

ANDÍA, Juan Javier Rivera, ed., *Non-Humans in Amerindian South America: Ethnographies of Indigenous Cosmologies, Rituals and Songs*, 396 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. New York: Berghahn Books, 2018. Hardback, \$135.00. ISBN 9781789200973.

This collection brings together various ethnographic approaches regarding indigenous peoples of South America in order to analyze and highlight several practices, symbols, and transformations in human and non-human relationships. The editor compiles the heterogeneity of appearance in three parts that correspond to the sections outlined in the introduction. Thus, it is possible to read this book by its separate chapters, by its parts, or through a cross-sectional reading that attempts to connect the organization of the parts and the sections that make up the introduction. It seems to me that in this way it is possible to understand what Rivera Andía means by his moderate proposal on animism as an ontology through which the human and non-human relations of the Amerindian worlds are composed and compose themselves.

In the first part, we find four chapters dedicated to human and non-human relations that emphasize a common movement in the sociality of Amerindian peoples, that is, choosing and incorporating 'non-indigenous' elements in favor of reactivating 'traditional cosmology'. In Isluga, according to Dransart's work, we find the *wayñu* ceremony, held in several other places in the south-central Andean region, which allows communication between

humans, animals, and divinities through inspiration as an activator, ensuring the well-being of each species that composes and participates in the ritual performance. In the chapter dedicated to the complex mountain spirit in the Peruvian Andes, Sax shows us the importance of personified and lively landscapes for Quechua- and Aymara-speaking societies, displaying the differences between those located in the north Andes and those located in the south. In the former, the connections between humans and non-humans would come about through the *encantos* (enchancements) that allow good luck or misfortune; in the latter, there would be a relationship of retribution that connects people and divinities through rites. Ventura i Oller, through his ethnography on the Tsachila ritual, immerses us in an analysis of the bodies and the healing of their bodies to think about humanity and its limits, following some keys of the Amazonian and Melanesian ethnographic ensemble. Similarly, in Ferrié's work, the foothills of the Bolivian area are visited to show how human and non-human bodies are porous, enabling the development of an interspecific shamanic cure.

In the second part, we meet with another modality of relations between humans and non-humans in which the focus of analysis is on the daily life of the indigenous peoples, bringing new reflections for the 'moral economics of intimacy' theory. Through an analysis of the Shipibo Conibo songs, Brabec de Mori displays the complex relations between these indigenous peoples, located in the Ucayali and the Inkas, and a non-human

image that is different from those that the Tahuantisuyo empire founded and extended. The relationship established by the songs gives an account of a deep emotionality that evokes a mythical cultural hero. Following an account of the present and the past, Salas Carreño shows us the relationship between the types of dead and the construction of Andean kinship. Describing the practices of food provision and co-existence between the living and the dead, it highlights two figures of non-humans—the damned and the ancient. In the chapter dedicated to the Ayoreo, Otaegui presents a type of funeral song as a lament that reflects the changing complexity of relations with non-humans in meetings where values are usually outlined. Finally, in the work of Opas we are faced with an analysis of a non-human master figure called Kaxpomyolutu among the Yine, in which considerations of late capitalism and monetary economy are carried out through the native point of view.

The last part is made up of three chapters that place human and non-human groups in Amerindian societies in relation to current issues, such as migration, monetary economics, or late capitalism. The efforts gathered in this part try to give an account of the turbulent transformations, on different scales, that Amerindian societies have experienced. As much in Hill's work as in Yvinec's, we may see a rich analysis of musicalization among the Wakuénai and the Suruí Paiter peoples. In the last chapter, Ødegaard invites us to think about the migrations in the Andes, pointing out a phenomenon of the 'assemblages'. In these final chapters, the non-human figures of the spirits, God, and the beings of the earth are highlighted.

After finishing our tour of the three parts, it seems to me that a connection between the introduction and the epilogue can be established, as it gives clues about the concerns that are at the heart of this collection. After a neat synthesis about the new studies of animism, Rivera Andía expresses his concern about raising an anthropological viewpoint that considers other dimensions of indigenous life

beyond the intellectual level when describing animism; his moderate proposal in the introduction for an engaged ontography would be part of this project. Furthermore, Münzel's final comments in the epilogue recognize the enormous value of the animism analysis lines, suggesting that they are not possible to discard, while pointing out as well that the ethnography is substantial. In this sense, it seems to me that this book brings us new fronts to think about anthropological research.

However, there are issues that could have been improved upon. For instance, in the introduction, some strategies were adopted without much justification, such as dispensing with both the natural and the supernatural distinctions, as well as the non-human and the more-than-human. Getting rid of them is not an easy task: even in some of the chapters they appear voluntarily or involuntarily. As for the current anthropology and ethnology issues, it seems to me that it is necessary to bring into discussion what Stengers (2012) postulates about animism and naturalism, on the one hand, and the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, on the other. In my opinion, that will allow us to expand our reflections. We can realize and live up to the call of our time, that of the Anthropocene, by thinking *par le milieu*—that is, by considering all sides of the issues.

Julián Antonio Moraga Riquelme
Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro

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CASSANITI, J. L., *Remembering the Present: Mindfulness in Buddhist Asia*, 318 pp., glossary, references, index. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018. Paperback, \$27.95. ISBN 9781501709173.

Mindfulness is at the heart of Buddhism, the seventh of the Eightfold Noble Path. Definitions vary, but basically mindfulness is intense, purposeful concentration of the mind on the present, while allowing any distractions that arise to easily fade away. Ideas and practices of mindfulness associated with meditation have spread from Asia and have been adapted, together with Buddhism, in America and beyond (Mitchell 2016; Wilson 2014). Mindfulness is found in a wide diversity of contexts and expressions, secular and religious, and is even pursued for ethnographic research (Orellana 2020).

Cassaniti, a psychological and medical anthropologist at Washington State University, explores such phenomena for the lived religion of Theravāda Buddhism in Thailand, Burma, and Sri Lanka, and to a lesser extent in the United States. She accomplishes this by focusing on the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of mindfulness, with numerous quotes based on informal conversations, formal and semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires, as well as her own participant observation during meditation retreats.

Cassaniti identifies her main purpose in the introduction: “What we can learn from studying mindfulness in Southeast Asia is that the way one thinks about the mind matters. I found that people who follow Buddhism in Southeast Asia see the mind as an intentional agent that, through training, changes what it encounters. Maybe we can all benefit from that” (p. 19).

This cross-cultural ethnographic survey reveals the differences as well as similarities in the concept and practice of mindfulness, instead of considering it to be some kind of universal. Cassaniti herself practices meditation and mindfulness, the subject of her insightful autoethnography comprising chapter 2. Thailand, the subject of chapters 1–3,

was a natural location to begin comparative field research because of her previous ethnography (Cassaniti 2015). Burma, the focus of chapter 4, was chosen because it has been so influential in the worldwide meditation movement. Sri Lanka, the subject of chapter 5, was selected because of its long history of Buddhism. The conclusion includes some consideration of the American sites in Pullman, Washington, where Cassaniti is on the university faculty.

Throughout much of the book, Cassaniti pursues five domains of mindfulness—temporality, affect, power, ethics, and selfhood—in part as a standard for her comparison of mindfulness in different countries. In Thailand, Burma, and Sri Lanka, she interviewed groups of monks at two monasteries as well as a group of university students, the staff at a psychiatric hospital, and villagers. Forty individuals were sought for each of these five groups: in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 members, and questionnaires, with 14 questions on mindfulness, were used for the remaining 30. The psychiatric hospitals were chosen because of the connection between mindfulness and mental health. The result of two years of research encompassed more than 6,000 pages of material from interviews and questionnaires, plus over a thousand pages of observations and experiences recorded in field notes, followed by two years of writing.

Cassaniti concludes her book with the following observation: “The fact that people in Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, and the United States think a little bit differently about mindfulness’s meanings, practices, and effects suggests that some of these meanings, practices, and effects may be intimately tied to cultural ideas and aspirations about what is true, good, and worthwhile in human experience” (p. 250). Some readers may be disappointed that the differences identified about mindfulness by people in the cultures of the three countries and Pullman are slight, but others might appreciate that there is so much basic commonality, if not uniformity, resulting from historical connections.

Cassaniti does not explain why she did not also study nuns. However, in contrast to Burma and Sri Lanka, in Thailand that tradition is not officially established, which may be the reason, given her pursuit of cross-cultural comparison (Seeger 2019). Also, it would have been interesting to at least acknowledge the interreligious conflict in these countries (Lehr 2019). Nevertheless, any deficiencies in the book that a reader might opine are certainly far outweighed by the richness of detail and creative approach of this systematic, meticulous, revealing, and engaging study of mindfulness.

