

## **The 2021 RERC Conference**

**10<sup>th</sup> July 2021 (online)**

**11.30-1 p.m. Panel 1: Alister Hardy Lampeter lecture by Prof Jane Shaw, Oxford**

**Title: Religious Experience and the early twentieth-century Revival of Mysticism**

Abstract:

The early twentieth century saw a revival of interest in mysticism through print culture and the rise of retreats and prayer groups. How did that revival influence and frame the articulation and expression of religious experience? Drawing on major works about mysticism from the period and archival records of people's prayer lives and spiritual diaries noting their religious experiences, this lecture will explore the place of religious experience in early twentieth-century spirituality.

Bio:

Professor Jane Shaw is Principal of Harris Manchester College in the University of Oxford, where the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Unit began. She is also Professor of the History of Religion and a Pro-Vice-Chancellor at Oxford. She is the author of several books, including *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (Yale 2006) and *Octavia, Daughter of God: the story of a female messiah and her followers* (Jonathan Cape 2011).

**2.-3.30 p.m. Panel 2: Interdisciplinary Studies in Religious and Spiritual Experience**

**Dr Jack Hunter, honorary research fellow of RERC**

**Listening to the Land: Other-than-Human Voices in the Anthropocene**

Abstract:

At a time of ecological crisis – such as the period in which we are now living – there is an ever-growing need for the incorporation of ‘other-than-human’ voices into our research agendas and decision-making processes. With dramatic losses in biodiversity, and continued ecological degradation through human activities, there is an urgent need to explore novel

approaches to re-connecting with the ecological systems that sustain us. The ecological crisis is just as much a cultural and spiritual problem as it is an economic and scientific one, approaches emerging from the study of religious experience, and other forms of extraordinary experience, have a role to play. Anthropological research on spirit mediumship – as well as other modes of communication with other-than-human persons – may provide clues as to how the voices of the non-human world can be brought into respectful dialogue with the sciences and humanities. This paper will be an exploration of these themes in the hope of encouraging further research in this direction.

#### Bio

Jack Hunter, PhD., is an anthropologist exploring the borderlands of religion, ecology and the paranormal. He is an Honorary Research Fellow with the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre, and a tutor with The Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture, both at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. He is a Research Fellow with the Parapsychology Foundation and a Professional Member of the Parapsychological Association. He is the author of *Manifesting Spirits* (2020) and *Engaging the Anomalous* (2018), and editor of *Damned Facts* (2016) and *Greening the Paranormal* (2019).

#### **Prof Marta Helena de Freitas, Catholic University of Brasilia**

##### **Religious Experiences and Mental Health: Psychological implications**

#### Abstract:

The paper discusses the ambiguity around religious experiences and mental health. It will reflect on the difficulties to come to a conceptual consensus between individuals, societies and cultures. The paper starts with some clarifications about how we understand religious experiences from a phenomenological approach within psychology. It is followed by some reflections about the relations between religiosity and mental health, illustrating them with some Brazilian cases. It is concluded with a brief discussion about the implications of that for mental health professional practices.

#### Bio

Psychology, Master in Social Psychology and Personality, Ph.D. in Psychology, University of Brasilia. Professor at the Catholic University of Brasilia - UCB, since 1989. Coordinator of Psychology & Religion Working Group of National Association of Post-Graduation and Research in Psychology – ANPEPP and member of International Association for the Psychology of Religion – IAPR. Currently she is doing a postdoctoral at RERC, UWTSD, Lampeter.