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REVIEWS

CANTÓN-DELGADO, Manuela, et al., *Evangelical Gypsies in Spain: "The Bible Is Our Promised Land,"* 290 pp., bibliography, index. Lexington Books, 2020. Hardback, \$95.00. ISBN 9781498580939.

Evangelical Gypsies in Spain is the first English translation of the first monograph dedicated to the largest Gypsy (Roma) church in the world (Anderson 2014: 106)—Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia (Philadelphia Evangelical Church). Manuela Cantón-Delgado, Cristina Marcos Montiel, Salvador Medina Baena, and Ignacio Mena Cabezas describe the process of ethnogenesis and the transformations that Gypsies in southern Spain undergo as a result of their conversion to evangelism in the Spanish provinces of Cádiz and Seville. Translated by Marisol Gayton-Escobar, this volume contains a preface written by its editor, Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, and a new chapter in which Cantón-Delgado discusses what her focus has been since the book was first published in Spanish in 2004. The chapter shows that Gypsy evangelism remains a challenge today for the Roma association movement, the state, and the social sciences.

The book provides a broad overview of the impact of religious conversions on the social, economic, political, and symbolic practices of Gypsies. The different topics are treated with great sensitivity and honesty, relying on the active participation of the people involved in the scenes that are described. The afterword was written by a Gypsy pastor, and ethnographic writing techniques, such as the

polyphonic story, are used. This work also defends the subject by distancing itself from functionalist positions that reduce the phenomenon to mere responses to marginality, deprivation, or poverty. Closer to religious innovation, the text ensures that the reader becomes a witness to a transformative process carried out by the Gypsies themselves in an independent way. This constitutes for Manuela Cantón-Delgado “the most important ethnically based social and religious movement that Spanish Gypsies have ever produced” (p. 227).

The first chapters are dedicated to contextualization, showing the readers the history of Gypsies in Spain and the stigmatization processes that they have been subjected to (chap. 1), the origin of the Gypsy Pentecostal movement in Spain (chap. 2), and the characterization of beliefs, practices, and organization of the Philadelphia Evangelical Church (chap. 3). The ethnographic chapters analyze the transformations that the Gypsy minority undergoes when converting to Pentecostal evangelism. These changes, which are produced in different practices, are observed with an emphasis especially on the Gypsy kinship system.

The integration of Gypsies into the non-Gypsy majority society in Jerez de la Frontera in Cádiz, described in chapter 4, makes it extremely interesting for an analysis of ethnicity and religion. Cantón-Delgado et al. point out that kinship networks are essential as a route for religious conversions and as a means for resolving the preeminence of



kinship over religious adherence. In a context where Catholicism is hegemonic, competition in the local religious field requires some specialization on the part of churches in relation to the socio-economic characteristics of the city, and one of the strategies consists of mobilizing a discourse congruent with the expectations that people have of Gypsiness.

The arrival of Gypsy evangelism in Andalusia during Franco's Spain resulted in suspicion toward both evangelism and Gypsies. This account is told by some of its protagonists (women and men, Gypsies and non-Gypsies) through a masterfully organized polyphonic story in chapter 5. The narratives highlight the importance of family ties, and significant episodes emerge with profuse details about the daily life of the Gypsy pioneers of evangelism in Seville.

Chapter 6 has Weberian resonances as it is dedicated to an examination of the new representations of work and consumption and some changes in the interactions between converted Gypsy families in San Juan de Aznalfarache, Seville. Street vending is the most common labor activity of evangelical Gypsies, and it complies with some organizational strategies of the Philadelphia Evangelical Church.

The Philadelphia Church operates some detox centers (chap. 7). Within the framework of meaning offered by Pentecostal evangelism, drug addiction is interpreted as a disease, and evangelism provides the basis for healing processes. The Church also makes available material and symbolic resources to the families of the sick, which partially shows the autonomous nature of this religious organization.

Following the methodological (chap. 8) and theoretical (chap. 9) reflections and the conclusion (chap. 10), this edition includes a new chapter in which Cantón-Delgado refers to the role of religious leadership and the negotiation of prestige, conflict resolution, and gerontocracy as a traditional Gypsy authority structure. This helps readers understand the success of the religious movement.

Starting from an analysis of classical themes in the anthropology of religion, the book

provides a detailed and complex vision of an unprecedented phenomenon within the Gypsy world. Since its original publication almost 20 years ago, *Evangelical Gypsies in Spain* is still relevant and continues to be one of the few publications on Gypsy evangelism in general and on Gypsy evangelism in Spain in particular. The book thus becomes obligatory reading for all those interested in Pentecostalism among the Gypsies.

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Reference

Anderson, Allan Heaton. 2014. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*. 2nd ed. New York: Cambridge University Press.

COTTER, Christopher R., *The Critical Study of Non-Religion: Discourse, Identification and Locality*, 264 pp., illustrations, notes, references. London: Bloomsbury, 2020. Hardback, \$115.00. ISBN 9781350095243.

“There is no data for non-religion” (p. 206).

Cotter's *Critical Study of Non-Religion* represents an original attempt at marrying two camps of thought that have had a rocky relationship to date, showing how both parties can get along in the same house and have a lot to learn from each other. The book links the ‘critical’ school of thought: those who can be broadly dismissive of non-religion studies—as they perpetuate the existing problems and the contested category of ‘religion’—and those who gather, theorize, and typologize the ‘nones’ in often context-specific landscapes.

In his first chapter, Cotter presents the case for the importance of studying non-religion. Not limited to opening up the discussion around the “perceived or claimed universality of religion” (p. 16), he additionally allows us “to explore relational interactions” (p. 17) and finally theorizes the concepts of ‘religion’

and the 'secular'. However, as Cotter rightly notes, these are binary categories we should seek to avoid, and for good reason. For instance, if one reviews Cotter's three quotidian exemplars (pp. 2–4), it can be appreciated how easily they demonstrate the wide-ranging spectrum of beliefs and practices of the 'non-religious'; in short, the non-religious are far from a homogeneous group with coherent worldviews (p. 32). Furthermore, this chapter provides the context and sets the scene for the rest of the book, outlining a comprehensive review of current research on the non-religious, with emphasis on the United Kingdom. Additionally, one gets a snapshot of the non-religious landscape, including the problematic nature of surveys/self-identification and the importance of context—a key theme throughout.

In chapter 2, Cotter focuses on the 'critical' issues of the current research and positions his book within the critical study of religion that focuses on deconstructing categories and exposing power dynamics (p. 58). After outlining the research in the previous chapter, he discusses shortcomings of various approaches to non-religion. First, we are offered the category of what Cotter calls the 'subtractionist' approach, which views non-religion in negative (and ultimately uninteresting) terms as the absolute absence of religion. Second, we have the 'context-specific' approach, which, although more positive and interesting than the first one, does not facilitate comparative research and analysis. Finally, there is the 'substantial' approach, which appears to struggle with focusing solely on the non-religious side of the coin (which seems to be insistent on having both religious and non-religious facets) and is intimately entangled with the 'World Religions paradigm' (pp. 54–59). While Cotter recognizes benefits to these three approaches, he argues that a discursive approach, which considers the relationship between language and context, provides more fruitful insights, and that researchers and scholars of religion and non-religion "stand to benefit from looking

beyond the terminology and beyond the supposed 'religious' or 'non-religious' character of discourse" (p. 134).

Chapter 3 introduces Cotter's fieldwork in Edinburgh's Southside, where he conducted 71 interviews and 62 questionnaire responses that sought a maximum variation sampling strategy and utilized historical data sources for triangulation. Following this, Cotter demonstrates that a wide variety of discourses exist within his data with specific entanglements—that is to say, some discussions around meaning-making or morality can be described and analyzed without reference to religion, while others must draw upon constructions of religion/non-religion. Cotter also presents the argument that discourse should avoid being labeled as either 'religious' or 'non-religious', as these are resources that are drawn upon in different contexts.

In chapter 5, Cotter makes the important point that identities relating to religion and non-religion are not static but are influenced by context, along with space and relational factors. He thus maintains that circumstances are key; it depends on what and where. This 'what and where' is crucial to how we approach non-religion. The way people view their own identity depends on situations in which religion may or may not exert power. This extends in the following chapter where Cotter argues that configurations of both religion and non-religion are influenced by 'local particularity'. Thus, we come back again to one of Cotter's main arguments throughout—the importance of context.

Cotter's book is a clever combination of a textbook that opts for a discursive relational approach combined with an original empirical study of the non-religious landscape located in the Southside of Edinburgh. In this sense, Cotter's bridge to a happy relationship is both a manifesto and an example of putting it into practice by looking "beyond the supposed 'religious' or 'non-religious' character of particular discourses" (p. 205). Cotter's admonition to scholars to be "relentlessly self-conscious in their approach" to religion

and non-religion (p. 206) should be noted. An important contribution and resource, both empirically and theoretically, this book is essential reading for religious studies students and scholars of all disciplines who study religion/non-religion.

