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Reviews

Plowshares: Protest, Performance, and Religious Identity in the Nuclear Age

by Kristen Tobey. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016. 184 pp. \$69.95 hardcover. ISBN: 978-0-271-07672-0.

The Plowshares are an American Catholic Left activist group which gained notoriety in the Vietnam Era with dramatic antiwar demonstrations such as pouring blood on draft files. While criticized widely for their extremist activism and convicted of crimes such as terroristic threat, conspiracy to commit a felony, and destruction of federal property, the group does not concern itself with legal outcomes or social acceptance for success. Rather, Kristen Tobey argues, their success hinges on the degree to which the Plowshares “embody a scripturally based ideal of prophetic witness” (5). The principal aim of the book is to perform an analysis of the actions and rhetoric in which the Plowshares activists communicate their moral distinction.

In contrast to Sharon Erickson’s and Barbara Epstein’s prominent books on the Plowshares, which employ the perspective of social movement theory, Tobey examines the ways in which the group’s religious logic and performance of boundaries clarify and strengthen their identity. Drawing her use of the scientific term “boundary work” from sociologist Thomas Gieryn, Tobey’s book is not only a significant contribution to the expanding theological literature examining the Plowshares group and its activism; it also offers a new methodology in its application of boundary work to theological studies, in order to better understand the social and ethical perimeters that

draw religious identity markers. The book turns away from the tactics and legislative efficacy of Plowshares, and focuses instead on the inner workings of the group and their ideology from 1980 until today.

Tobey's first chapter introduces the symbolic and moral boundaries of the Plowshares Eight through an analysis of the origins of the Plowshares from Vietnam War-era radical Catholic activism to the most recent Plowshares action in 2012. Of particular interest is the discussion of the so-called rebel priests, Philip and Daniel Berrigan. For the Berrigans, a true Christian was an outsider, misunderstood by the world at large, and living on the margins. Thus Tobey makes explicit how from the group's origins, the Berrigans embodied and performed boundary work by setting themselves apart as marginalized, radically outspoken activists, exemplifying the Plowshares actions that would follow for decades to come.

In the second chapter, Tobey argues that the movement's disarmament activism, which utilizes Catholic symbolism such as blood, trespass, and hammers, is a ritualistic performance of boundaries. According to Tobey, the performative act of recounting civil disobedience actions is just as important as the act of civil disobedience (or divine obedience, as the Plowshares would term it). The strength of the argument lies in her discussions of the Plowshares's evocation of the divine through Biblical symbolism which is clarified in Tobey's analysis of their courtroom appearances wherein they claim obedience to a "higher, truer justice" than the earthly courts (108). The analysis of symbolic boundaries continues in chapter 3, where Tobey most fully employs a dual use of "performance" (as achievement and depiction) in order to examine the intention and efficacy of the Plowshares's activism, which is both constructed through audience response and through the group members' narratives of self-sacrifice. Finally, the fourth and fifth chapters explicate the embodied performances of the Plowshares in the legal trials, in which Tobey's prior arguments nicely coalesce in her detailed performance analysis.

With the rise of a new generation of activists, new approaches to examining activist work and religious identity are timely and needed. Tobey's use of boundary work is a compelling and productive tool to examine the Plowshares's activism, particularly their intentions and self-constructed narratives. As Tobey suggests in her introduction, the usefulness of beginning with boundary work in such an analysis is largely that it makes connections between identities and strategies of religious and activist groups that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. As a reader, educator, and activist, my hope is for further scholarship to seriously consider new and unlikely ideological and performance-based connections between the Plowshares and other activist groups, perhaps even considering an implicit religiosity or divinity in the ambitions of some secular activism. Thus the possibilities presented in Tobey's work are an exciting call to action for scholars researching religious identity and activist ideology. It would also be worthwhile to further examine how the performance of moral and religious boundaries both affirm and deny difference for other religious activist groups. For instance, while the efficacy and identity of the Plowshares hinges on its exclusivity, is an opportunity for meaningful community lost in their disavowal of their potential place within the context of a larger radical movement (such as disarmament)? Tobey's boundary work in *Plowshares* pushes her readers to examine the social and moral imperatives of religious activism from a new, richly complex perspective.