Leslie E. Sponsel
University of Hawai'i

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- CASSELBERRY, Judith, and Elizabeth A. PRITCHARD, eds., *Spirit on the Move: Black Women and Pentecostalism in Africa and the Diaspora*, 248 pp. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019. Paperback, \$25.95. ISBN 9781478000327.
- Spirit on the Move* is a welcome addition to the expanding library of Pentecostal studies. The organizing focus, insightfully discussed in the introduction by Pritchard, is on the interlockings of gender, power, class, race, and Pentecostalism. The aim of this multi-disciplinary collection is to prove that “a major appeal of Pentecostalism to black women worldwide consists in its being the proximate and pre-eminent opportunity for these women” (p. 3) to establish a “live relation to power” (ibid., citing Berlant 1997).
- Eight case studies draw on various theoretical and methodological traditions, showcasing the plurality of Pentecostalism’s possible implications on black women’s lives worldwide in terms of its teachings (biblical instructions, body disciplining through dress codes), structures (organizations, leadership and supporting roles), and performances (liturgy, entertainment).
- Notably insightful are two manifestations of ‘diaspora’ in the collection: diaspora as a consequence of transatlantic slavery, with its enduring lived realities, and as the manifestation of the evangelizing mission, a theological force that encourages transnational mobility. Burdick’s multi-layered ethnography of a black gospel choir in Sao Paulo analyzes how female members consciously express in the strong emotionality of their singing the suffering that generations of black Brazilians have experienced and still are living. Crumbley’s historical reconstruction of the emergence of a female-led ‘storefront sanctified church’ visited by Afro-American women in Philadelphia explains the church’s dress code (white mantles covering women’s bodies) as a symbolic contestation of the exploitation of enslaved black women’s bodies. In the Black Apostolic Church in Queens, New

York, the gospels sung by black women echo the despair and joy in Negro spirituals, thus expressing a “black American aesthetic sensibility” (p. 139).

McAlister’s excellent description of the third wave of charismatic Christianity in Haiti shows how Pentecostalism itself thrives very much on “an evangelical diasporic imaginary” (p. 47). Probably Aymer’s chapter dissects best what this imaginary can do for women. Nigerian Pentecostal women, members of a worldwide missionary organization, travel to the Caribbean, where they teach ‘sisters’ to wail as a form of participating in the spiritual warfare. The reverse movement, described in van de Kamp’s chapter, is made by Brazilian Pentecostal pastors, who travel to Mozambique to help women in Maputo engage with the traumas of the civil war, post-colonial state formation, and the rise of an urban middle class.

The authors attend to the notion of ‘lived religion,’ which allows them to critically assess the oft-hailed emancipatory role of Pentecostalism for women. Haitian’s evangelicalism (McAlister) rewrites the national past by demonizing Cecile Fatiman, an African priestess, who figures in the national narrative as ‘the mother of the Haitian nation.’ Now labeled ‘the Jezebel Spirit,’ she is deemed responsible for the bad omen of the Haitian nation. In Mozambican Maputo, urban middle-class women are attracted by the discourse about spirits and witchcraft in Brazilian Pentecostal churches (van de Kamp). Yet after conversion, these women become isolated from their husbands, and their lives are “far removed from the happy marriage and life promised by Pentecostal pastors” (p. 84). Nigerian female converts traveling to the Caribbean island of Grenada partake in a parachurch organization that does not challenge the traditional male-led authority in Pentecostal Christianity, leading Aymer to conclude that these women assume secondary forms of leadership. Similar observations are made in Soothill’s chapter on power and agency in charismatic churches in Accra (Ghana). The social and spiritual

capital of the ‘pastor’s wife’ depends on her husband. And converted women in Accra, who endure(d) abuse, violence, and marital instability, conform to social expectations of gendered behavior. Domestic relationships restrain or limit Pentecostalism’s empowering possibilities (p. 174). It is a wise choice to end this collection with attention to women’s ‘pragmatic agency.’ Premack’s historical account of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), arguably Nigeria’s largest Pentecostal church, starts from the premise that Yoruba women’s desire to become mothers pushes them to search for spiritual healing across the religious market. Since its beginnings, CAC has acknowledged these women’s concern with fertility, for example, by sponsoring maternity centers and midwife training. This helps to explain the success of CAC among these women.

Some more streamlining among the various chapters would have increased the internal cohesion. For example, not all chapters equally engage with the question of what ‘blackness’ means, or what Pentecostals—and especially Pentecostal women—understand it to mean. Despite this minor critique, I do not hesitate to recommend this exciting collection. It opens up opportunities to refresh our understandings of the interlockings of Pentecostalism and gender, and it raises new questions. For example, several authors document Pentecostals’ emphasis on gender complementarity, which could generate additional reflections on women’s ‘live(d) relation to power,’ and the difference that Pentecostalism can make. The merit of this book goes beyond the study of religion, and I expect it will be eagerly read by anyone interested in gender studies, the sociology of race and migration, and even global studies.

Katrien Pype
KU Leuven University

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ELISON, William, *The Neighborhood of Gods: The Sacred and the Visible at the Margins of Mumbai*, 336 pp., illustrations, notes, references, index. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018. Paperback, \$35.00. ISBN 9780226494906.

The Neighborhood of Gods by William Elison is probably one of the best scholarly books ever written on Indian urban spaces. In this thoughtful study, the author invites, but also teaches, the reader to look at and understand Mumbai from a very different angle than that proposed in other research, using a quite innovative and ground-breaking interpretational framework.

At first glance, Mumbai—also known as Bombay, a name that many Indians consider colonial, or as Mayapuri (the city of illusion)—is considered not only the financial and commercial capital of the country, but also the heart of the entertainment and Bollywood industry. During his fieldwork, carried out mostly in 2002 and 2003, Elison embarked on a fascinating tour of sacred spaces not officially recognized as such and often described by the English-language press as “illegal religious structures” (p. 56). Particularly interesting stops on this tour—which correspond to the central chapters of the volume—include the Filmistan Studios, located on an area of five acres in the Mumbai suburbs on which an indigenous community of Warli also resides; the shrines dedicated to Sai Baba of Shirdi, “the unofficial patron saint of Mumbai” (p. 93); and Film City, another film studio complex located near a preserved forest area from which *adivasi* (indigenous) communities were almost entirely evicted. On his tour, Elison is often accompanied by locals who are very active research participants in the book. From a methodological point of view, this allows for a remarkable decrease in the distance between the observer and the observed.

Despite the training of the author as a scholar in religious studies, the volume is not particularly focused on that field, at least not in the strict sense of the term. Elison’s

aim—fully achieved through his detailed analysis, and largely inspired by Appadurai’s (1995) concept of the ‘production of locality’—is to reveal how people make sense of their cosmos and their position in the social fabric and urban space through an intensely visual relation with sacred spaces and religious symbols.

An additional contribution of this book lies in the fact that the author includes important local concepts in his theoretical approach, making them effective analytical tools. One of them is the *darshan*, or the ritual of visual worship—a deeply embodied and sensorial experience that allows for an insightful encounter between the human and the divinity and that, moreover, proves the temple’s efficacy (p. 81).

The colonial relationship between sahibs and servants transformed during the post-colonial period into one of citizens and subalterns, as well as one between indigenous and non-indigenous communities. These relationships are negotiated on the fluid terrain of encounter and confrontation between the ‘real’ and the ‘fake’, the ‘visible’ and the ‘invisible’. However, these concepts are better expressed by two local terms—*pakka* (cooked, proper, clearly defined) and *kaccha* (raw, ad hoc, blurry). Elison introduces the concept of *pakka*-fication (p. 143) as a process of development that is similar to gentrification, but is particularly useful in interpreting the makeover of *kaccha* elements, in particular shrines and temples, financed by patrons.

Identities, social roles, and power relations, as well as subalterns’ and *adivasi*’s demands of recognition and activism, are negotiated not only on the basis of the position of the subject in the sacred geography, but also on his/her visual relationship with it.

The conclusion of the book is also very interesting. In it, the author—who went back to Mumbai in 2015—describes and analyzes the remarkable changes that had occurred since his previous fieldwork, most of which were due to “the rise of India’s information technological sector to a position of global

prominence” (p. 226). The *darshan* maintains its importance, although now mediated by and enacted through the wide use of mobile phones and computer cameras. The growing access to technological means provides a new analytical framework for the three topics largely discussed in the volume: deterritorialization, reproducibility, and the reconfiguration of mass publics.

The depth, originality, sensibility, and richness of Alison’s study make this volume a must-read for a wide range of public and scholarly disciplines, including religious studies, urban and visual anthropology and studies, anthropology of South Asia, and anthropology of mass media.

Diana Riboli
Panteion University of Social and Political
Sciences

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HACKMAN, Melissa, *Desire Work: Ex-Gay and Pentecostal Masculinity in South Africa*, 216 pp., illustrations, notes, references, index. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018. Paperback, \$24.95. ISBN 9781478000822.