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CUNHA, Ana Stela, and Edegar MIQUETA, dirs., *Mandou me chamar, eu vim!*, 2021. Documentary film, Portuguese, color, 61 min. Sponsored by IBRAM (Brazilian Institute of Museums) and SYNC Cultural.

The documentary film *Mandou me chamar, eu vim!* (You Sent for Me, I Came!) guides us into the world of Afro-Brazilian religions in Portugal. The filmmaker Edegar Miqueta and the anthropologist and linguist Ana Stela Cunha—who has studied many religious and musical practices between Brazil, Cuba, Congo, Angola, and Portugal—take us to the Lisbon Region to learn more about Umbanda, Candomblé, and Jurema. These three religions are linked by a cosmological and ritual continuum and worship the *orixás*—Yoruba divinities—as well as numerous spirits, such as the *exus*, *mestres*, and *ciganas*. Born in the colonial and slave context, these religions were brought to Portugal around the time of the Carnation Revolution in 1974, first by Portuguese women returning to Portugal after long-term migration across the Atlantic, then by Brazilian migrants. Today, there are approximately 40 *terreiros* (houses of worship) in Portugal, mostly consisting of Portuguese members—many of whom are phenotypically white—and led by Portuguese or Brazilian cult leaders.

Several *babalorixás* and *iyalorixás* (male and female cult leaders) and their *filhos de santo* (initiated persons) are interviewed and talk about their background and their religious practice. Joci is a migrant from the

Brazilian Nordeste; João de Iemanjá¹ is the son of a mixed-race Angolan woman; Ermolinda is a white Portuguese woman who lived in Angola for many years; and Jomar and Paulo de Iemanjá regularly go to Salvador de Bahia. The film highlights the religious circulation between Portugal and its former colonies, as well as the relationship between religion, migration, religious freedom, and racism in the country.

The main theme of the documentary is music, which is omnipresent in the gift and counter-gift relationship between humans, *orixás*, and spirits. The instruments, songs, and clapping greet the gods and spirits and invite them to manifest themselves in the bodies of the initiated, to become incarnate in the ‘matter’. The film focuses on the rituals, which organize the daily life of the *terreiros*. We witness the preparation and offering of food to gods, public ceremonies (*xirê* and *gira*), and an initiation (*bori* and *feitura*), which is usually not allowed to be filmed.

In Joci’s Jurema, people sing in Portuguese to the rhythm of maracas, calling the spirits to come and ‘work’. The Portuguese who visit the *terreiros* more often seek help to solve their health, emotional, financial, and professional problems. Candomblé songs are sung in Yoruba to the beating of drums called *atabaques*. Jomar and Paulo de Iemanjá explain that “each song tells a story,” a myth linked to the *orixá*, who “comes to dance.” The *orixás*, who represent forces of nature, are also the primordial holders of *axé*, the vital energy inscribed in every ritual object and initiated person. These religions are based on a principle of charity and the notion of balance of the person, says João de Iemanjá. This is why some rituals (*ebó*) aim to “unload the person, to get the evil out of the body,” adds Ermolinda.

The relationship with tradition is an underlying theme that raises questions: How can tradition be preserved in the process of displacement? Is this tradition Brazilian, African, or now Luso-Afro-Brazilian? Jomar and Paulo de Iemanjá identify their ritual commitments with the “root” (*raíz*), namely, with two

prestigious Bahian houses of worship whose religious foundations they intend to “preserve.” Moreover, as they wish to reproduce a model of orthodoxy on Portuguese ground, their *terreiro* has its own *ogans*, the men in charge of the ritual music.

The question of Afro-Catholic syncretism is also raised in the film. These religions bear the stigma of the evangelization of slaves, but nowadays their Catholic elements create a ‘cognitive bridge’ with Portuguese Catholicism.² The Portuguese João de Iemanjá says he follows “the African pantheon” and criticizes the syncretism that today “makes no sense.” On the other hand, the Brazilian Joci insists on the continuities between his religious practice and Catholicism, assuring that the songs of the Jurema have the same function as “the recitation of an ‘Our Father.’” Joci embodies the Brazilian migrant for whom a religious career may lead to a better life across the Atlantic. In his eyes, it was “spirituality” and the necessity to respond to the needs (*carência*) of the Portuguese people that brought him to Portugal.

Although Afro-Brazilian religions are non-proselytizing, migration is perceived as a mission—a ‘reversed’ religious mission from Brazil to Portugal, a country that can acknowledge the contribution of a multiplicity of religious practices to its migrant populations. However, the protagonists point out that their religions suffer from discrimination and racism, as they echo the Portuguese “black magic” (*bruxaria*) and an imaginary of “primitive Africa.” João de Iemanjá invokes his religious freedom to counteract the virulence directed toward animal sacrifice, which is central to the cult. During the long final initiation scene in the film, animal blood is poured on the head (*ori*) of the newly initiated (*iyáô*), as well as on the altars (*assentos*) representing the individualized *orixás*. In fact, the blood (*ejê*) is a carrier of *axé* and nourishes the gods, who bring balance to the lives of humans in return.

In conclusion, and in addition to its cinematographic and ethnographic qualities, this

is why the film is so important. It gives voice to religious actors who are rarely heard yet nevertheless teach us much about the socio-cultural and religious challenges of contemporary Portugal.

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Notes

1. Iemanjá is one of the many *orixás*. An initiated person bears the name of the *orixá* to which he has been consecrated.
2. This echoes Alejandro Frigerio’s work on the transnationalization of Afro-American religions. Frigerio considers that for the new followers, the more ‘syncretic’ religious variants such as Umbanda act as ‘cognitive bridges’ between the pre-existent belief system—folk Catholicism, for example—and a more ‘African’ religion such as Candomblé.

DAHL, Shayne, and Satoshi WATANABE, dirs., *The Buddha Mummies of North Japan*, 2017. Documentary film, color, 20 min. <https://www.kanopy.com/product/buddha-mummies-north-japan>. <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/buddhamummies>.

Recent years have seen the release of a number of captivating documentaries on mountain religious practices in Japan. A combination of ascendant global proclivities toward nature and spirituality alongside the inherent stunning visuals (with alternating scenes of verdant landscapes, gilded altars, and fire rituals) may help explain why. Yet below this veneer of appeal, the historical layers, interwoven doctrines, and surrounding socio-demographic challenges of the subject (rural depopulation, an aging society, declining parishes) offer filmmakers—several of whom are scholars in the field—ample material to explore.¹ Shayne Dahl and Satoshi Watanabe’s short documentary, *The Buddha Mummies of North Japan*, joins this category with an unprecedented

glimpse of veneration toward an uncommon if not uncanny object—mummified ascetics.

From the late sixteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries, religious specialists known as *issei gyōnin* underwent intensive periods of asceticism for thousand-day intervals at the site of Mount Yudono and a number of other mountains in northern Japan. These ascetics gained cultic status, propitiated and materially supported by regional and distant confraternities. Based on beliefs about the afterlife of Kūkai (the founder of Shingon Buddhism in Japan), a handful of these practitioners were transformed into objects of worship postmortem, thanks to processes of mummification administered by their followers. Despite having a biological death, they are treated as embodied ‘living Buddhas’ (loosely translated from *sokushin-butsu* in Japanese).² Through the voices of priests and devotees, accompanied by the expertise of scholars of Japanese religions, the film explores the complex rituals and encoded beliefs of this practice in the present day.

Buddha Mummies centers on two illustrative scenes, the first being a ritualized ‘changing of the robes’ (*okoromo-gae*) of one icon in the summer of 2015. This rare ceremony allows Dahl and Watanabe to capture the ritual in all of its spectacle: the coursing chants of the Heart Sutra, strikes to a large taiko drum, and the resonant conch shell horns of adherents of Shugendō (Japan’s premier mountain religion), combined with the flickers of an esoteric Buddhist fire rite, an ensemble of Buddhist priests lavishly robed, and a captivated audience of worshippers. Interspersed with these shots is the resident priest, describing the ceremony and its historical basis to the directors. Interviews with devotees and scholars after the event expand on its multiple meanings.

The second scene opens with Dahl assisting the priest of another temple with the upkeep of a tomb originally built for their own *issei gyōnin*; this includes what looks to be a back-breaking lift of a fallen memorial stone. In an illuminating conversation that

continues at the temple, the priest recounts the historical worship and post-war media craze over the icon, finishing with an exposition on how the Buddha mind of the ascetic continues to guide followers away from suffering toward a state of awakening, the quintessential goal of the Buddhist path. As the priest likens the mind to the moon—clear and radiant but often concealed by clouds—the scene transitions to footage of a full moon rising in the night sky.