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When Art Disrupts Religion: Aesthetic Experience and the Evangelical Mind

by Philip Salim Francis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 232 pp. £22.99 hardcover. ISBN: 978-0-190-27976-9.

In 1975, a group of adventurous professors from Trinity College in Deerfield, Illinois launched a semester-away program in the relative wilderness of an abandoned logging camp outside of Ashland, Oregon. Surrounded by natural beauty and little else, they would lead groups of twenty-five to forty students, recruited chiefly from evangelical colleges across the U.S., through a rigorous, semester-long, literature-centered program of introspection and questioning. Much of the literature read each semester involved themes of seeking and doubt; representative books include Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, David James Duncan's *The River Why*, Shusako Endo's *Deep River*, and Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. Music and the visual arts also featured prominently in students' experiences.

Philip Salim Francis, a graduate of this program, interviewed and solicited "memoirs" from the program's alumni, in which they assessed the impact the experience had on their faith. For these memoirists, Francis observes, the experience was transformative, forcing a reevaluation of—if not shattering outright—the fundamentalism that had been a cornerstone of their identities. Francis identifies in the words of his memoirists many potential reasons for these tectonic shifts; but at the heart of each, he suggests, is an encounter with the arts that rendered unsustainable the Christian life he or she had been living. For some, this amounted to a loss of faith; for others, it yielded a dramatically reconfigured relationship to faith. In either case, Francis observes, at the point of rupture is an aesthetic experience. "Aesthetic objects and experiences," Francis asserts, "can function as loci of psychosomatic, intersubjective encounters that ... destabilize firmly established rituals of belief and practice" (16).

When Art Disrupts Religion resonates with other contemporary arguments for the liberal arts, revealing through vivid first-person accounts the power of art to undermine Christian fundamentalist modes of thought with the potential to threaten free thought and empathetic connection. Through solicited recollections and interviews with both Oregon Extension alumni and graduates of the Bob Jones University School of Fine Arts—a bastion of American fundamentalism best known for its rigorous and controversial rules for student behavior—Francis identifies key similarities in the ways students found their faith "disrupted" by aesthetic experiences. To this end, he first describes the four key attributes of fundamentalist belief that these aesthetic experiences jar loose: the need for absolute certainty in matters of religion; strict division between insider and outsider, godly and secular; all-or-nothing commitment; and the idealization of a longed-for past. Francis handles these chapter by chapter, showing their irreconcilability with the world revealed to these students through literature, paintings, films, and music.

The book's title does not reflect its true scope: while the author does consider the role aesthetic experiences played in rupturing his memoirists' restrictive systems of belief, he also explores the intriguing ways in which the arts help these individuals grieve and cope with the resultant sense of loss. Several students did lose their faith entirely: for these deconverted Christians, the loss of God—enormous in itself—often also meant a loss of community, family, and identity. In the chapter, "Hymns to the God I No Longer Believe In" (a title taken from a memoirist's poem), Francis argues that

such beliefs cannot simply be “crossed out”: practices of faith are remembered in the body, often against the individual’s will. These can include reflexively-offered prayers, bodies swaying to secular music as if to worship, scripture verses coming to mind unbidden, and even speaking in tongues. The body bears palimpsestic evidence of life lived as a “nondoubter” (Francis’s word for an individual committed to absolute certainty in matters of faith), performing unconsciously a faith physically remembered.

Francis claims not to be using “fundamentalist” and “evangelical” interchangeably; and he claims that he uses the “vague and complex” word “fundamentalism” only because it is so frequently used by his participants. But “fundamentalism” is the word used throughout to identify a “method of identity preservation” defined in large part by the aforementioned attributes (absolute certainty, insider/outsider division, etc.), and it is not clear if the word “evangelical” in the subtitle means anything other than this. If these words do not express quite what Francis means, one might wish he had found others.

The strength of Francis’s book lies in the honest, thoughtful reflections of his memoirists and interviewees. Francis finds in his memoirists’ words points of entry into several worthwhile discussions on art, faith, and aesthetics; the words of Elaine Scarry, Theodor Adorno, William James, John Dewey, and Judith Butler are prevalent. But at its heart, *When Art Disrupts Religion* chiefly stands in support of modern aesthetic theory’s central claim—that the arts can “unsettle our entrenched ways of thinking and believing” (5).