Gay and lesbian people have long had a troubled relationship with Christianity. Particularly as the movement for LGBT acceptance has expanded, a steady stream of writings on how Christianity understands homosexuality has emerged, focusing on how gay Christians should go about their lives, on whether homosexuality (or other divergences from majority sexualities and genders) can be a legitimate part of Christianity, and on a wide range of theological explanations for these varied positions. Recent studies of the ‘ex-gay’ movement have also directed our attention to whether gay

people who wish to resolve what they perceive as a conflict between Christianity and homosexuality can, indeed, remake their sexual identities and perhaps become fully heterosexual, even acquiring opposite-sex spouses and children. Many personal accounts by gay Christians have detailed the painful rejection their identities have elicited, sometimes also involving banishment from family and community. These are heart-rending stories, full of self-doubt, and while they often express a commitment to change one’s orientation, they also evidence understandings of Christianity that embrace its gay adherents.

Debate about these issues has appeared in many different locations, and Melissa Hackman’s *Desire Work: Ex-Gay and Pentecostal Masculinity in South Africa* situates the struggle in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. Perhaps counter-intuitively, despair over homosexuality has survived its legal acceptance in South Africa, whose constitution permits same-sex marriage and eschews bias against its LGBT citizens. But the narrators whose stories appear in Hackman’s book are committed Christians who excoriate themselves for what they consider sexual weakness and departures from ‘normal’ gender performance, while also continuing to embrace notions of race and masculinity that have deep roots in South Africa. Her narrators are nearly all men who espouse a Pentecostal version of Christianity. They are either white or colored (mixed-race), with black voices notably absent from the movement she explicates. Importantly, Hackman’s book takes the stories through time, as the Healing Revelation Ministries (HRM) evolves, eventually collapsing as a movement, with many of its members reasserting their gayness, often depending on the same discourse of ‘naturalness’ that supported their earlier efforts to be ‘ex-gay’. Hackman’s account rests on lengthy ethnographic fieldwork, which lends authenticity to the narratives she presents.

The story of HRM is transnational, as the church was founded by an American who felt a call to undertake missionary work in

Cape Town, widely viewed as South Africa's gay capital. His call later led him to return to the US, a story Hackman tells in the book. Importantly, the church drew its inspiration from notably conventional expectations of men's and women's sexual appetites, and also rested on the norms of racial segregation that carried over from apartheid. Hackman explains that HRM understood heterosexuality as *natural*, but also that for some men achieving this natural condition would require what she calls 'desire work', with ex-gay ideology depending on a seeming paradox: "opposite-gender desire is 'natural' but sometimes also needs to be learned and embodied through purposeful effort" (p. 4). In this understanding, the body is seen as evidence of an internal state.

Using the approach that Saba Mahmood (2005) pioneered in *Politics of Piety*, Hackman explains that the men in HRM used Pentecostal practices to discipline and change their external presentation, and thereby to support their 'natural' heterosexuality. In other words, the importance of personal agency in Pentecostal practice presented the men with a mechanism for remaking their desires and becoming 'ex-gay'. Pentecostalism demands constant work on the self, with the experience of being filled with the spirit a vital aid to remaking oneself. HRM drew heavily on twelve-step movements in its reliance on testimony that offered members a narrative that explained their homosexuality. Over time, the narratives became more uniform, as men became convinced that their moral lapses and 'sex addictions' could be traced to childhood sexual trauma. The overarching narrative was one of redemption, which HRM shared with the truth and reconciliation process that was ongoing in post-apartheid South Africa.

Interestingly, 'coming-out' narratives take on a new meaning in this context. For LGBT individuals, coming-out narratives typically offer a way to realize one's natural self, while also institutionalizing a particular understanding of how one comes to be gay. For ex-gay men, these stories were refutations of

gayness and repudiations of the weakness that had led them to moral transgression.

Hackman's book goes full circle. When she returned to Cape Town after only a few years, she found that even the most ardent members of HRM had either left (as did its first leader when he returned to the US) or had come out as proudly gay. Fundamental understandings survived this transition, as one's 'natural' self was now seen to be gay. The accounts of childhood trauma and the counseling that had supported these narratives also survived the men's departure from the ex-gay world, and even former members saw their time in HRM as a valuable part of their personal development.

Hackman's ethnographic account offers readers yet another piece of evidence about the vexed and often contradictory relationship between Christianity and gay identity, providing a story of how Christianity can shift in its support for different sorts of identities, even in a relatively limited time frame.

Ellen Lewin
University of Iowa

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LEITE, Naomi, *Unorthodox Kin: Portuguese Marranos and the Global Search for Belonging*, 344 pp., notes, references, index. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017. \$29.95. ISBN 9780520285057.

The book *Unorthodox Kin: Portuguese Marranos and the Global Search for Belonging*, by Naomi Leite has brought a renewed attention to the Jewish Studies field of research, particularly to contemporary Judaism in Portugal. It is a richly engaging account of the identification processes of the Marranos from the Porto city in northwest Portuguese, elucidating the ways

in which these Marranos imagine themselves vis-à-vis others—Jews and non-Jews—while yearning to gain recognition and looking for a sense of belonging in the globalized world. As an anthropologist specializing in tourism, and based on an in-depth ethnography, the author insightfully analyzes the relationships between the notions of identity, exclusion, kinship, affinity, and tourism. It is a new and clear observation of the Marrano identity construction process, comparing both its past and present as much as its local and global dimensions. Employing in-depth participant observation, intensive interviewing, and online research, the author consciously intertwines her research and encounters with the Marranos with their own views and experiences, successfully testing the ethnography's limits.

The first chapter of the book offers a general overview of Judaism in Portugal, along with the description of the Porto Marrano community's history, detailing the forced conversions during Inquisitorial times up to the discovery of Marranism, the secretive practice of Judaism, in the 1920s. The most important facts of the Marranos' inherited past are viewed by Leite as the embryo of their existence as well as their resource to connect in time and space and to construct their identity today.

The second chapter explores the process of becoming a self-identified Marrano as a personal and social discovery, either through an affinity with Judaism or through the detection of a Jewish soul, genes, or kinship. This means that by perceiving oneself—essentially or by choice—as a Jew, a Marrano gains a new social identity. The following step is to assume one's newfound identity, risking possible exclusion not only from the 'official' Jews, but also from one's own social networks. Leite uses the neologism 'genealogical causality' to explain how Marranos connect to each other by sharing certain psychological, emotional, and behavioral characteristics with their forebears (pp. 111–112). As several of these Marranos already felt themselves to be Jews by descent and choice, they did not become Jews, but instead returned to Judaism.

In chapter 3, Leite explains the process of becoming a Marrano, which follows "a standard structure, with implicitly codified turning points and a common narrative arc" (p. 165). It starts with an irresistible inner self-discovery of being a Jew. These Marranos then enter into a liminal stage between recognition and non-recognition from the mainstream Jewish communities, until they finally achieve such external recognition. To the formal Portuguese Jews, however, that change of the Marranos' own identity perception is quite indifferent, while to the Marranos, it means a venture into a 'figured world'—Leite's powerful concept "for understanding how people come to understand themselves and their relationships to others in culturally patterned ways" (p. 126). In this case, it relates to the Portuguese-Jewish communities. But many Marranos never achieve that desired recognition, so they turn to their peers to create associations of their own and to Jews in the outside world, using the Internet and direct contact with foreign, traveling Jews.

The author mentions several face-to-face (usually fleeting) encounters with tourists, researchers, Jewish outreach workers, or foreign rabbis who come to Portugal to explore its Jewish heritage or to look for their own roots, and many of the cyber contacts with the global Jewish world and their effects on the Marranos' identity consolidation are discussed. To the Jewish foreigners, these Marranos are a fascinating sign of a stoical resistance, as they are imagined to be those who kept alive the crypto-Jewish traditions, against all odds, over the centuries. The emotion of seeing the Marranos as living proof of a possible shared past—a shared soul with the eternal people of Israel (a spark of the *netsach yisrael*), or even a shared sense of a lost/endangered identity—evokes sympathy among them. In addition, some identification, guidance, and cooperation to help the Marranos learn more about Judaism and feel more like 'real Jews' do come out of such encounters, namely, from the Masorti movement.¹ Thus, Leite considers the Marranos as "Christians without faith,

Jews without knowledge, trapped in a no-man's land" (p. 131), sharing a Jewish essence but also marginalization.

Leite's ethnography culminates with the grand ultimate stage of the process, when a group of Marranos formally converts and obtains unrestricted recognition as Jews by foreign mainstream Jewish visitors. Such unexpected support grounded in affinities and affection finally affords the members of the group the sense of belonging (p. 178) they so much yearned for. By giving them a voice, along with her own, Leite's ethnography includes these Marranos in the broader Jewish world.