Clocking in at 20 minutes, the film moves efficiently through places and interviews while pausing at interludes to linger on the surrounding mountainous landscapes. Beautifully shot, it effectively conveys belief, practice, and historical context through interviews rather than narration. This diversity of voices is a highlight, yet there are times when the devotional narratives deviate from the historical evidence and go unchallenged in the film. For instance, references to alleged events of self-mummification are made, despite recent scholarship refuting this historical narrative.³ That aside, *The Buddha Mummies of North Japan* provides compelling and entertaining material of great educational value, raising points for classroom discussions on Buddhist doctrine and practice, lay iconic worship, and contemporary temple life, let alone the fascinating subject of mummy iconography and worship itself.

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Notes

1. Two excellent films are *Shugendō Now* (Abela and McGuire 2010) and *Là où les montagnes volent* (Roth and Roth 2010).
2. For research on the history of *issei gyōnin*, see Ichiro Hori (1962) and Andrea Castiglioni (2019), either of which would pair nicely with the film for classroom use. Director Shayne Dahl has also published a number of insightful articles on the contemporary social and religious issues at stake. See <https://independent.academia.edu/ShayneDahl>.

3. Castiglioni (2015, 2019), who also appears in the film, convincingly argues that it was the followers, not the ascetics, who carried out the entire process of mummification.

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FAUSTO, Carlos, *Art Effects: Image, Agency, and Ritual in Amazonia*, 420 pp., photographs, illustrations, maps, tables, references, index. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. Hardback, \$80.00. ISBN 9781496220448.

Carlos Fausto's *Art Effects*, translated by David Rodgers, is an ethnographically grounded and theoretically nuanced book focused on indigenous Amazonian material culture in ritual context. The book revolves around several themes, including the relationship between persons and things and the agency of artifacts and images. Fausto explores these subjects by engaging with the anthropological literature as well as that of art history.

The ritual artifacts he discusses tend to oscillate between humanity and animality in stark contrast to Christian iconography, which tends to be anthropomorphic and

anthropocentric. Fausto argues that there is a low level of anthropomorphization of ritual objects in Amazonia compared to Christian iconography and analyzes the consequences of this fundamental difference. The book shows that Amerindian visual regimes opt not to imitate or reproduce the human form faithfully, or firmly for that matter, but aim to figure transformation, thus producing images with multiple referents, ambiguous and paradoxical. When it comes to the agency of such artifacts, Fausto accepts a relational ontology. One of the central ideas of the book is that the efficacy of ritual artifacts in Amazonia depends on the complex relationships that constitute them, relationships that he examines at length. Additionally, regarding agency, he does not treat artifacts as the source of action or as possessing intention, but rather looks at how the ritual artifact influences its vicinity.

The book is ambitious and is clearly the result of long-term engagement with indigenous Amazonia. It is replete with ethnographic details from the author's own research with the Parakanã and the Kuikuro peoples, while employing a comparative approach and engaging with a large body of Amazonianist ethnographic literature. It consists of five chapters, each of which focuses on a different type of ritual object. The first chapter examines the human body within a variety of ritual contexts, including a discussion of artifacts made of body parts, as is the case with trophies (shrunken heads). This is a logical point of departure for a book on ritual artifacts since the body itself in Amazonia, as elsewhere, is the object of intense fabrication. The second chapter discusses aerophones and more specifically the cult of sacred flutes, which is found in two main areas in Amazonia. What makes these ritual objects sacred is a strict prohibition that does not allow women and children to look at them, a fact that also creates a distinction between male and female spaces.

In the third chapter, which focuses on masks, Fausto widens his comparative scope and brings in ethnographic evidence from North America. Of particular interest are

masks that represent different metamorphoses, from one condition to another, or that represent two conditions simultaneously. Indeed, the chapter centers around the concept of ‘recursive nesting’ and the importance of surfaces in Amerindian cultures. Chapters 4 and 5 are more ethnographic: each chapter focuses on a different ritual from the Upper Xingu area that uses a human effigy of a dead kin-person, something quite rare in other areas of Amazonia. Specifically, the author discusses the Javari and Quarup festivals, which feature effigies quite differently. While in the Javari ritual the effigy stands in for multiple identities, effigies in the Quarup festival stand in for a particular deceased person, a commemorated chief. This last example threatens to challenge the book’s main arguments, but the author does a great job anticipating and raising questions, which he answers with meticulous ethnographic detail.

In the conclusion, Fausto contrasts the Amazonian and Christian aesthetic regimes, bringing his book full circle to the themes laid out in the introduction. His discussion of Christian iconography depicting hybridity and transformation is fascinating. He argues that because such qualities were associated with the Devil in Christian iconography, it was inevitable that when they were encountered in Amerindian religious and ritual regimes, their practitioners would be persecuted.

The line of argument laid out in the book is much more complex than this short review can convey. *Art Effects* will be of interest to Amazonianists as well as scholars of religion, material culture, and art. Not only does it successfully demonstrate the complexity of Amerindian ritual life, it also dispels preconceived notions of Amazonian cultures being poor in artifacts. To emphasize what he finds to be the great challenge of Amerindian art—the rendering of transformational ambiguity—Fausto ends the book with an image of an artifact that successfully does this, which is quite fitting.

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FEDELE, Anna, and Kim E. KNIBBE, eds., *Secular Societies, Spiritual Selves? The Gendered Triangle of Religion, Secularity and Spirituality*, 254 pp., illustrations, references, index. London: Routledge, 2020. eBook, \$49.00. ISBN 9780815349754.

In recent decades, attention to spirituality has risen in the study of religious phenomena. Originally used in the religious domain, the term ‘spirituality’ gradually disappeared from the theological realm to reappear in the social sciences milieu during the 1990s as the ‘new’ fashionable category to capture novel religious expressions (Giordan 2007: 162). The crisis of traditional forms of religion penetrated conceptual debates, leading to a ‘crisis of religion’ itself as a concept to address contemporary transformations in the religious landscape. Furthermore, this differentiation not only emerged in academic circles, but also appeared in the empirical field, in the ways in which people self-define and express their relationship with the ‘sacred’. However, from an analytical and descriptive point of view, the distinction between the ‘religious’ and the ‘spiritual’ is far more complex. This is what Anna Fedele and Kim Knibbe illuminate with this new and rich edited book. Departing from previous conceptual debates, they go a step further in the discussion, mobilizing these categories but without losing sight of the ground in which theoretical reflection is embedded and flourishes.

One of the main contributions of the book is the way in which it problematizes the binary thinking that has marked the research on spirituality. The book revises and expands on the works that have made an effort to go beyond the religion-spirituality divide by suggesting an interrelated cultural and relational perspective. Fedele and Knibbe propose to understand this dichotomy as a cultural phenomenon to study instead of as an analytical tool. They invite readers to explore how these categories are not fixed and universal but contextual and processual. On the one hand, using a ‘lived religion’ perspective (McGuire

2008), they encourage research on how people use and embody these categories in context and how they are displayed in practice. On the other hand, they use boundaries as a fertile thinking tool to capture how these differentiations are not static but continuously evolving by assuming certain characteristics under particular circumstances, locations, and institutions, while eventually changing over time (Lamont and Molnár 2002). In this relational, situated, and dynamic perspective, which connects to broad debates in the social sciences (Dépelteau 2018; Emirbayer 1997), the book also contributes by offering an original and novel ingredient to complexify the problematic religious-spiritual dichotomy: the transformation of the binary into a triangle by incorporating the 'secular' into the equation. The book articulates this triangle to address the multifaceted entanglements concerning spirituality, religion, and the secular without omitting the power dimension. The overcoming of this dichotomous approach is accompanied by a gender perspective that reinforces attention to affective and political aspects behind the mobilization of such categories, including public/private, visibility/invisibility, mind/body divides or gender roles.

This insightful conceptual framework discussed in the introduction of the book invites an iterative reflection throughout the reading of the varied chapters that configure the equally important empirical contribution of the volume. The latter carries the reader through different countries and case studies that offer diverse angles and illustrations to reflect on the conceptual discussion as well as the cultural, relational, and gender perspectives offered at the outset. We encounter the feminist movement, the wellness industry, goddess collectivities, neo-indigenous movements, eco-spiritual groups, charity places, prison settings, and queer communities. The transnational dimension of the book enables us to see how discourses, ideas, and practices circulate in different geographical and institutional environments. Moreover, it is especially relevant that the chapters not only

describe particular contexts, but also show diverse ambivalences and nuances related to the religious, spiritual, and secular triangle—from the subversive character of market-oriented spiritual practices to the ambiguities in essentialist readings of the feminine and empowerment narratives that reproduce gender roles.