—Neil Kristian Scharnick
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Reckoning with the Spirit in the Paradigm of Performance by Donnalee Dox.

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 282pp. \$85.00 hardcover (\$39.95 paperback). ISBN: 978-0-472-07297-2 (978-0-472-05297-4).

Donalee Dox’s new book interrogates the methods and assumptions that move spirituality out of sight and out of mind. If performance is defined as a witnessed activity, then the presence of a spirit or the experience of spirituality cannot be visually located and analyzed (unlike texts, practices, or the artifacts of material cultures, which are easily identifiable as objects of study). Dox encourages scholars to uncouple their presumptions about what counts as valid or worthwhile study from a prior need for external verification, be it visual or theoretical.

Left unchecked, these presumptions force the performance paradigm to construct the spiritual into a subject ready for explanation in familiar terms. *Reckoning with the Spirit in the Paradigm of Performance* diagnoses the loss scholarship suffers when “Western thought rejects or brackets spirituality” (23) prior to intellectual engagement. Bodily postures and symbolic gestures, for instance, can only mark social status and identity. Ritual dress and exotic instruments can only display colonial appropriations for capitalist consumption. Personal narratives about spiritual sensations or healings can only express ideology. These conclusions betray a myopic approach to spirituality that constricts the insights performance might offer about spiritual knowledge. Instead, Dox provides new strategies to take spiritual experiences and invisible realities seriously.

Reckoning with the Spirit in the Paradigm of Performance intervenes where the lack of a common vocabulary makes concepts hard to pin down. Words like “spirituality” and “performance” migrate freely throughout both scholarly and popular discourses. Following suit in its form, this book oscillates between a careful treatment of two spiritual performance-practitioners and chapter-length investigations of the intersections between performance and spirituality in distinct academic fields. A model for interdisciplinary work, Dox’s book provides a detailed introduction to prevailing performance studies approaches to religious and ritual practices. Performance treats that which is tangible and visible to interpret spiritual claims. She then turns to recent and classic religious studies attempts to theorize spirituality outside of an allegiance to confessional institutions or theological traditions. This quest to think mind-body-spirit together leads toward spirituality in the organs of the body and of the community. Dox explores the role spirituality plays in neuroscience and psychology of religion, and how neural imaging can visualize a material site for those feelings of spiritual presence. Finally, Dox returns to the work of cultural practice through critical theories in dialogue with consumerism and globalization. With each chapter, Dox argues how experiences of spiritual presence should matter just as much as material expressions or cultural-linguistic codes.

The book contends that the performance paradigm can expand to learn from spiritual phenomena and the spiritual knowledge imparted by “what cannot be seen in vernacular spiritual practices but is (for practitioners) nonetheless present” (148). So the book’s structure flips the usual script. The author does not apply *one* meta-theory to a series of case studies. Rather, she grounds the conversation by patiently treating two instances of “Western vernacular spirituality,” her preferred term for local and culturally hybrid practices such as Collective Awakening (which fuses peace-building and spiritual communication with music, instruments, and religious traditions indigenous to West Africa) and Dancemeditation (inspired, in part, by Sufi Islamic practices).

The theoretical combinations can be dizzying, but the result proves how centering trust in reported spiritual experience opens new opportunities. Dizziness can illuminate. The sense of spiritual presence reported by the practitioners of Collective Awakening and Dancemeditation occurs in a kind of movement flowing both within and outside the body (192). Dox shows how interpreters might frame performance as the membrane linking interior life and cultural idiom (112). This framing suggests that performance operates as a “permeable boundary between people’s sense of an inner, spiritual life and the bodies acting in the materiality of culture” (60).

Dox avoids the reduction of spirituality to some other force. Her many rhetorical questions imagine how spirit challenges the validity of established scholarly analysis. This reader’s favorite: “What would it mean to say, ‘I don’t believe in performance’ with the same ease as ‘I don’t believe in ghosts’?” (202). Whether encountered devotionally in private, as part of a show for an audience, or structured as part of the rituals of a religious community, the frequency with which people report spiritual sensations forces a reevaluation of the performance paradigm to include the unseen as a data point alongside the visible, the ineffable alongside theoretical and empirical mainstays.