One limitation of the book concerns Leite's introductory distinction between rural and urban Marranos. She states that it is especially critical to understand the latter group, while acknowledging that the "intact communities of secret [i.e., rural] Jews" must be mentioned as they fuel "ancestral imaginings among urban Marranos and [shape] the expectations of Jewish visitors from afar" (p. 9). However, not only a myriad of situations exist across this polarization (many Marranos routinely travel from the cities to the countryside, and vice versa), but also the crypto-Jews are as subject to change as are the urban Marranos. Additionally, a misunderstanding regarding the words 'Marrano' (p. xv) and 'Israelense' (p. 279) should be cleared up, as Marrano has both a positive *and* a negative meaning in Portugal and Spain, while Israelense is used by Brazilians but never by Portuguese.

Finally, while focusing on the Marranos' search for belonging, Leite could also have explored the recent cultural and tourism trends, for example, the establishment in 2011 of the Portuguese Network of Jewish Quarters. In general, however, the book is definitely a gripping and elucidating narrative on this complex subject. It can be viewed as authoritative reading for researchers, tourism agents, and decision makers, and as gratifying reading for the public at large.

Marina Pignatelli
ISCSP-University of Lisbon

Note

1. The Masorti movement is identified with Conservative Judaism, often described as 'traditional'.

Li, Geng, *Fate Calculation Experts: Diviners Seeking Legitimation in Contemporary China*, 158 pp., references, index. New York: Berghahn Books, 2019. Hardback, \$120.00. ISBN 9781785339943.

Chinese divinatory practices—and especially those that have arisen from the *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*)—are famously technical, esoteric, and difficult to penetrate. A great deal of scholarship on Chinese divination, and the *Yijing* especially, has been devoted to unpacking this classic work by analyzing its metaphysics and divinatory *techné* alike. But in Geng Li's marvelous book, the thrust of the contribution is different. Here readers are given a lively ethnography of full-time, professional, literate Chinese diviners, whom Li calls "daily metaphysicians" (p. 7). Each of these diviners seeks to legitimize his or her craft in a world where membership in a professional association is vital to obtaining authority, credibility, and acceptance from wider society and the Chinese party-state. Yet as Li shows, Chinese diviners are routinely prevented from joining professional associations endorsed by the state because all forms of divination, including those that spring from the *Yijing*, fall under the rubric of illegal "superstition" (p. 3). What diviners set out to do, then, is to creatively build up close associations between their practices and certain eminently legitimate touchstones of wisdom in today's China, such as academia, science, modern professionalism, moral doctrines, and notably the "national learning" (*guoxue* 国学) approach, which champions the revived interest in and a lifestyle fashioned after traditional Chinese culture (p. 30).

Through this timely book, Li reveals how Chinese diviners and their clients (who are often officials, businesspersons, and women

seeking marriage partners) weather the uncertainties, micro-politics, and institutional logics of living a good, full, and successful life underpinned by divination. Rather uniquely, Li also shows that diviners and psychological counselors in China draw upon their perceived similarities to boost business, with some counselors even going out of their way to woo a rival diviner into joining their enterprise (pp. 115–116). Going a step further, Li shows that Chinese diviners seek to build legitimacy through the entrepreneurial pursuit of ‘self-institutionalization’, which is one important linchpin to her book (p. 117).

Li proposes that the diviner’s aspiration to craft the terms of his or her own legitimacy is realized through the production of a “counterfeit” version of the self (p. 126–127). Diviners produce their counterfeit legitimacy, as it were, by harnessing the qualities of the two apparently opposite stereotypes into which they are often classed. As Li shows, Chinese consider that “people smart” diviners draw upon their astute social skills to address their clients’ queries, whereas “book smart” diviners are well-educated in history and literature (p. 44). Moreover, people smart diviners are associated with an opportunistic lifestyle that is euphemistically called “rivers and lakes” (*jianghu* 江湖) (p. 36), which makes them a part of the “*jianghu* school” (*jianghu pai* 江湖派),” while book smart diviners are part of the “academic group” (*shuyuan pai* 书院派) (p. 44). Revealingly, the diviners in Li’s book appear to straddle both schools when constructing their own accreditations. To this end, diviners posture as academics, attend conferences organized by other diviners at prestigious venues, and purchase counterfeit certificates that mimic the state-authorized credentials that confer legitimacy upon a profession.

Notably, Li suggests that diviners take a pragmatic approach to assembling a counterfeit professionalization. The whole point is to imbue the divinatory vocation with the symbolic capital of modernity and science, both of which are tightly bound up with official legitimacy within China. Yet this is not to

say that diviners accept their lot unquestioningly. Some diviners seek to obtain counterfeit accreditations because these alternative forms of legitimacy have, as Li observes, the “dual potential to enable a social critique and to reveal the implicit tensions in society” (p. 6), at least as it concerns the position of divination in China today. One rather admirable contribution of this book, then, is that Li shows the reflexive gaze of Chinese diviners onto the history, value, and longevity of their own craft.

Li conducted the fieldwork for this book in her hometown in northern China. Her familiarity with key research partners has resulted in rewarding case studies on the morally conservative pronouncements that Chinese diviners tend to make for their clients. Readers will enjoy following her ethnographic episodes and will likely wish that further connections between them could have been brought to light. Although Li does not pose this question, her book invites readers to wonder whether Chinese diviners and those who consult them occasionally open up a space, in the course of divination, for critiquing the implicit tensions in their society today, such as the perceived need to obtain counterfeit accreditations. After all, giving voice to often unspoken critiques and tensions is one of divination’s strongest suits.

Katherine Swancutt
King’s College London

LYNCH, Rebecca, *The Devil Is Disorder: Bodies, Spirits and Misfortune in a Trinidadian Village*, 282 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. New York: Berghahn Books, 2020. Hardback, \$120.00. ISBN 9781789204872

Based on a rich and refined ethnography, this book shows the powerful connections existing in contemporary societies between health, illness, and religion. Although medical anthropology was originally rooted in

the study of religion, the current focus on the political contents of biomedicine, as well as its connections with science and technology studies, fosters an understanding of the concept of health that fails to go beyond medicine. The book shows us exactly how necessary and fruitful is to focus on the relations between health and illness, on the one hand, and the interpretations of evil, on both individual and collective levels, on the other.

Rebecca Lynch takes us on an ethnographic trip of Trinidad and Tobago, a rarely explored site in Latin American studies. Although it shares history and cultural diversity with other Antillean islands, the country has not often been explicitly considered in the context of the Caribbean cultural and geographical area. Lynch shows how a history of invasions and exoduses of people as diverse as Africans and Hindus translates into the founding of different churches and political parties whose social relevance has a direct influence on the ways people think about and experience health and illness. The question that the author uses to open the book, through the narration of one of her informants, takes us back to the issue raised by Evans-Pritchard almost one hundred years ago, one that gave origins to the study of the crucial subjects that would shape investigations in medical anthropology. If a granary should fall at the exact moment when a person is passing behind it and kills that person, the Azande had no doubt that the granary fell because the termites consumed it. Their question was about the appearance of evil at that specific moment: why did the granary fall at the exact moment when that person was passing?

Lynch's informants ask themselves the same thing in relation to the richness and wealth of some people who do not behave as good Christians, in opposition to what happens to those who are apparently destined to poverty, illness, and misfortune. Why might God allow the suffering of people who live such good Christian lives? The dilemma about the meaning of evil is still impossible to solve on a biomedical level and puts us directly in

the realm of the connections between illness, morality, and spirituality. Why does it happen to me?

The journey that Lynch takes when considering the spiritual, physical, and psychological notions of her informants allows us to understand that the answer to the moral question enclosed in such matters has to be found in the notion of health as a process that goes through the vital cycle of the subjects. For Lynch's interlocutors, health represents a continuous construction of equilibriums in which the forces of good (understood as the actions of God) are in tension with the forces of evil (understood as the actions of the Devil). The capacity that people have to fight against adversities and maintain faith in God is intended as a proof of the persisting menace of evil with its possible influences over the body and its well-being.

Differently from classic studies in medical anthropology, Lynch's work does not reproduce the historical opposition between 'traditional' notions of body, health, and illness and the impositions of modern biomedicine. Instead of feeling disenchanting over the lack of the *obeah* cult in the area where she worked, Lynch prefers to show how oppositions such as biology/culture, knowledge/belief, medicine/religion, and material/spiritual are inconceivable in a world that has built bridges between those concepts, resulting in an experience of evil that is both material and spiritual, medical and religious. The book allows us to understand how her informants' decisions surrounding the sphere of health and body pass through a moral order that addresses how things should be.