This richness culminates with the afterword by Linda Woodhead, a prominent voice on gender perspectives in the study of religion and one of the authors who has configured the debate on *etic* and *emic* consideration of the spiritual-religious divide (Heelas et al., 2005). After the empirical itinerary of the book, Woodhead retakes the initial debate and offers a closing reflection. She points to the conceptual risks of displaying many different categories and being lost in definitional battles or purely accumulative pragmatic uses. As a response, she launches two alternatives that dialogue with the book's conceptual and empirical contributions. The first alternative is re-examining foundational categories such as myth, ritual, church, or sect in the empirical study of contemporary lived religion to trace commonalities with past ethnographic research. The second more theoretical alternative is moving toward abstraction and putting middle-level theoretical frameworks at work to overcome secularization theory and interpret the dynamism of the religious landscape. It is a provocative ending, which stimulates the reader to follow up the threads that the book leaves open for future research. This edited volume, therefore, puts the debate forward and brings into the study of religious phenomena relevant concerns that permeate the social sciences.

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FERARO, Shai, and Ethan DOYLE WHITE, eds., *Magic and Witchery in the Modern West: Celebrating the Twentieth Anniversary of the 'Triumph of the Moon,'* 278 pp., references, index. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. eBook, \$70.00. ISBN 9783030155490.

Magic and Witchery in the Modern West is first and foremost a celebration of Ronald Hutton's *Triumph of the Moon*, which observed its twentieth anniversary in 2019. The contents are delightfully diverse but limited by the historical studies' perspective. The chapters' themes range from background studies (Hugh Urban, Sarah Pike, and Ethan Doyle White), through various traditions within the scope of 'witchcraft' and 'paganism' (Sabina Magliocco and Jenny Butler), to the societal context of certain movements (Shai Feraro, Chas Clifton, and Manon Hedenborg White) and, finally, towards perhaps more critical analysis of certain phenomena surrounding the subject (Léon van Gulik, Chas Clifton, and Helen Cornish). The book offers an

overview of a plethora of phenomena that can be labeled under 'witchcraft', and how the research has sought to categorize it as part of a living culture. The afterword by Ronald Hutton himself is a crown jewel on top of a great collection of articles and puts it all in context with the contemporary times.

The book gives a solid range of studies in the anthropological, sociological, folkloristic, and historical spheres of pagan studies, and the subjects are relevant but wide-ranging. It presents central characters who have so far received less attention, and the reader is offered new perspectives into paganism and how to conceptualize it. For example, I had not known that the 'flying ointments' discussed by Clifton are really a commodity that is sold to people. Coincidentally, a dispute arose recently around a witch's shop in Finland that sold such an ointment without disclosing the ingredients. The owner claimed that it was a professional secret, which of course did not go well with the Consumer Protection Law in Finland, where it is necessary to publish a list of ingredients to ensure that allergens are disclosed. This sort of "secretism as prestige" is what Clifton also describes in the context of the "modern traditional" witches who "are prone to [take] seriously the stories tortured from accused witches in past centuries" (p. 227). This, then, may lead to the less scientific research of, for example, hallucinogenic herbs as part of a witches' sabbath, and the selling of these as part of the tradition of witchcraft, not bound by the 'dogmatism' of Wicca.

An interesting character first mentioned by Hutton in *The Triumph of the Moon* and still deserving attention is Andrew D. Chumbley and his Cultus Sabbati, or Sabbatic Craft—again, a non-Wiccan type of 'atavistic' witchcraft tradition. Chumbley claimed his tradition stretches "back through time in a non-physical, supernatural sense" and thus avoids having to prove "an unbroken lineage from the distant past" (p. 206). His academic career in the Study of Religions is also an interesting one from the point of view of an unfunded PhD candidate from the

2020s. Apparently, Chumbley was permitted to “proceed to a PhD programme without the intermediate master’s degree” (p. 211). Professional jealousy aside, Chumbley’s innovative Cultus Sabbati seems to be a good example of how occult innovation continues into the 2000s, and how our dear field keeps attracting magical individuals time and time again.

All in all, this book feels like a piece of a puzzle that fits neatly with other research publications on paganism. Different methods from questionnaires and interviews to observation are developed into sound and analytically interesting essays, which include a challenging theoretical take on Wiccan creativity by Léon van Gulik. His article seems to say what is rarely discussed out loud—that the Wiccan path consists of both elitism and egalitarianism, but controlled pluralism as well. While pagan studies often state that paganism is a creative religion, Gulik’s detailed dissection of this process as the motor behind the changing face of Wicca, in my perspective, puts this discussion on a more exact and less romanticized level of abstraction.

I recently reviewed Lewis and Pizza’s *The Handbook of Contemporary Paganism*, published in 2009 (Mäkelä 2019). While I do not agree with Markus Davidsen’s (2012) critique of pagan studies as not being analytical enough, I concur that this is something of an issue with Lewis and Pizza’s book. However, *Magic and Witchery in the Modern West*, I think, proves that this research field has more to offer than Davidsen gives it credit for.

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- GARZÓN VALLEJO, Iván, *Rebeldes, románticos y profetas: La responsabilidad de sacerdotes, políticos e intelectuales en el conflicto armado colombiano*, 212 pp., references. Bogotá: University of La Sabana and Ariel, 2020. Kindle, \$4.99. ISBN 9789584287168.
- In this most recent book by Iván Garzón Vallejo, *Rebeldes, románticos y profetas: La responsabilidad de sacerdotes, políticos e intelectuales en el conflicto armado colombiano* (Rebels, romantics, and prophets: The responsibility of priests, politicians, and intellectuals in the Colombian armed conflict), the author discusses the political, moral, and intellectual responsibility of public figures, some linked to the Catholic Church, to either justify or oppose the armed struggle of the 1960s, the decade in which the conflict arose in Colombia. Garzón identifies the public figures involved as rebels, romantics, and prophets, and to each group a chapter is dedicated.
- The rebels were those priests and laity who chose to justify the armed struggle based on a symbiosis between Christianity and Marxism. The author uses the ‘myth’ that exists about the priest Camilo Torres and his connection to the guerrillas of the ELN (National Liberation Army) in 1965 to touch on central aspects of the Colombian conflict. These include the ethical and individual responsibility to take up arms, the clashes between the Catholic hierarchy (intransigence) and the guerrilla priests (radicalization), and the contradictory relationship between Christianity and Marxism that would eventually give rise to radical currents in liberation theology in Latin America. The romantics were those religious, political, and intellectual leaders who did not participate directly in the armed struggle, but who “intervened in the public debate around it with moral and intellectual ambiguity, helping to legitimize the reasons underlying the revolutionary insurgency” (p. 27). The romantics contributed to a utopian vision of the socio-political changes needed in Colombia, sanctifying violence as a useful solution and encouraging a revolution that

never took place. The prophets were those priests, politicians, and intellectuals who opposed the armed struggle in Colombia as a political solution, and instead promulgated reformist and non-violent ideas. Citing cases of bishops and civilian leaders assassinated on different sides, the author points out that dissident voices of violence have been present in the Colombian conflict since its origins, but that they did not have the public resonance achieved by the rebels and the romantics.

Garzón dedicates two chapters to an analysis of the Catholic Church in the context of the armed conflict in Colombia. In chapter 1, “The Catholic Church on the Bench,” he describes the trajectory of the religious institution in the second half of the twentieth century, emphasizing the guillotining promoted by the Second Vatican Council and the processes of secularization in Colombia. The chapter ends with the question, “Should the Catholic Church ask for forgiveness?” In chapter 5, “When Is It Right to Take Up Arms?” the author delves into theoretical discussions and interpretations of Christianity and Marxism in Colombia. In addition, he describes the internal changes within the Colombian hierarchy with respect to peacebuilding in the armed conflict during the 1980s.

The contributions of this book can be summarized as follows. First, Garzón resumes the discussion of the role of the Catholic Church in the armed conflict within the post-conflict framework in Colombia. Second, as an exercise in collective historical memory, he proposes a new typology to dispute the moral, political, and intellectual responsibility of public figures (religious and lay) around the use of violence as a method. Third, Garzón questions the historical ‘common places’ about the connection between Catholicism and violence in Colombia after 50 years of armed conflict, inquiring about the relationship between relatively stable democratic institutions and the high rates of violence in a predominantly Catholic country.