The book’s work with “Western vernacular spirituality” rightfully dislodges the snobbery that considers such practices beyond the pale of serious scholarship. Dox’s repeated concerns about ideological endorsement, however, lead her to position herself in opposition to some fields in need of her contribution: those that risk

“championing the primacy of personal experience” (185) and acting as “religious advocacy” (10). With good reason, the book idealizes the inclusive and liberating impulses underlying the vernacular spiritualities it studies. But will vernacular spiritualities *always* align spirit with healing love? As Dox shows, socially positive resistance can even bubble up within traditional institutions. Further, performance can just as readily mediate a legitimately spiritual sense in service of social and personal harm. Normative disciplines left outside Dox’s performance paradigm—like philosophy, theology, or religious ethics—will be needed to differentiate angels from demons, freeing spirits from the specters of oppression.

Dox’s many-voiced monograph opens a much-needed conversation about mutually intelligible methodologies for work on spirituality, theatre, performance, and religion. *Reckoning with the Spirit in the Paradigm of Performance* should quickly find its way into theory and method conversations across these and other fields.

—Charles A. Gillespie
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Rethinking Religion in the Theatre of Grotowski by Catharine Christof.

Abingdon: Routledge, 2017. 238 pp. £105.00 hardback (£31.49 ebook). ISBN: 978-1-138-29226-0 (978-1-315-22793-1).

In an important new work, Catharine Christof address an interdisciplinary gap in the study of Polish theatre artist and theorist Jerzy Grotowski. Previous studies have not investigated the religious resonances of Grotowski’s techniques and theories, despite Grotowski’s own allusions to religious concepts, such as calling a performer’s sacrifice “atonement,” using the term “secular holiness,”¹ referring to “transparent consciousness,” and making use of of New Age spirituality. Christof posits a materialist and embodied approach to religion that showcases Grotowski as an innovator in reclaiming the individual experience of religion from ecclesiastical authority by relocating it within the performer.

The text is structured thematically in two parts with nine total chapters. Part I applies the theories of Michel Foucault to Grotowski’s performances during his “Theatre of Productions” phase. Christof argues that performances such as *The Constant Prince* (1965) and *Akropolis* (1962) suggest a longing for something greater than the biological form. In *Prince*, Christof draws compelling connections between the title character’s messianic confessions, Foucault’s reflections on truth obligations in early Christian ritual (where penitence, self-martyrdom, and the practice of *exomologesis* become the means through which the embodied self is understood through the scourging of the body), and the actor’s project of engaging with his own sexual, body-centered experience. Part II engages with New Age spirituality and showcases the influence of Yoga, shamanism, ritual, trance, and ancestral channeling on Grotowski’s theatrical theories. In analyzing a technique such as Grotowski’s “Motions,” efforts to break with safe, conventional movement and achieve precise action and deepen visceral effects on the body, Christof shows the integration of Hindu and Haitian rituals.

¹ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 34.

The book breaks more ground in terms of injecting a much-needed model for relating experimental performance to religion than it does in producing new knowledge of Grotowski's work. Christof accepts with minimal critique certain shared assumptions about Grotowski and his work. While granting him status as a kind of Indian guru, and quoting Richard Schechner's comparison to the "guru-*shishya* (disciple) [in which] the element of transmission is apparent [and] there is little opportunity to debate or challenge" (qtd. 24), the possibility that some performers' assertions of religious or experience may be mere repetitions of the guru's words, rather than a lived reality, is something Christof has not fully explored, despite noting Grotowski's identity in the early years as potentially "theatre director, prophet, guru, magician, or charlatan" and his followers as potentially "performers, disciples, puppets [...] or indulgent elitists" (qtd. 116).

