This Issue of the journal, the ninth, is dedicated to articles generated by the first Alternative Expressions of the Numinous conference held at The University of Queensland from the 18th to 20th August, 2006.

This series of conferences began as an idea by the three Co-Chairs, myself, Helen Farley and Danielle Kirby, all postgraduate students at The University of Queensland at the time. We wanted to provide a platform for international discussion on, to quote Helen’s “Welcome” in the programme:

Topics we found most interesting; those that hover on the edges of academic pursuit. Blurring the lines between emic and etic, subject and object, self and other, philosophy and religion, theology and literature, anthropology and magic, history and mythology, psychology and astral flight...to explore the myriad ways in which a soul might approach the numinous, Otto’s *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.

It was a very steep learning curve as we had no models to follow, and unfortunately due to ill health Dani’s contribution was not as active as she would have liked. This first conference attracted 53 presenters from all over the world, including the United States of

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1 Limited publication of the programme by the Queensland Society for the Study of Religion.
America, India, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and of course from across Australia. Presenters encompassed all levels of academia from undergraduate students to professors.

It was a very enjoyable time for all of us, with many connections and friendships made over morning and afternoon teas and lunches. Many who attended expressed their thanks for a conference that allowed so many seemingly disparate subjects to be brought together, and our grouping of the talks was also remarked upon. The last session of the conference was one where we asked for input as to how best to improve the conferences for the future – the main suggestion was to arrange it so that each presentation could be attended by all those at the conference – quite an impossibility over three days but a very great compliment nonetheless.

Not everyone chose to rework their presentation for publication here, and because of this the true flavour of the conference is not comprehensively reflected. Other topics addressed included the role of dance and music as expressions of spirituality, quantum physics and other sciences, on-line religions, folklore and magic, biography, sacred spaces, Nazism, altered states of consciousness, women’s various roles, language and words, as well as major religions of the world.

There have since been two further conferences also well attended and presenting diverse topics with expressing the numinous as their focus. We hope that there will be more in the future but sometimes the nuts and bolts of academia can get in the way and delay things a little.

Crossroads does not publish conference papers, and so each of the following have been reworked by the presenters and been subjected to our normal rigorous review process. We are thankful that these authors still have such a passion for their individual topics that they took the time to re-work their presentations and to update them accordingly.

We hope that you enjoy this selection of essays, and will be inspired to submit your own works to the journal, or to attend the next Alternative Expressions of the Numinous conference when it is organized. Crossroads will keep you updated.