The following points are similarly offered as a criticism of Garzón’s book. The author

privileges the analysis of the Catholic Church as a global institution, but does not pay much attention to the experiences of other Latin American churches (e.g., in Brazil, Chile, or Nicaragua) around violence and non-violence. Likewise, the discussion regarding the violence suffered by the representatives of other religious creeds—Protestantism, for example—within the framework of the armed conflict in Colombia should also have been taken up.

Scholars and students interested in politics and religion will find in this book a dialogue between different postures about violence and Christianity supported by a variety of sources. In particular, Garzón’s work contributes to the essential literature on the role of the Catholic Church in the armed conflict in Colombia, emphasizing its actors (including bishops and rebel priests), groups (violent and peaceful), and main debates.

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HALPERIN, David J., *Intimate Alien: The Hidden Story of the UFO*, 304 pp., illustrations, notes, index. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020. Hardback, \$26.00. ISBN 9781503607088.

This book has glowing reviews on the Stanford University Press website from the likes of Jacques Vallée, one of postmodern ufology’s giants, and Jeffrey J. Kripal, a vanguard religious scholar of striking contemporary importance. This is apt. The book straddles a fine line between a consideration of the UFO phenomena in religious terms, reminding us that Halperin taught Jewish history at the University of North Carolina, and a psychoanalytic approach, in which the unconscious and its collective archetypes take precedence in how UFO presents itself. In *Authors of the Impossible*, Kripal (2010: 23) argues that the paranormal, the psychical, and the ufological are an “unacknowledged, unassimilated

Other of modern thought,” a consciousness not *yet* a culture. In this book, Halperin meticulously, and with the attentiveness of someone who has been in the trenches of belief, fleshes out exactly how this collective consciousness, or unconsciousness, can become a culture, a history, an object. Like Kripal and Vallée, he does not deny the anomalous experience or perception, or even the physicality of the paranormal for those in its midst. Something *is* ‘out there,’ and this something often becomes the fabric of people’s inner and outer lives.

UFO is not a myth in the folkloric sense of the term, as a set of ideas that inhabit the mind. Rather, it is a more potent, culturally encompassing, and profoundly human myth than we might think. To understand UFO as anecdote or as solely the property of the mind is to misconstrue it; but to understand it as something that exists independently of its perceiver is equally so.

Halperin tells a story with this book, and he begins where he should—with his own narrative. As a child and teenager, he was an avid UFO enthusiast of what Diana Pasulka (2019) and others would call the ‘nuts and bolts’ variety, a hard-line empiricist approach that seeks concrete proof of alien penetration. The same year Halperin was born, 1947, was when both private pilot Kenneth Arnold spotted objects he described as “saucers” and the incident at Roswell occurred, later mythologized as the site of the ultimate alien “crash.” This was the beginning of the nuclear age, the Cold War, and the space age, with multiplying anxieties about otherness, about death. On the first page Halperin says that the two main currents of thought on UFOs’ existence are believers and debunkers, respectively. But, of course, there were and still are alternatives that escape this dualism. One of them is Vallée’s own understanding of a multi-dimensional non-human form of consciousness (a non-extraterrestrial one) that has adapted plastically to human culture through history, appearing in different guises. Halperin’s own solution is to look deep into the mind and

its archetypal structures, which have been deeply affected by personal and social traumas. It is telling that his last chapter is titled “Roswell, New Mexico.” He wants to show us exactly *how* Roswell *became* Roswell. And it has nothing to do with alien debris.

As a teenager, Halperin struggled to understand why extraterrestrial visitors did not just declare themselves, instead of appearing elusively and incompletely. But eventually he came to see that “*the external stimulus for the UFO sighting is only a trigger. The ‘real’ UFO, the bearer of significance, comes from inside*” (p. 60; original emphasis). In the first chapter, Halperin deconstructs several well-known case studies of UFO sightings under this Jungian light, which is also a cosmological-religious one. For example, he relates the 1959 ‘close encounter’ of an Anglican priest and his entire congregation in Papua New Guinea, where tensions were plentiful within the community amid the Highlands indigenous belief that the sky is inhabited by humanlike ghosts who descend to earth (p. 61). Halperin’s thesis is that the “external stimulus” undergoes a “*fantastic distortion* in the course of its transformation into the UFO,” and that this distortion is “*rooted in and explicable through the psyche of the observers*” (p. 63).

This sets the tone for the author’s examination of other, better known facets of the UFO phenomena, from abductions to so-called Men in Black. Halperin claims that the roots of these transformations may be either shallow or indeed deep: “*layers of the human psyche that transcend centuries and cultures*” (p. 61). Collective and individual traumas take center stage here, such as the 1960s abduction of Betty and Barney Hill, a multi-racial couple in New Hampshire, which Halperin claims re-enacts slavery, as well as the lynchings and genital mutilation of the black community that were commonplace in the American South (p. 85).

To some, Halperin’s take on the UFO phenomena may seem a stretch. He leaves questions unanswered (many abduction narratives follow similar points; would they all be copies

of an original?), and while never dismissive of experiencers, he resorts to psychological concepts such as hallucination and distortion to account for the extraordinary in complex non-reductive ways. But he also inserts a crucial factor into his theory, and that is temporality. In his chapter titled “Three Men in Black,” Halperin argues that “an individual’s trauma is injected into the culture. It spreads beneath the skin; it manifests itself on a large scale years or decades later” (p. 158). The Men in Black myth, invented by ufologists Gray Barker and Albert Bender, which tells of government officials silencing those who have knowledge of aliens, in effect developed into a full-scale phenomenon, and even a series of Hollywood movies. But there are older, archetypal figures that fit this same bill, for instance, the Devil in seventeenth-century witch confessions (p. 160). Halperin thus moves forward and backward in order to show that there is not *one* source of UFO, but an entire mythology, which is perhaps transgenerational and which responds to people’s own traumas.

This is an extremely original take on UFO phenomena from an expert on religious history and its profoundly human dimension. *Intimate Aliens* can be appreciated whether or not the reader is in agreement with Halperin’s main hypothesis—that extraterrestrials are *not* actually ‘out there’.

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OCHOA, Todd Ramón, *A Party for Lazarus: Six Generations of Ancestral Devotion in a Cuban Town*, 336 pp., notes, bibliography, index. Oakland: University of California Press, 2020. Hardback, \$85.00. ISBN 9780520315983.

Ochoa’s *A Party for Lazarus* is just the kind of utterly engrossing ethnography that instructors seek for undergraduate and graduate classes. Vivid and accessible, the book tells the story of a Cuban family through the entanglements of their spiritual commitments and the drama of everyday life, and it does so over what is an extraordinarily long time frame for most ethnographies. As the book’s title indicates, an annual festive ceremony for San Lázaro-Babalú Ayé (Saint Lazarus) on 17 December (his feast day) serves as the focal point for the ethnography, illustrating how the necessities of fitting fieldwork into academic life afford opportunities for novel rhythms of ethnographic engagement. As the book’s subtitle indicates, the historical context of these contemporary devotional practices stretches over six generations, although the ethnography describes ceremonies held between 1999 and 2018.

Ochoa makes an especially significant contribution in tracing the micro-history of a particular festive practice in one family and town over multiple generations. He situates the particulars of personal, familial, and spiritual projects in a century of upheavals, from the abolition of slavery and wars of independence, through the heady early days of the Cuban Revolution and the ‘gray’ decades during which religiosity was officially discouraged and young people fled rural zones for new opportunities, up to the present precarities of life under the revolution. This kind of project is only possible with long-term relationships and a level of trust between anthropologist and interlocutors to allow ongoing collaboration. Ochoa is present in the text as a character, such that his positionality is clear. As a close friend of the ethnography’s main protagonist, Isidra Sáez (a pseudonym), who is also central in Ochoa’s previous book,

Society of the Dead, the author contributes time, energy, and financing to the elaborate preparations. He has a stake in what unfolds, beyond the ethnographic quest for context.

A Party for Lazarus is also a theoretically sophisticated text, steeped in insights about Cuban popular religious practices that contribute to studies of African diasporic and Caribbean religion. I am especially appreciative of Ochoa's careful terminology. In a brief preface (pp. xiii–xviii), he explains why he de-emphasizes “religion” and coins “*santo-orisá* praise” as the best label for the festive and devotional practices he describes. Ochoa chooses “party” to translate two terms used in Cuban Spanish for the event: *fiesta* and *bembé*. The latter term is rooted in African-inspired spiritual practices in Cuba that offer praise and offerings to the *santo-orisá*, including through a feast of foods to nourish spirits and living bodies alike. The energy of those who assemble to sing and dance also constitutes an offering in celebration of Saint Lazarus. The term *santo-orisá* captures that same duality or doubling of folk Catholic and African-inspired religious genealogies.

