

“Theology of Marilynne Robinson in a Postsecular Age”

“What end is served in abstracting the glimmer of numinosity, the summons to awe...from its particular histories, institutions, communities, struggles?”

—Tracy Fessenden, “The Problem of the Postsecular”

Marilynne Robinson has written widely-acclaimed novels and essays that explore the relationship between religion and culture. For this special issue, we examine how recent developments in post-secular studies illuminate Robinson’s religious vision both in her fiction and essays. Jurgen Habermas, Talal Asad, Charles Taylor, Jared Hickman, Tracy Fessenden, among other scholars, have led us to reconsider the secularization thesis and the ways in which it has shaped narratives of modernity. We ask how Robinson’s investigation of faith is especially relevant to the growing field of postsecular studies.

The following are some of the questions that this special issue seeks to address: How might we assess Robinson’s body of work, one deeply informed by a particular theological tradition, in light of the ideas emerging from postsecular studies? In what ways do we see the influence of theologians such as John Calvin, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Jonathan Edwards in her fiction? How do the Christian intellectual tradition and American Puritanism, in particular, offer Robinson a rich source for understanding human identity, social justice, and the relevance of beauty in our world? How do these traditions shape her narratives of suffering and theodicy? Robinson’s novels and essays also focus on historical memory, examining the intricate and complex relationship between past and present. How does the author’s theology influence the way she engages with history? What are the pressures of contemporary moment that impel her to return to the past? How does Robinson’s historical memory enrich her aesthetic vision?

Please submit a 350-word proposal with a brief bio to haein.park@biola.edu by January 30, 2019.