The first part of the book presents this moral order, focusing on the interconnections established with certain institutions that have a relevant role in the town and beyond. In the second part, the author explores notions of the social and individual body, forms of understanding illness, and multiple metaphors used to explain the action of evil. In this way, Lynch builds a thesis that highlights the political substance of illness, without

neglecting the moral and mystical orders in which this experience acquires sense. Thanks to books like this, which draw on previous studies like those of Michael Taussig in South America and Peter Geschiere in Africa, it is possible to contribute to the construction of an anthropology that is able to interpret the complexity of the experience of modernity, focusing on its entanglements with body, health, and illness. Illness offers a privileged point of view, due to the fact that its frightening ghosts of hopelessness and desperation convert the body into a strategic generator of social significance. Intended as a form of ‘symbolic deconstruction’, illness introduces chaos and evil into daily life. It is interpreted through socio-medical paradigms that connect harm and pain with their social significance, and relate them to a series of strategies that can be applied to re-establish order.

Making evil visible, talking about the Devil, and exorcising his actions on the individual and collective level—both in the body of the subject and in the body of the nation-state—are exercises that aim to maintain communal bonds based on a shared morality. The author of this book points out how this corporal and spiritual moral order is deeply linked to the ways that global socio-political dynamics affect local experiences on these islands.

Alejandra Carreño Calderón
Universidad del Desarrollo, Chile

MATORY, J. Lorand, *The Fetish Revisited: Marx, Freud, and the Gods Black People Make*, 392 pp., illustrations, bibliographical references, index. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018. Paperback, \$29.95. ISBN 9781478001058.

J. Lorand Matory’s *The Fetish Revisited* is the first of two volumes dealing with the theme of the fetish as it relates to the racial implications of North American bondage, discipline, and sadomasochism (BDSM) and master/slave eroticism in connection with Afro-Haitian

religion.¹ Through the theories and biographies of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, Matory argues that processes of fetishization delineate not only those behaviors that the two famous intellectuals intended to describe, but also their own personal fears and aspirations, and, by extension, how the latter developed into and were interwoven with their theoretical arguments *about* the fetish. By performing a unique dialectical twist, the author returns (‘revisits’) the fetish to its theoreticians.

Matory unfolds his provocative comparison with a broad heuristic definition of the fetish that encompasses both Afro-Atlantic (purportedly ‘fetishist’) religions and post-Enlightenment European social thought. This heuristic working definition considers the ‘fetish’ as a “material thing animated by the contrary models of society and the contrary personal expectations of the people who ... have rival relationships with that material thing. A thing is most likely to be called a fetish when it mediates the relationship between parties with very different or even opposite perspectives on their social relationship, perspectives that are also expressed in opposite perspectives on the thing itself” (pp. xix–xx).

In parallel, a more conventional understanding of the fetish tightly accompanies such a definition, one that implies a sort of, at worst, outright error or, at best, ambiguity and hidden (to the ‘fetishists’, whether they are Afro-Atlantic religious subjects or social theorists) dimensions, intentions, and effects. Ultimately, Matory claims, the fetish as a ‘thing’ reveals more about the social relationships condensed around and mediated by it than any substantial and inherent quality in it. In that sense, if Marx and Freud have been equally as fetishists as their Afro-Atlantic religious counter-examples, then what Matory is offering is a kind of ‘reciprocal’ social, and even psychological, theory. At the same time, it is also implied that, in a sense, Afro-Atlantic religious subjects are less fetishistic than Marx and Freud, because they at least recognize the ambiguity and hierarchical rivalry involved

in their view of the ‘things’ they ritually animate. They also recognize that these ‘things’ are in a reciprocal relation of mutual constitution with their human counterparts and not artificially disjoined in their solitary individualism (Occidental ‘scientific’ personhood) or in their transcendental immaterialism (Abrahamic religions, especially Protestantism). Multiplicity, immanence, assembly of people, assemblages of ‘things,’ and invisible volitional/agentive forces constitute the Afro-Atlantic polysemic and polytheistic cosmos.

The African ‘heart of darkness’ was constructed in a post-Enlightenment environment to contribute to the creation of material and symbolic conditions for European supremacy and domination. In between this white/black polarity stood groups and classes of people who had an ambiguous position and strove to place themselves on the ‘white’ side of the polarity, in order to enjoy the privileges of such status and avoid the marginalization, exploitation, even persecution and enslavement of the ‘black’ side. Such peoples, argues Matory, were the Jews like Marx and Freud, who developed theories on the fetish in an effort to disambiguate their own status, by trying to prove their non-fetishist ‘mentality’ and thus their legitimate belonging to the ‘white’ side of society. Their theories on the fetish were themselves fetishized, according to both understandings that appear in Matory’s book—the conventional and the heuristic.

Although I cannot delve into the theories of Marx and Freud, or Matory’s more detailed critical view of them, as far as their understanding of religion is concerned, I highly agree that their perspectives are not that productive, at least from an anthropological point of view. And this is not because they are outright *false* (a crude version of fetishism), but perhaps so obviously ‘true’ (modern, Occidental, scientific, Enlightenment, or however one wishes to call them) that one cannot really go that far with them. As their approach to religion is, in essence, to explain it away, little is offered if one wishes

to engage with religious phenomena. It is thus not a matter of agreeing or not with Marx or Freud on issues of religion, but rather the degree one is interested either in the agendas of these thinkers (of which religion was out of the frame and stood only as an obstacle) or in the study of religiosity.

I wish to close the present review with some broad questions and a critical note, which I think Matory’s arguments raise: What ‘thing’ does not mediate ambiguous (even rival and hierarchical) social relationships? What social relationships are not ambiguous? What ‘thing,’ then, *is not* a ‘fetish’?

Anastasios Panagiotopoulos

CRIA-Universidade Nova de Lisboa

Note

1. Matory’s forthcoming second volume is titled *Zombies and Black Leather: Haitian and White American Connection and Alienation in Haiti and White America*.

PANSTERS, Wil G., ed., *La Santa Muerte in Mexico: History, Devotion, and Society*, 230 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2019. Hardback, \$65.00. ISBN 9780826360816.

Wil Pansters, the editor of this collection, aptly describes La Santa Muerte as representing a religion ‘in the making’ in Mexico. Tracing its roots to the middle of the twentieth century, La Santa Muerte fascinates today due to its complexity, tri-dimensional visual imagery, and co-existing devotion with Catholicism. The volume explores such topics by bringing together experts, who, in a mutual dialogue, analyze the importance of this religious movement (or cult, as some of the authors name it) for Mexicans, and how it has expanded not only to areas other than central Mexico but also to the United States.

The book consists of a preface by the editor, six chapters, and an afterword by Claudio

Lomnitz. The first chapter is a compelling account of the history and social context that gave birth to the La Santa Muerte cult. Serving as a sort of introduction to the themes discussed later in the book, Pansters recounts in this chapter the origins of the La Santa Muerte cult, how it emerged from Catholicism, and the first academics who paid attention to it. He depicts the rapid emergence of studies related to La Santa Muerte and how it spread from central Mexico, particularly the *barrio bravo* (fierce neighborhood) of Tepito, to other states such as Veracruz, Sinaloa, and San Luis Potosí. Pansters points to the role played by charismatic individuals such as Enriqueta Romero (doña Queta) and David Romo in the public promotion of La Santa Muerte. Doña Queta is responsible for making the cult's transition to the public sphere by building an altar at her home in the barrio of Tepito in September 2001, and Romo by trying to institutionalize the cult and to capitalize personally from it.

The chapters by Benjamin Smith and Juan Antonio Flores Martos position La Santa Muerte in a historical and Latin American perspective, respectively. Smith's chapter deals with the historical development of the cult seen as a revitalization movement that can trace its origins back to the colonial period. By comparing La Santa Muerte with other religions, Smith offers a complex image of an emerging cult that has to co-exist with Catholicism. Flores Martos, on the other hand, compares La Santa Muerte with other Latin American marginal cults through a perspective that focuses on heritage, in what he calls the 'patrimonialization of death'. His comparison includes descriptions of popular death cults in Colombia, Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela. Flores Martos concludes that La Santa Muerte appears as a cult that shares many traits with other rituals related to the miraculous death. Particularly salient is its emergence among the most economically and socially vulnerable sectors of society.

In chapter 4, Anne Huffschnid analyzes the visual culture of La Santa Muerte, which

goes beyond its stereotyped dangerous and illegal image. Huffschnid describes the outward movement of La Santa Muerte imagery, focusing on its aesthetics, the urban landscapes, the topography of the cult in Tepito's neighborhood, and the statuettes that devotees carry to the shrine. For Huffschnid there is a 'hypervisibility' of the cult, which shows that there is nothing to hide about La Santa Muerte and that she is unconditionally accessible to anyone, as death does not make a judgment on a person's deeds.

In chapter 5, Regnar Kristensen describes the oscillation of La Santa Muerte's movement between the private and the public spheres of culture. For her, there is a dynamic move that goes from the domestic family domain to the external visual imagery of the cult. The author describes the inner tensions that existed between rival shrines of La Santa Muerte, and how a mechanism of spiritual exchange was configured among devotees through *mandas* (vows).