The author's focus on a rural site of a less studied region along Cuba's north coast makes an important contribution in counterpoint with the much more heavily documented and prestigious urban religious communities of Havana, Matanzas, and Santiago de Cuba. No initiated priests of the *reglas* (hierarchically organized religious ‘traditions’) reside in the small town of Sierra Morena, so that family-based traditions prevail. Ochoa argues that it is through the annual cycle of *bembés* that informal but deeply felt praise communities coalesce.

In part 1, Ochoa traces the life of one family and town, from the era of plantation slavery, in which the town's first generation of elders was born, to the town's founding on a small rise above the risk of storm surges, after a hurricane in 1888 wiped out a sea-level plantation settlement on the coastline below. He draws upon oral histories to reconstruct the personalities, lives, and times

of the prominent citizens who established the Sociedad Africana (African Society), founded the town's most memorable *bembés* for the Day of Saint Lazarus, cultivated African spiritual wisdom, and animated the *orichas* (African gods) and spirits who mounted them during *bembés*.

In parts 2 through 5, Ochoa presents the unfolding ethnographic account of Isidra's annual efforts to continue the family tradition of the *bembé* for Saint Lazarus in Sierra Morena, after her mother's death and while living in Havana. I have said of Ochoa's previous book that he has a novelist's eye for detail, capable of bringing personalities and scenes to life. Well-drawn characters and dramatic dialogue pull the reader into intimate family disputes and give a visceral feel for the struggles of daily life in Cuba, with the added dimension of relationships to the deceased, the *santo-orisás*, and other ‘powers.’ Riveting descriptions of the dramas of ceremonies and their extensive preparations convey the nitty-gritty details, from the arduous efforts to procure needed materials to the actual unfolding events, whose logic comes across clearly in Ochoa's account.

The text is ideal for teaching because it is succinctly descriptive and cleaves to the particularities of human lives, encouraging empathetic understanding rather than exoticizing distancing.

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PALMISANO, Stefania, and Nicola PANNOFINO, *Contemporary Spiritualities: Enchanted Worlds of Nature, Wellbeing and Mystery in Italy*, 180 pp., figures, tables, references, index. New York: Routledge, 2021. Kindle, \$44.00. ISBN 9780429019722.

This book is a necessary and essential contribution to the study of contemporary spirituality, engaging with the literature on spirituality

and religion produced in the fields of sociology and anthropology of religion. One of its significant contributions lies in the analysis of how spirituality, based on the recurring themes of nature, wellbeing, and mystery, is felt and defined in a particular context—that of Italy. The Italian context is a heterogeneous one, framed by a Catholic background but with several growing spiritual movements, where little research has been conducted about this interrelationship.

Contemporary Spiritualities illuminates the importance of spirituality as a source of re-enchantment of the contemporary world, which dialogues with and penetrates secular spheres, becoming a widespread and recognized narrative for individuals. In addition, the authors demonstrate how contemporary spirituality is not so ‘new’ or ‘alternative’ as it is generally considered to be, tracing its genealogy through the history of Western religion. In their analysis, Palmisano and Pannofino argue that contemporary spirituality is rooted in “Western esotericism” and “Christian mysticism” and that spirituality influences the secular sphere, being a secularized form of “experiencing the sacred” (p. 4).

The book is divided into two parts, through which Palmisano and Pannofino present their hypothesis that arises from a dialogue between theoretical analysis and ethnographic information. Part 1 is dedicated to analyzing spirituality from a theoretical point of view, its relation to religion, and its heuristic utility for the sociological field. In the first and second chapters, the authors trace the genealogy and definitions of the concept of spirituality and its relation to religion, approaching the key debates, criticisms, and defenses regarding its use. What follows is the authors’ hypotheses and interpretative model of studying contemporary spirituality. Lastly, they present their critique of the common usage of the ‘new’ forms of spirituality and/or the use of ‘alternative’ expressions to institutional Judeo-Christian religion, as they see the influence of Western esotericism and Christian mysticism in contemporary spirituality.

Palmisano and Pannofino overview three main narratives, which constitute the basis of the theoretical positions produced during the long debate that has been taking place since the 1990s. The first narrative interprets the spirituality-religion dichotomy as compatible but distinct (Roof 1993; Wuthnow 1998, 2001). The second narrative is related to the ‘spiritual revolution’ thesis (Heelas and Woodhead 2005), in which religion is losing its place to spirituality in the contemporary world. Lastly, the third narrative considers that the concepts of religion and spirituality are not distinct (Ammerman 2013; Fedele and Knibbe 2013). Palmisano and Pannofino argue that it is helpful to distinguish the two concepts at a theoretical and analytical level. Thus, they align with the first narrative, which perceives religion and spirituality as dissimilar but overlapping. The two concepts interact with and fertilize each other; they are variably and innovatively assimilated, depending on the contingency of the cultural context in which they are enmeshed. As stated by the authors, what makes contemporary spirituality distinctive is the intertwinement between the spiritual, the religious, and the secular, and the dialectical interrelationship and exchange that occur between them.

The second part of the book focuses on an analysis of the Italian context, where, despite the predominantly Catholic influence, several holistic and natural cures permeate both individuals’ lives and otherwise secularized spheres, such as health and education. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 expose nine case studies that illustrate how the themes of nature, wellbeing, and mysticism are recurrent in the Italian spiritual context. The authors divide these modalities of spiritual experience into three metaphors: first, the *Arcadia* narrative, nature, which includes three case studies (Clan of the Great Bear; Dreamland Foundation; The House of Slow Movement) that consider nature a sacred domain; second, the *Hero Journey*, wellbeing, in which spiritualities (Mindfulness, Lumen, Red Tents) turn to the human interior and human development and growth

are analyzed; and, lastly, the *Mirabilia*, which connects with mystery and spiritual expressions oriented in that way (Dark Tourism, Damanhur, Esoterica Festival). These ethnographic cases show the creative dialogues established between past and present and the secular and the religious, resulting in a deep web of knowledge and meanings that enrich contemporary spiritual experiences.

Contemporary Spiritualities convincingly demonstrates the significance of spirituality in Italy and, by extension, the contemporary world. It also goes against the grain of conventional secularization and disenchantment theories by showing ethnographically how individuals meet with re-enchantment through nature, wellbeing, and mystery. It is a mandatory book for scholars, teachers, and students who engage in the research of religion and contemporary spirituality.

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- ROBBINS, Joel, *Theology and the Anthropology of Christian Life*, 208 pp., references, index. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. Hardback, \$35.00. ISBN 9780198845041.

Review

The twin disciplines of anthropology and theology are having quite a moment together as of late. After decades of little cross-fertilization, there has recently been a slurry of special issues, monographs, and edited volumes that are seemingly dedicated to charting every combinatory possibly in the relationship between the two fields. And while some wonder whether there is any genuine desire for a dialogue at all between the two subjects, most see value in putting the disciplines alongside each other—with anthropology being the object that would gain the most out of such an encounter. This turn may strike one as a surprise; it would seem like anthropologists of religion, and particularly anthropologists of Christianity, would have much to share with one another. And the enthusiasm with which this conversation is being carried out now suggests this is true. But this conversation needed a triggering event. This efflorescence of anthropological interest in the thought of various divines, ecclesiologists, and exegetes is the slowly growing but then quickly ripening fruit of a single essay.

In "Anthropology and Theology: An Awkward Relationship?," Joel Robbins (2006) considered both the resonances and disharmonies between the two fields, and suggested that there was reason to suspect that further investigation could result in anthropological gain. Without fail, these discussions all confess their connection to that piece. Roughly a decade and a half later, we now have a monograph-length reflection on the subject by the author of that original instigating *locus classicus*. Drawn from the 2018 Cambridge University Stanton Lectures in the Philosophy of Religion, the loctionary content of this book is a discussion of how the subfield of the anthropology of Christianity could benefit from

reading over the shoulder of theologians. The illocutionary aspiration, though, is a transformative encounter between anthropology and theology as a whole.

The link between the locutionary and the illocutionary is a bit complex, although Robbins's crystalline prose can make the complicated mechanics recede into the background. Robbins initially turns to theology as a theoretical source domain for the ethnographic target domain. He first relies on a tradition of abstracting theoretical material from ethnographic data, a tradition that runs from Dumont's hierarchy to Strathern's dividualism, from Amazonian perspectivalism to 'ethnographic theory' and the 'ontological turn'. What stands out here is that rather than turn to non-Western modes of thought, Robbins turns to theology—usually reformed theology, the stream of Protestant theology rooted in the Reformation. Robbins then takes this theoretical material to (usually) extant anthropological discussions, such as continuity versus discontinuity, ethics, gift theory, and millenarian movements, and argues that approaching this material with a theological lens allows for the identification of subtleties that escaped the strictly anthropological readings.

