

# Editor's Introduction

*Past Imperfect* presents its 25<sup>th</sup> volume, marking a legacy since 1992. Over the years, we have consistently published high-quality articles and book reviews contributed by graduate students worldwide. Our commitment lies in fostering academic diversity, welcoming contributions from the fields of history, classics, and religious studies.<sup>1</sup>

This year's volume features three articles, all fitting under the overarching theme of "redefining notions," ranging from the realm of poetry to imperial power. The entries explore diverse motives, ways, and repercussions of redefining notions. The first article examines how Statius redefines the love language of Ovid in his *Thebaid* to align with his distinctive aesthetic preferences. The second article discusses the efforts of university-educated male physicians to redefine the concept of infant health in eighteenth-century England. The third article explores how the Ursuline nuns redefined notions of hygiene for the Indigenous girls in seventeenth-century New France, laying the groundwork for justifying imperial actions and future endeavors to assimilate the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

The first article, a contribution from the field of classics, delves into the creative genius of Statius. In his article, Matt Ludwig sketches how Statius changed the way love was depicted in Latin poetry and how he crafted his own style within the genre. He argues that Statius made deliberate connections with Ovid's *Amores* in his *Thebaid*. While Ovid portrayed love in a light-hearted way, Statius transformed it into something more menacing and destructive in *Thebaid*.

In the next article, Alyssa Moore explores the role of educated, Enlightenment-influenced, male physicians in shaping perceptions of infant health in eighteenth-century England. By examining the medical advice books authored by three prominent physicians of the era—William Cadogan, George Armstrong, and Thomas Beddoes—she delves into their endeavours to supplant existing practitioners, such as unlicensed nurses and midwives, while emphasizing the necessity of specialized medical knowledge for infant health. Her article provides insights into the historical construction of the infant body through medical authority during that period.

The final article, authored by Chiara Power, contributes to the dynamic field of material culture studies, specifically concerning imperial and colonial endeavors in seventeenth-century New France. Drawing from textual sources, Power explores the significant role played by linen

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1. In 2021, the field of Religious Studies at the University of Alberta became integrated into the Department of History and Classics, resulting in the renaming of the department as the Department of History, Classics, and Religion. This merger led to the discontinuation of *Axis Mundi*, the journal dedicated to Religious Studies. The archives of *Axis Mundi* can be accessed using this link: <https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/axismundi/index.php/axismundi>

shifts in the Ursuline nuns' efforts to convert Indigenous girls to Christianity and integrate them into French society, ultimately highlighting the nuns' inability to achieve this goal. Importantly, the article centres the Indigenous perspectives, practices, and beliefs throughout its narrative. It illustrates how clothing can serve as a potent instrument for assimilation, coercion, and cultural imperialism, providing insights into the intricate relationship between material culture and identity within the historical context.

In addition to the articles, this volume includes four book reviews. The first one is by Connor Thompson, who reviewed Cynthia Culver Prescott's *Pioneer Mother Monuments: Constructing Cultural Memory*, a significant work in the area of American historical memory and public history literature. Madhulagna Halder reviewed Emily Bridger's *Young Women against the Apartheid: Gender, Youth and South Africa's Liberation Struggle*, which explores the personal narratives of female activists who became involved in the anti-apartheid movement during the 1980s in South Africa. Christine Green and Frederik Blank offer reviews of Tyler Shipley's *Canada in the World: Settler Capitalism and the Colonial Imagination* and Jeffrey Denis' *Canada at a Crossroads: Boundaries, Bridges, and Laissez-Faire Racism in Indigenous-Settler Relations* respectively. These books contribute significantly to the history of European settlements in Canada.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the individuals whose contributions were instrumental in bringing this volume of *Past Imperfect* to fruition. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the other members of the Editorial Board— Josh Passey, Karrie Englander, Sean Patterson, and Tulika Singh. Their constant support, be it regarding administrative decisions or copyediting, was of significant value. Sean Patterson, who served as the editor of the previous issue, provided valuable guidance based on his prior experience with the journal. Tulika Singh helped me to decide the theme of this volume. I am grateful to Dr. Heather Coleman, the former Associate Chair (Graduate Studies), Department of History, Classics, and Religion, for entrusting me with the role of editor for *Past Imperfect*. Her insightful suggestions regarding the journal's administration were invaluable. I also extend my thanks to Dr. Dagmar Wujastyk, the current Director of Graduate Programs of our department, for her continuous encouragement and support. I extend my appreciation to the authors, whose expertise in their respective fields, unwavering enthusiasm and dedication played a pivotal role in bringing this volume to fruition. Moreover, my deepest gratitude goes to the reviewers of this year's issue, whose knowledge and seamless support shaped the journal into its current form. I must also mention Emily Zheng, the Publishing and Digitization Specialist at the University of Alberta Libraries, who assisted me in navigating the Open Journal Systems (OJS) and promptly addressed my queries. Finally, I express my gratitude to my close friend, Anirban Das, for designing the journal's cover.

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