In chapter 6, Judith Katia Perdigón Castañeda and Bernardo Robles Aguirre show the importance of tattoos of La Santa Muerte for practitioners. Tattoos in this religious context demonstrate the devotee's gratitude to La Santa Muerte, at the same time that they become a sign of body protection against evil and bad deeds as their patron is permanently inked in their skin. In this sense, tattoos are a form of devotion. Through their analysis, the two authors show one more time that this cult is becoming a global emergent religious movement that is no longer as marginal as it initially seemed to be.

Finally, in the afterword, Claudio Lomnitz summarizes the context of La Santa Muerte studies over the last 20 years and how this religious movement has broken the dangerous stigma it had when it flourished in prisons in the early 2000s. For Lomnitz, there are strong and weak forms of being devoted to La Santa Muerte, expressed in tattoos, vows, favors, and visits to the shrines in Tepito, or just by asking for protection privately. He underlines the nature of exchange in La Santa Muerte by

using an analogy with marriage. To get into a relationship with death while alive represents an exchange where one does not expect to get salvation, but just a temporal ‘respite’ from the immediate difficulties of life, like a form of *amparo*, a legal injunction.

One of the most compelling accounts of La Santa Muerte in recent years, this book offers a general historical, anthropological, and artistic insight into the movement’s current expansion. It will be of interest to researchers and students working in Anthropology of Religion and Ritual studies, as well as to all who are interested in new religiosities in Mexico. The book is destined to become obligatory reading for anyone who wants to know more about La Santa Muerte and its seductive national and international appeal.

Sergio González Varela
Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí

PIERINI, Emily, *Jaguars of the Dawn: Spirit Mediumship in the Brazilian Vale do Amanhecer*, 290 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. New York: Berghahn Books, 2020. Hardback, \$135.00. ISBN 9781789205657.

Jaguars of the Dawn is one of the most fascinating ethnographic works recently produced. Detailed and deeply embedded in a variety of theoretical and analytical routes, it covers some of the most current themes in the anthropology of religion. One of its major contributions is that it offers a detailed account of a quite particular case on spirit mediumship, being the first study to be written on the Vale do Amanhecer in the English language. Furthermore, it accompanies some of the most profound ethnographies that have been published in recent years on the anthropology of contemporary religion and spirituality in Brazil, especially in the context of spirit mediumship and spirit possession in Spiritism and Afro-Brazilian religions (Espírito Santo 2018; Rocha 2017; Schmidt 2016).

Throughout her analysis, Pierini addresses crucial yet difficult dichotomies, such as mind versus body and belief versus experience, which she re-evaluates under a new light and through the empirical basis of her ethnographic material. The author goes beyond the mind/body dichotomy, a popular explanatory model used by earlier studies on spirit mediumship that were based on Western categorizations. Going against the kind of cognitive approaches that see the practice of spirit mediumship as more grounded in a disembodied mind rather than a fully engaged body, Pierini argues that in the type of spirit mediumship she studied, emphasis is and should be placed on the interrelationship between the mind and the body, creating a continuum rather than a rupture between the two.

Another significant aspect of the book’s impact on the anthropological research of contemporary religious phenomena is the discussion of the relationship between spiritual belief, embodied experience, and empirical knowledge. The author cleverly demonstrates how her interlocutors in the Vale do Amanhecer prioritize knowledge through experience instead of knowledge through belief. Rather than treating ‘belief’ and ‘experience’ in and as antithetical terms, Pierini places bodily sensory perception at the center of the analysis in an effort to show how spirit mediumship is learned through a self that embodies, senses, feels, perceives, and experiences spirits. Offering a criticism against certain cognitive anthropological approaches, she presents an ethnographic case wherein the spiritual is approached holistically and knowledge is acquired through the creation of a pluralistic self—a self that is creatively (re)invented and (re)imagined as mediating between the material and the spiritual world in both an immanent and a transcendental manner.

Despite the resemblance between multiple aspects of the spirit mediumship practices she studied and the practices that belong to the so-called New Age movement (Heelas 1996), Pierini makes a strong point against bringing the two together analytically. She argues that

the debates surrounding spirit mediumship in Vale de Amanhecer are embedded in ‘millenarian discourses’ of Brazilian indigenous and popular cultures rather than New Age ones, from both an emic and etic perspective. However, given the at times striking similarity between the bodily practices and discourses of Vale with New Age practices and discourses, it would have been theoretically and analytically intriguing to engage more profoundly in a discussion about the reasons why the practitioners of Vale prefer to disengage themselves from the New Age. In spite of its critics, the New Age is still considered a vivid part of the study of contemporary religiosity in the world. Thus, instead of refuting its connection with the spirit mediumship at Vale, which in fact reproduces the negative stereotype of the New Age as a religio-spiritual phenomenon, it might have been advantageous to dedicate more analytical space to the convergences between them, especially for researchers who study contemporary spirituality and healing practices of the New Age.

Lastly, this book is one of the few recently published ethnographies that dedicates much empirical and analytic space to the relationship between spirituality and healing. Pierini moves her analysis elegantly within a multiplicity of narratives concerning spirituality and modes of non-biomedical healing, painting a complex yet clear image of how spirituality and healing combine within a specific socio-cultural context of spirit mediumship. Using a reflexive methodology and learning and experiencing the healing and mediumship through her own body, she provides a unique account of multi-dimensional therapeutic itineraries, where intellectual and somatic modes of learning spirit mediumship are integrated, and where spiritual healing and embodied learning enter into a dialogue with biomedicine and ‘scientific’ knowledge. Equally important, the book is a much-needed addition to the current debates with regard to complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), while (re)presenting a particular yet fundamental paradigm of religious pluralism,

diversity, and reflexivity, not only within the Brazilian context, but also at a global level.

Jaguars of Dawn is an essential addition to the library of all students and scholars working in the fields of anthropology of religion and medical anthropology. It is bound to engage the interest of anyone eager to learn more about religion, spirituality, mediumship, and healing.

Eugenia Roussou
 CRIA, ISCTE-IUL, University Institute of
 Lisbon, Portugal

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PITARCH, Pedro, and José Antonio KELLY, eds., *The Culture of Invention in the Americas: Anthropological Experiments with Roy Wagner*, 288 pp. Canon Pyon: Sean Kingston Publishing, 2019. Hardback, \$90.00. ISBN 9781912385027.

This volume, edited by Pedro Pitarch and José Antonio Kelly, aims to constitute “the first attempt to acknowledge the recovery of Wagnerian anthropology and to show its fertility in Americanist anthropology” (p. 2). Certainly, key Wagnerian concepts such as ‘convention,’ ‘innovation,’ and ‘expersonation’ are evoked in most of its chapters. Marianna Keisalo, for example, invites us to consider both the “conventional symbols,” that is, the collectivizing “serious message,” and the “differentiating symbols,” the particularizing “open

possibility of meaning” (p. 136), in a Yaqui ritual of Sonora, Mexico. Regarding the notion of ‘expersonation’, it is central in Pitarch’s chapter on the process of the Maya-Tzeltal person-making “that goes from the most universal to the most particular, from the most subjective to the most objective, from the most affective to the less” (pp. 73–74).¹

Although the introduction does not address the pertinence of Roy Wagner’s perspectives on Amerindian areas other than those present in this collection, it certainly incites comparisons beyond Mexico and Brazil. That is the case with Roger Magazine’s and Alessandro Questa’s chapters, which focus on *fiestas patronales* in the Mexican regions of Texcoco and Puebla, respectively. Both Magazine’s “delicate interdependence among beings” (p. 109) and Questa’s “visual models of the otherwise invisible social relations between humans and non-human beings” (p. 142) constitute invitations to revisit ethnographic settings far beyond their specific area of study. How can one not to think, for instance, of the Andean ritual world when Questa affirms that “visualizing others by dancing is a way in which Masewal dancers invent their own culture” (p. 140), or when Magazine shows that the *mayordomo* must produce “in others not just action of participation but also the subjective state of willingness” (p. 109)?

Additionally, this book’s determination to avoid “an anthropology that is a mere extension of our symbols” (p. 27) is certainly relevant for Americanism. Considering Afro-Brazilian Candomblé, Marcio Goldman debates the interpretation in which its initiation’s personal divinities are considered as made, while its general divinities are taken as given. Distrusting a dichotomy that “maps almost perfectly onto our dominant modes of thinking” (p. 47), Goldman comes to the conclusion that we “need to try to stop thinking [of] our theories as things we ‘make’ in order to apply to ‘given’ data that will confirm them or not. In anthropology the problem is the alignment between concepts coming from

both sides of the process of understanding” (p. 48). This symmetric anthropology is also explicitly endorsed by Questa: “Full of fallible rules, conflicting codes, debatable hierarchies and layers of possible meanings, both dances and anthropology constitute methodologies, explorations on others and on their concepts” (p. 154).