Two entwined aspects of how this algorithm is carried out in *Theology and the Anthropology of Christian Life* should be noted. First, Robbins reads the anthropology of Christianity literature broadly to come up with ethnographic exemplars of his anthropological problems; while not exhaustive, of course, he has canvassed the literature in a way that one might expect from someone who has taken part in these discussions from the start. Second, though, Robbins does not use this as an opportunity to settle scores. Many of his own theoretical contributions to the anthropology of Christianity are presented as being relatively manqué when compared to theoretically inspired readings. Concepts closely identified with Robbins's earlier work, such as rupture, ethics, and everyday millennialism, are revisited in a way that does not eviscerate

that work but makes it look relatively flat when put alongside theological understandings. Sometimes this operation results in such different articulations that they end up looking not just like competing accounts of the same problem, but something altogether new; millenarianism becomes bifurcated into the apocalyptic and the eschatological, discontinuity becomes interruption, and the related but separable issues of "responsibility, danger, and human possibilities" (p. 71) become sutured together when addressed through the theological idea of atonement. And in what is possibly the most stunning move, a discussion of gift theory becomes instead a meditation on the seemingly non-anthropological idea of human passivity.

This is invaluable for those interested in the comparative anthropological conversation about Christian populations that has evolved over the past two decades. As a discussion that has ironically become somewhat intellectually moribund even as it has become more widespread, a shot in the arm like this is welcome. But is it transformative at the disciplinary level, as Robbins intends? It seems that there are a few barriers here, some of which are covered by Robbins, others of which are not. The first is that however intense the dialogue between anthropology and Christianity becomes, there are limits to any rapprochement. While there are ways the distinction can be theoretically nuanced on the anthropological side, in the end, anthropologists will always methodologically foreground human agency, and theologians will almost inevitably lean in the direction of stressing the agency of the divine. This does not preclude dialogue, Robbins insists, but it does lock down its furthest horizon. A second limitation is the result of Robbins's own parsimony. Theology, he insists, should in no way be privileged over other potential domains; it should only be turned to where there is a fit between Christian ethnographic subjects and theoretical theological thought. This, however, limits the immediate scope of what theology can do. For better or for

worse, theology cannot be directly turned to in hopes of producing some form of overarching general theory, a new paradigm with the scope of, say, anthropological Marxism or structuralism or actor-network theory. What we end up with instead is something on the order of middle-range theory—understandably built for purpose but with a limited range of application, at least initially.

The ‘at least initially’ is an important caveat. While Robbins doesn’t touch on this issue, there are ways that these theologically derived middle-theory contributions could make a difference. Through intellectual capillary action, it is possible for ideas to drift away from where they were initially siloed and circulate more widely, getting metabolized by subfields other than the anthropology of Christianity. Such action is slow, and the success of any one idea seeping out, let alone a raft of ideas derived from an encounter between two different disciplines, is not guaranteed. The illocutionary does not guarantee the perlocutionary. But it does not preclude it either. And even if it falls short of its aspirations in time (after all, reception is never dependent on the author alone), this book has value, not just as a theoretical intervention into the anthropology of Christianity, but also as a practice-study in how to conduct a full-throated interdisciplinary conversation that does not presume to overwrite disciplinary differences.

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Response

I am grateful for the chance to respond to Jon Bialecki’s thoughtful review, which captures perfectly the ambitions and architecture of my book while also being keenly sensitive to the uncertainties that inhabit it. The book is based on lectures delivered at the Divinity School at Cambridge on the invitation of a group of theologians. Although I hoped that some day the text that resulted from the

lectures would be engaged by anthropologists, I was both energized and a bit unnerved by the fact that to succeed in their own terms, the lectures would in the first instance have to offer something to a discipline toward which few anthropologists, myself included, tend explicitly to write.

It is true that since I began studying Christianity anthropologically in the 1990s, I had been excited by the possibility that this then emerging topic would afford dialogue with theology, a discipline with a deep history, a wide-ranging literature that takes up among other things fundamental issues of the nature of human life, and a habit of succeeding in addressing communities beyond academic ones (a point discussed in the 2006 article on anthropology and theology to which Bialecki refers). Hadn’t Clyde Kluchohn somewhere written that anthropology is “an intellectual poaching licence”—its very broad topical scope justifying its practitioners’ quick forays into other fields to see what they could find? I imagined theology could be ripe for this treatment, maybe even as ripe for anthropological incursion as fields like philosophy, linguistics, history, and psychology have been at various times in the past. So I welcomed the chance that the lectures gave me to read seriously in theology and to talk with theologians in a sustained way.

The opportunities I have just listed account for my feeling energized by the invitation to deliver the lectures, but when I finally began tentatively to write them, the unnerving side of the task reared its head. For it immediately became evident that poaching and genuine interdisciplinary dialogue are not at all the same, and the latter is a much more difficult and slow intellectual process. The interdisciplinary move Bialecki himself makes by borrowing the terms ‘locutionary’, ‘illocutionary’, and ‘perlocutionary’ from the philosophy of language and linguistic pragmatics provides a pithy way of partially accounting for the difficulty of such dialogue: the success at least of illocutionary speech acts depends upon conventions shared between speakers and their

hearers such that all understand that an utterance of type X in the context at hand counts as performing speech act Y. When one does not know what conventions are shared with one's hearers, one really does not know exactly 'what one is doing' when one speaks or writes.

Of course, shared academic conventions about how to accomplish some routine intellectual ends make the ground between myself and a theological audience a little less treacherous than it could be, and I think this is one reason I mostly worked with full-on academic theology in the book, rather than focusing on the kind of folk or 'everyday' theology that attracts many other anthropologists (including sometimes myself). I do not know yet how speech acts that take up such folk theology are likely to work for a broad audience of academic theologians (although some are interested in this topic). This kind of pragmatic uncertainty may also account for my tendency to focus on reformed theology in many places in the book, since trying to get a little comfortable in one academic theological tradition felt like enough for an initial effort like this one. Even having taken these precautions, though, Bialecki is right that this is the kind of work in which one can do the least to manage the perlocutionary effects of what one says and writes, so it makes sense to be ready to wait and see.

Shifting gears a bit, Bialecki's point about the middle-range quality of a lot of the theoretical contributions the book hopes to make to anthropology is astute. Rethinking Christian rupture as interruption, for example, can lead to broader discussions about the nature of social and cultural change, but it does not by itself constitute a call to rethink anthropology from the ground up. Still, there are a few places where I harbor some hopes that the book opens up to wider vistas. There is, for example, the discussion of the similarities between some theological anthropologies and the anthropological commitment to human incompleteness as a foundation for the disciplinary interest in difference, as well as the linked ways Lutheran accounts of passivity

might give anthropologists further courage in their efforts to avoid falling too far in thrall to rather narrow models of human agency that can misdirect the ethnographic eye from the kinds of things it is most uniquely suited to see. The fact that young theologians are trained to make grounded normative judgments about the world in ways anthropologists are not is another place where even if I bang the drum a bit softly in the book, so it does not crowd out room for interdisciplinary conversation, I do hope it might resonate a bit more loudly in my home discipline.

Bialecki has done me the great courtesy of reading the book on its own terms, as a work that tries to bring theology and anthropological theory together by showing how they can combine to illuminate some usually unseen aspects of ethnographic materials (a key metric for success when it comes to anthropological theory—a point I hoped theologians might take from the book). As a final point that extends beyond those original terms, I might mention that the "moment" Bialecki notes that anthropology and theology are currently having is a variegated one. As Amira Mittermaier's Rappaport Lecture (this volume) indicates, another approach would be to put certain kinds of theology and anthropology in dialogue as ways of doing ethnography. Or, as Khaled Furani (2019) lays out in his book *Redeeming Anthropology*, one might consider how theology and anthropology differ as ways of life and intellectual practice (see also Furani and Robbins 2021). If this moment is to last, all of these terms of engagement and more will need further exploration. The path I have taken in response to the chance to speak at some length to a theological audience is, I hope, a promising one, but it is surely only one way forward.

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SILVIO, Teri, *Puppets, Gods, and Brands: Theorizing the Age of Animation from Taiwan*, 290 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019. Paperback, \$35.00. ISBN 9780824881160.

Near the end of Teri Silvio's *Puppets, Gods, and Brands*, the author directly states her general argument regarding the forms of animation one observes in Taiwan. While noting that acts of 'personification' and 'animation' have often been regarded as "stupid"—childish, primitive, and trivial at best," in the present context these very same acts can be powerful gestures driving practices that "simultaneously reproduce and denaturalize the neoliberal identity machine" (p. 178). *Puppets* is an interrogation of this provocative claim. The sophisticated animated puppetry produced by Taiwan-based Pili International Multimedia, the anime/manga versions of the Japanese webcomic *Axis Powers Hetalia*, and the fans that these works inspire are the empirical focus of the study. Silvio's contribution to debates over complex social practices entangled in multimedia forms of popular culture is a welcome one, and *Puppets* stands out as a notable—albeit sometimes frustrating—entry in this expanding literature.

