helping the fractured body politic, it needs to work holistically.

Although the sea seems to grow larger and more perilous, each of the “waves” is still at work. Although every new context for learning or engagement generally requires starting again at the beginning, theoretical and practical tools for the interreligious project continue to be refined. The self-critical capacities of many lifestances and of the academy have propelled tidal forces that carried us along through the waves of equality, difference, diversity, and intersubjectivity. As they press forward toward new horizons, scholars will continue to learn from a range of fields to advance our understanding of “the dynamic encounter between religious traditions and persons.”

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⁶² See, e.g., the “Teaching Interfaith Understanding” faculty seminars being taught each year, facilitated by the Council of Independent Colleges and Interfaith Youth Core; <https://www.cic.edu/programs/interfaith>.

⁶³ The InterReligious Institute at Chicago Theological Seminary is incubating a project to develop metrics for assessing the social impact of interreligious engagement, as well as developing an InterFace platform to provide customized multicultural training for businesses and professional programs, with an emphasis on navigating religious difference.

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