Johannes Neurath’s chapter on the co-existence of free gift and reciprocity is another fine example of symmetric anthropology. Neurath contends that this asymmetry, which is also present in Questa’s description of simultaneously enacted predation and reciprocity, is at the base of Huichol unstable cosmology: “Conflicting ontological principles, as well as the difference between reciprocal exchange and the free gift, are not simply a matter of seasonal transition, or of ritual inversion of the cosmos resulting from a single ontological frame ... the point is the coexistence of contrasting, even incompatible existential conditions and principles ... There is no easy complementarity ... Huichol ontology and cosmology appear to be unstable, based always on shifting foundations” (p. 103). In fact, a sort of gestural or ritual perspectivism is suggested: “Participants in one ritual celebrate together, but are immersed in ontologically differentiated ritual dynamics. While some are practicing free gifts, others practice reciprocal exchange” (p. 104).² At the end of the day, critical reflection emerges from instability: “Huichol ritual reflexivity arises from not agreeing with either gift or exchange... there is a reflexive (or critical) praxis where no consensus about the meaning of a determined set of ritual actions can be attained” (p. 104).

Considering whether the Huichol material would constitute a “polyontology” (p. 104), Neurath suggests that “it would not be useful to declare analogism the dominant ontology of the Huichol, and animism just a secondary tendency” (p. 102). Other chapters also take critical positions on Descola’s and other influential authors’ perspectives. Chloe Nahum-Claudel, for instance, highlights that in Amazonian ethnography “exchanges

of services, food and goods between affines have been documented but are scarcely commented on” in the context of a “popular denial of the existence of exchanges of wealth” (pp. 212–213). Making reference to León-Portilla, Lydia Rodríguez and Sergio López criticize his reaction against the universality of the “linear notion of time,” which postulates an essentializing and exotic cyclical notion of time in Maya thought. They propose instead a “new metaphor” (p. 172), one that is “closer to the Maya ethnographic reality” (p. 175)—a “pattern followed in the planting of a corn-field” based on a “model of intersectional time” (p. 182). Finally, Marcela Coelho de Souza’s chapter on how kinship determines humanity among the Kĩsêdjê of central Brazil critically weighs key Wagnerian perspectives.

Lastly, I raise two somewhat problematic points. First, regarding Wagner’s long-lasting interest in the writings of the controversial Peruvian anthropologist Carlos Castañeda, whose books, according to Pitarch and Kelly, “have nothing to do with the indigenous peoples of Mexico” (p. 12), the editors simply confess that it is “hard to say to what degree Wagner takes Castaneda’s work as ethnography” (p. 13). The fact that Wagner does not answer this point in his commentary, which comprises the final chapter, could be seen as yet another example of the increasing role of irony in his late “poetic-theoretical work” (p. 1). To this second point, the editors opine: “It seems there is method to this madness” (p. 4).

In sum, this insightful collection of ethnographies not only is a useful introduction to Wagner’s main perspectives among Americanists, but also constitutes a solid contribution to a better understanding of human and non-human collectives in the Americas in its own right.

Juan Javier Rivera Andía
Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos,
Peru

Notes

1. Amerindian personhood is also examined in Roger Magazine’s description of “the emergence [in a Masewal ritual] of the villager as a socially interdependent and thus complete person” (p. 110).
2. The chapter by Kelly on the Yanomami, Yekuana, and Piaroa is also close, in this case explicitly, to perspectivism (along with Wagnerian semiotics).

RAMBELLI, Fabio, ed., *Spirits and Animism in Contemporary Japan: The Invisible Empire*, 240 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Hardback, \$153.00. ISBN 9781350097094.

As its title indicates, this collection is a balanced introduction to the phenomenon called ‘animism’ in contemporary Japan. While its examination spans from the early modern period onward, its originality lies in the analyses of discourses and representations of animistic phenomena that flourished in Japan after World War II. In the introduction, Rambelli recalls the history of cultural movements around ‘neo-animism’ in Japan. According to Rambelli, this history began with Iwata Keiji’s arguments on animism in Southeast Asian societies and the emphasis on ‘Esoteric Buddhism’ in the 1970s. These were followed in the 1980s by the discourses of intellectuals such as Nakazawa Shin’ichi, who advocated animism as an ideal human-nature relationship. Subsequently, through incorporation into popular culture, animism entered the core of Japanese cultural identity and spirituality (pp. 5–10).

With some exceptions, most of the volume’s contributors focus on animistic elements—spirits, ghosts, and monsters—found in literature, the arts, and other forms of popular culture. These are analyzed, for instance, as an effective means of reconciling the anxiety of modernity (chap. 8), or as an illustration of attitudes of the Japanese toward recent environmental catastrophes, who strive to

deactivate the hazardous power of nature and create a novel national identity (chap. 11).

The phenomena regarded here as representative of Japan's animism, most of which are cultural representations and objects of consumption, constitute a unique animism as a vital part of contemporary Japanese culture. Therefore, this volume, which intelligibly introduces and analyzes the history and current trends of Japan's animism, is undoubtedly significant. Simultaneously, arguments that highlight the surprising co-existence of spirits and technologies in Japan or that see contemporary animistic aspects as an exemplification of a 'national identity' seem conventional and one-sided. To understand animism in Japan from multiple angles, we should focus not only on conspicuous elements in intellectual discourses or popular culture, but also on animistic practices of people on the periphery. These cannot be represented monolithically, but have constituted animism(s) in the archipelago.

For instance, Ishimure Michiko portrays intimate interactions between locals and sea creatures on the coast of the Sea of Shiranui, where Minamata disease, caused by mercury poisoning, has been prevalent since the 1950s. Similarly, Furukawa Hideo describes entangled relationships between the historically exploited and marginalized people of Tohoku prefecture and their livestock. These works depict the lives and memories of people on the periphery that are deeply rooted in the soil, climate, and *anima* of each place and cannot be generalized into a 'national history' or 'collective past'. Animistic practices in Japan are embedded in the voices of marginalized people—peasants, fishermen, mineworkers, scavengers, and forced laborers. Those who listened to these voices were not the intellectuals advocating for Japan's animism, but folklorists such as Matsutani Miyoko and Ono Kazuko, who remained close to people's life-worlds.

Thus, we notice alternative meanings to the animistic elements in popular culture analyzed in this volume. For instance, in chapter 11, Castiglioni points out that Godzilla, in films released in 1954 and 2001, can be interpreted

as a manifestation of the war dead of World War II who desire commemoration and veneration by the nation. However, Takashi Arai (2019), a Japanese artist, posits the Godzilla of 1954 as an embodiment of the anger of those killed and abandoned by the Empire, which cannot be subsumed by the latter.

When we perceive the inaudible voices and anima of marginalized beings, we realize the power of diverse animistic practices in Japan, which are tough, uncanny, and rich. Unlike neo-animism, consisting of discourses and creations by intellectuals and creators at the center, the diverse animistic practices are rooted in common people's memories and experiences. Although their narratives cannot easily be translated into academic language, they contain the power of 'what really happened (*attarukoto*)', or actuality, in them. Those who listen to and record these narratives, such as Ishimure and Ono, have never loudly advocated for Japan's animism. Rather, they have strived to make the polyphonic voices of diverse beings resound within the unified national space by remaining close to those disregarded and forced to disappear.

In explaining the volume's subtitle, "Invisible Empire," a reference to Roland Barthes's *Empire of Signs* ([1970] 1982), Rambelli presents an image of an animistic empire with a center populated by invisible ghostly presences, which is also a manifestation of a collective past (p. 15). However, the term 'animism' is not compatible with 'empire'. The animistic practices of people co-existing with other creatures are never imperialistic, but bear wounds inflicted by the violence of the Empire. The metropolis's empty center, where the first Godzilla did not enter, remains a magnificent emptiness never populated by the anima of these wounded beings. While suffering the cruelty of nationalistic imagination, these small beings continue moving vigorously around the periphery, without losing their unique voices, memories, and anima.

Miho Ishii
Kyoto University

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RICHMAN, Karen E., *Migration and Vodou*, 384 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018. Paperback, \$28.95. ISBN 9780813064864.

Migration and Vodou is the story of Ti Chini (Little Caterpillar), a peasant from Léogane, a provincial town in Haiti. Ti Chini was a "larva-sized baby" and a "compact, wiry, and composed" man (p. 1). Illiterate and unschooled, he made a meager living by share-cropping tiny pieces of land. In 1980, aged 34, Ti Chini left for the United States, paddling 700 miles in a canoe with twenty others. Once he arrived, he worked as a farm laborer in exploitative and squalid conditions, surviving both extreme work conditions and racist attacks. Most of the few dollars he earned he sent back home to sustain the family in Léogane.