The book's strength is the challenge Silvio offers to the hegemony of performance as 'the' critical concept framing contemporary forms of identity and social life. The author demonstrates that the enduring popularity of

'knight-errant' digital puppetry in Taiwan is rooted in practices of animation rather than performance. Silvio defines 'animation' as the act of constructing social others by projecting human qualities outside of the self onto objects that are culturally defined as not being capable of such qualities or actions (pp. 18–19). Thus, Taiwanese cosplayers (who dress up in costumes as fictitious characters) and fans of Pili releases are not performing a 'self' that is transparent and individual to the engaged subject, but rather are seeking to creatively serve as a medium for figures rooted in traditions of Taiwanese folk religion and *ang-a* puppetry. Fans and cosplayers give form to virtual personalities that are intimate to them but are not 'their own' or required to be an 'authentic' expression of the self. This set of animating practices is presented as a novel form of engagement within the context of global digital media and simultaneously as a set of practices that have clear roots in older forms of local ritual practice and engagements with icons in Taiwan that endow objects with 'personality'. Animating in this fashion makes the Pili puppet characters, like the temple gods themselves, "relatable" (p. 102), "comforting" (p. 103), and perhaps even "infantizing" (p. 105) via a mirroring effect that nevertheless is not aimed at expressing the truth of the individual subject as individual.

The frustrations with *Puppets* are twofold. The first pertains to the presentation of essential context that is intended to support the author's broader argument. The specific works produced by Pili (serials, films, figurines) and the anime/manga versions of *Axis Powers Hetalia* are both well described and analyzed as creative objects. Descriptions of related creative forms such as traditional Taiwanese *ang-a* puppetry, however, are not always so clear. Silvio gives extensive attention to *ang-a* puppetry, devoting an entire chapter to it, yet the listed characteristics are so numerous and abstract that the non-specialist struggles to form a clear picture of what *ang-a* puppetry concretely looks like or does. The 13 separate

aspects discussed constitute something of a disordered set, and much of what is attributed to *ang-a* could potentially describe creative and ritual practices anywhere.

The second frustration entails missed opportunities to engage relevant debates, past and present, that interrogate animating practices. While the critical comparison with current theories of performance is an innovation, broader debates around the phenomenon of human beings animating the inanimate with human-like qualities have been ongoing for quite some time. *Puppets* marks a return to concerns that have (pardon the pun) animated extensive research and discussion in earlier eras of anthropology, psychology, and art history. The author gestures to Frazier and Freud but does not take up earlier theories of animation and fetishism as articulated by Tylor, Warburg, Marx, and others. Nor does Silvio extensively explore the obvious indebtedness of her own framework to psychoanalytic concepts like projection. Some explicit consideration of recent critical works by Didi-Huberman and Tomšič (among many others) that refuse to regard these writers as anachronisms in revisiting the *political* question of the human propensity to animate the inanimate in its own image could have strengthened the author's case for the broader conceptual claim.

Puppets, Gods, and Brands is an intriguing book that ultimately seems to sell itself a bit short. The core claim regarding the importance of understanding human practices of animation and the lives that emerge out of this proclivity is an important contribution to these wider debates. The reluctance of the author to assertively express a clearer stake in what is a long-standing debate somewhat undercuts the overall impact of the book. Nevertheless, given the contrarian argument 'against' performance, *Puppets* is unique in its illumination of a quite rich 'glocal' phenomenon in Taiwan.

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YELLE, Robert A., and Lorenz TREIN, eds., *Narratives of Disenchantment and Secularization: Critiquing Max Weber's Idea of Modernity*, 272 pp., notes, bibliography, index. London: Bloomsbury, 2021. Hardback, \$115.00. ISBN 9781350145641.

This is an extremely coherent volume that makes an important contribution to the age-old Weber debate. There are clear, succinct, and original theses among the volume's chapters and the authors form an excellent group of specialists. While historians have long debated the extent to which the modern world is disenchanted, there are two schools of thought: those who argue that the modern world remains 'enchanted' (i.e., people still believe in spirits, metaphysical beliefs, astrology, and so on), and those who argue that the world was never completely 'enchanted' and hence could never become 'disenchanted'. This book features representatives of both camps.

The editors lay out quite masterfully the general problematic of disenchantment and secularization, arguing that Weber's disenchantment of the world is not synonymous with secularization, and that Weber still saw a place for religion in modernity. This idea is spelled out concisely by Kippenberg in the volume's first chapter, which concludes with the statement: "Thanks to the disenchantment of our world, as conceived by Max Weber, we recognize that secular orderings operate according to principles that are independent of religion and that vice versa, religious communities operate according to meanings that resist social constraints" (p. 30). Next, Josephson-Storm offers a reinterpretation of Weber's ideas about magic. The author makes a strong case that it is mistaken to claim that Weber "was describing a world without magic"; rather, "we understand Weber better if we read him as also theorizing the persistence of magic into modernity" (p. 42). In the third and fourth chapters, Aspren and Trein offer innovative readings of Weber's famous "Science as a Vocation" essay in order to propose

some novel interpretations about science and historical time. Asprems's interpretation of science along the line of Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption most clearly departs from a close reading and interpretation of Weber's theory and moves toward a speculative application of these ideas into the present. In the next chapter, Saler discusses interpretations of secularization and disenchantment and concludes with the following: "Weber provided profound questions, although his more limited answers reflected his own personal predilections and historical context" (pp. 108–109). In his chapter, Israel examines the extent to which theoretical debates of the Weimar era were shaped by political theologies. He writes that Weber offers us a cautionary tale: "We must avoid confusing the rapid receding of older forms of magical thinking, mystique and organized religion ... with any oppositional weakening of quasi-theological and powerfully mythical patterns of thought in the modern context" (p. 111).

Yelle's chapter is structured by four important questions about the volume's problematic, which the author answers succinctly. Using the Royal Touch ceremony as a proxy for magical beliefs, Yelle clearly sides with the evidence suggesting that in Western Europe performances that invoke magic decreased or were delegitimized in an effort to promote the acceptance of science's rationality by the public. Weber, the author argues, picked up the narrative of disenchantment from older religious sources that go as far back as the early Christians' effort to delegitimize pagan beliefs (pp. 137–139): "The idea that oracles had fallen silent was [present] already in classical paganism" (p. 139). The idea was not Weber's invention (p. 141), and he had been clearly influenced by centuries of prior thinking about disenchantment. "After much of genealogies [about disenchantment] have been taken into account," Yelle asks "what remains of Weber's theory that might still be regarded as useful?" (p. 147). The author argues that "Weber's sociology now appears partly theological" due to the influence of

earlier Christian concepts on which he drew, and therefore "the absolute divide between theology and science cannot be maintained," which in turn "undercuts the narrative of secularization" (p. 148).

Having read most of Weber's original texts about the Occident and Orient (and specifically the Byzantine Empire) myself, I reaffirm this conclusion: Weber's sources are so deeply inaccurate and biased that contemporary historians, theologians, and social scientists have completely revamped the understanding of Weber's so-called Orient. As a result, my historical sociology of Eastern Orthodox Christianity (Roudometof 2014) displaces secularization from its cherished position as the central notion in the sociology of religion. That is indeed a prerequisite for grasping the historical paths of faiths that fall outside the realm of the Occident, and this is clearly understood by scholars working in non-Western contexts. But while scholarship has acknowledged these limitations, the sociological or social scientific mainstream (inclusive of the sociology of religion) remains deeply Eurocentric in its research questions, assumptions, and research agendas.

In the volume's concluding chapter, Wohlrab-Sahr addresses the genealogical critique and the writings of Talal Asad in particular. While the fundamental thrust of that critique is legitimate, Wohlrab-Sahr argues that it has morphed into a counter-narrative that operates in a similarly homogenizing fashion and thus prevents scholarship from addressing the nuances and differences among diverse contexts.

Overall, this book carries important repercussions for Weber's centrality in several discourses. Its central arguments are worthy to be widely circulated and read. The religious bases of Weber's work do not necessarily detract from his scholarship, nor does the sheer presence of religious biases affect his legacy. Still, those biases that are clearly recognized as unacceptable in the twenty-first century *should* be criticized and undone. That leads to a far more historically accurate

and less biased perspective, both for the social world of the present time and for our understanding of social change in the past. This volume is a truly great contribution to scholarship that aspires to contribute toward that objective.

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