Richman's point of departure is audiocassette-taped 'letters' Haitians send back and forth from abroad to families back home. The book starts with one such exchange between Ti Chini in the US and his brother, Se Byen, back home. Ti Chini sends a letter to his brother, but receives a rather chilly and disappointing response. In the letter, Se Byen complains that his brother failed to keep in touch and to support his family, thinking only of himself: "After all, you left merely to pursue a livelihood" (p. 7). How is this possible, Richman asks, especially since she knew that Ti Chini did, in fact, send remittances. It turns out that this is not an easy question to answer.

It takes, as Richman convincingly argues, a thorough understanding of Haitian history and the intricacies of Vodou to understand Ti Chini and Se Byen's relation.

Richman first provides an analysis of how Haiti has been incorporated into the global political economy in the course of the twentieth century. Nineteenth-century self-determination made way in the twentieth century to "domination by foreign interests of the import-export trade and of the national debt" (p. 43). The increasingly precarious situation led peasants to emigrate on a massive scale, turning Haiti into a "nursery and a nursing home for migrants working in wage-labor jobs abroad" (p. 40). The consequence of all this is a double bind. On the one hand, families back home depend on the remittances sent by labor migrants abroad, and remittances have become one of the most important sources of domestic income in Haiti. On the other hand, wage labor is looked down upon in Haiti as a form of dependency reminiscent of slavery. Migrants thus occupy an ambiguous and precarious position that leaves them quite vulnerable to moral accusations.

The author then turns to the wider context of Vodou. Children, Richman argues, feel "duty-bound to one day compensate those who raised her or him and every adult migrant is obliged to 'give a livelihood to one's family back home.'" The core metaphor for this obligation is feeding. It is the "epitomizing social process, the essential means to creating, or realizing, relationships." This is true not only for interpersonal relationships, but also for those between people and spirits: "Obligations to the dead are explicitly construed as feeding debts, as are responsibilities to the lwa, spiritual counterparts of human members of the descent group." The lwa need to be appeased, or 'fed', so as to "protect the labor power of the migrants abroad" (p. 41).

The migrants' ambiguous status is inscribed in the spiritual economy of Vodou, as becomes clear in Richman's sustained discussion of the complex notion of 'pwen' (point), that is, "the hidden, vital pith of a relationship or thing"

(p. 163). Pwen have many functions, but a crucial one is their participation in the political economy of migration. Pwen are thought to come from outside of the moral community of Guinea, the ‘authentic,’ ‘African’ Vodou pantheon, and as such form a danger to its moral integrity. At the same time, the lwa depend on the pwen as a life-giving power, which means that they need to be concealed. Richman therefore convincingly argues that “in the context of Magic, pwen symbolize alienable labor power. They are a peasant society’s representation of the immorality of wage labor and an inhuman capitalist system that exploits it” (p. 164).

This is, in my view, one of the most crucial conceptual contributions of the book. The entanglement of worldly and spiritual economies has long been a familiar theme, but unlike Marx and Weber, for instance, Richman looks at the complex and ambiguous interplay of different religious traditions and political economy. This becomes painfully clear when Ti Chini converts to Christianity out of disappointment that, despite his loyalty over the years, the lwa have not come through for him. “There are no lwa,” he announces bitterly at the end of the book (p. 263). In other words, in this case it had not been Christianity that had kept him incorporated in the capitalist system, but the lwa. Indeed, his conversion feels like a liberation to him. At the same time, his rejection of the lwa also means that, as in the logic of the gift, the possibility of human agency is inherent in Haitian Vodou: one has to serve the spirits, but the spirits are obliged to reciprocate, and they can be sanctioned. Richman thus provides an different, more complex understanding of the ways religious and secular economies are entangled in Haiti.

Migration and Vodou is the product of an involvement with and research in Haiti that lasted several decades. The wealth of ethnographic detail—touching, for instance, on intricate questions of ritual change—makes the book an invaluable source for specialists in this specific area as well as a more general

readership interested in regionally specific dynamics of black Atlantic religion. A beautiful ethnography, it is a model for students and scholars alike.

Published as a hardback in 2005, this 2018 paperback edition remains timely in the current, global plea for the protection of black lives. So far, that debate has focused mainly on the (former) colonial cores in Europe and North America, sidelining other places where black lives are in jeopardy. This book, then, should be used not only by students of religion, Caribbean studies, or Haiti, but also in larger conversations about race and racism in the Atlantic world. It is a welcome counterpoint to discussions that tend to be dominated by a North American idiom, as it shows the local specificities and complexities of racialized domination in a setting that is both local and transnational.

Markus Balkenhol
Meertens Institute

VITEBSKY, Piers, *Living without the Dead: Loss and Redemption in a Jungle Cosmos*, 380 pp., illustrations, glossary, references, index. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. Paperback, \$25.00. ISBN 9780226475622.

In the first pages of his book, Piers Vitebsky relates a fieldwork anecdote that vividly encapsulates the two central concerns of the entire monograph. While he was talking about his presence among the Sora, a ‘tribal’ people from central India, a Brahmin teacher asked him, “Why have you come?” to which he answered, “I’ve come to study their religion.” Then, after a moment of incredulity, the teacher categorically replied: “You should study the Bhagavad Gita ... These people are not having religion” (pp. 15–16). This story, which may echo the experience of many ethnographers across the globe, has double significance for Vitebsky and the Sora. On the one hand, it shows the assumed gap that

people use to establish the difference between world religions and animist ontologies, which is isomorphic to the gap that can be drawn between hegemonic and subaltern forms of knowledge. Furthermore, in this case, it also manifests a transit between two positions that are internal to the Sora themselves, due to the transformation they have suffered during the period Vitebsky has carried out ethnographic fieldwork among them. On the other hand, the anecdote characterizes the nature of ethnographic fieldwork through an exemplary case without many parallels in the history of anthropology.

Indeed, *Living without the Dead* is not only a study with an unusually deep temporal approach to cultural change; it is also a perfect illustration of what ethnographic fieldwork is about. Vitebsky shows himself in the field, making sense of Sora cosmology, doubting and anxious about his own claims, making a cultural relativist analysis at certain times while taking shelter in his own cosmological framework at others. Through these dynamics, one can experience the process of transformation or realization that characterizes any proper ethnographic immersion.

In this book Vitebsky explores the radical change suffered by the Sora people during the 40 years he has worked with them, which is exemplified by a religious transformation from shamanic animism, whose main trait was daily dialogue with their dead ancestors, to the majoritarian development, especially among the younger generations, of Baptist Christianity and certain fundamentalist currents of Hinduism. Of course, religious transformation epitomizes a series of more general changes that go beyond the Sora, such as increasing colonial pressure, and shows the dynamics of Sora culture, including the changing role of dead ancestors in the lives of the living and the modification of the Sora notions of personhood. The general argument of the book is a diachronic account of this transformation, illustrating how change both affects and is shaped by different occurrences: the need to read and use documents,

the contestation of shamanic knowledge and the continuous adaptation of mediumship practices, a permanent modification in the treatment of emotions, and social tensions derived from generational differences.

In this analysis, Vitebsky describes what is going on with the Sora, performing a persistent work of translation in order to explain to us how their concepts are similar but simultaneously different from the so-called Western ones. For instance, he explains why Sonums are like spirit ancestors, yet at the same time they are not really spirit ancestors, or why Freud's ([1917] 1957) distinction between 'mourning and melancholia' is accurate when describing the process of loss that the Sora experience due to the death of a relative, but not fully accurate. These permanent 'excesses', in terms of Marisol de la Cadena (2015), appear constantly in Vitebsky's descriptions, and they are managed with an astounding ethnographic sophistication that highlights both the benefits and risks of this kind of comparison.

Dealing with the transformation of a tribal lifestyle, this ethnography is also a tragic account of the disappearance of a world, subsumed by Westernization and nationalist resistance, with both forces promoted by an overall process of modernization. This is explicitly explored through the uncertainty suffered by Sora elders about what will happen to them after they die, with current discourses and practices articulated in opposition to past animistic practices. Nevertheless, a light of hope emerges in the author's descriptions, particularly in how the adoption of exogenous frameworks comes with an uncontrollable 'excess', which guarantees uniqueness. As in any ethnographic monograph, this book puts special emphasis on recounting Sora practices in detail, whether transcribing shamanic chants or contextualizing social dynamics within local politics. In this sense, it is essential reading for anyone interested in contemporary tribal peoples in India, although at first glance it might seem overwhelming for someone who is not

acquainted with the area. However, beyond the richness of its ethnographic material and specificity, this volume should be of interest to scholars attracted to cultural change, religious transformation, and ethnographic epistemology in general due to the author's exposure of himself while doing research, the masterful construction of his ethnographic analysis, and his depiction of the clear dynamicity of Sora life over time.

Marcelo González Gálvez
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

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