Christof takes the religious language used in reference to Grotowski at face value. It is possible that "the physiological links between a performer and his ancestors"(145) are present in Grotowski's approach to a healthy trance state, a "simultaneously alert and yet passive state" (146), thus paralleling New Age definitions of channeling. It is also possible that when a performer such as J. Ndukaku Amankulo asserts a transcendent experience in collaborating with Grotowski, the language may be metaphorical or ironic. Were Christof to more rigorously question primary sources, the analysis would have more to offer the understanding of Grotowski specifically.

Ultimately, Grotowski's performances and theories become a place to test what experimental, New Age theatrical work may represent for the field of religious studies, or indeed what post-structuralist and New Age-informed research may mean for interdisciplinary studies in the fields of religion and theatre. In this project, Christof succeeds admirably, providing useful connections between diverse religious scholarship. For Christof, Manuel Vasquez's materialist theory of religion, which posits that human bodies are as significant locations for religious experience as Greek temples, and Foucault's critique of religious authority, which interrogates dualist traditions in theology in favor of a spiritual corporeality, speak mutually to the idea that theatrical experiment can, through even the extreme of blasphemy, challenge religious authority (51). Further supporting Christof's model are Thomas Beaudoin's links between religious experience and the body, where exploring a "bodily-kinesthetic domain for spiritual intelligence [...] opens up levels of experience beyond what we can conceptually understand" (65), and the historical perspective on the New Age of Wouter Hanegraaff, who organizes tendencies within the New Age, specifically channeling, personal growth, science, and neo-paganism, and centers on the idea that all things come from unified source, and thus all reality exists within a unified whole and an evolutionary process (90).

Christof's multilayered taxonomy demonstrates that experimental theatre navigates elements of New Age spirituality specifically because artists desire to realign such religious experiences as ancestral presence or atonement with the body of the performer, and disrupt religious authority and theological dualism toward what Foucault called "political spirituality" (qtd. 33). This work has the potential to inspire a broad array of new research into the performing body as a religious entity.

—Ben Fisler
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The Empty Church: Theater, Theology, and Bodily Hope by Shannon Craigo-Snell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 220pp. £59,00 hardback. ISBN 978-0-199-82792-3.

Shannon Craigo-Snell's book is much more theological than it is theoretical, which will cause theorists some consternation. Craigo-Snell's basic premises lean toward irreducible, dogmatic principles—"awakening by the Holy Spirit", for instance—that don't submit to interrogation (119). But *The Empty Church* is not primarily for theorists. The book aims itself at a body of Christian believers who are puzzled over their commitment to communal worship. Craigo-Snell's efforts to reduce their puzzlement by undertaking a performance analysis of certain types of Protestant worship produce not only an intriguing illumination of the human place in Sunday services, but also a valuable conversation about religion as *performance*.

The title is a riff on Peter Brook's 1968 still-canonical *The Empty Space*, but also has Karl Barth's spiritual emptiness in mind. By its final chapter, the book has explicitly juxtaposed Barth and Brook as fellow spirits in the project of stripping away the pointless pretense of doing things for show, so as to expose a space—literal for Brook, metaphorical for Barth—which, they recommend, offers magic, transcendent promise. What follows, in Craigo-Snell's theological argument, is "a discipline of emptiness" outside of which, the author insists, divine presence cannot appear (10). The discipline, here, is communal, Sunday worship in a particularly performative mode: deliberate, careful *doing* that both shapes identity and keeps identity in suspension.

Each of the argument's five parts has an expressly theatrical theme—"Setting the Stage", "Training the Actors", etc.—and a particularly consistent method. In each part, Craigo-Snell discusses a specific theologian and a specific theatre theorist/practitioner whose ideas correlate with each other across the presumptive "church" and "theatre" divide. Towards the objective of making church that submits to revolution, for example, Craigo-Snell's marriage of Boal and Russell describes practice in which the playing of multiple roles "rehearses us in acting for justice" (89).

The book has what is probably an unintended value as an entry-level introduction to performance studies. There are other valuable introductions to this mercurial field, of course, including Marvin Carlson's *Performance* and Tracy C. Davis's *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*. But because Craigo-Snell's book is tuned to readers who have little exposure to the formal study of *theatre*, it presents, perhaps, even fewer barriers to grasping why and how activity that does not occur within a proscenium arch can be better understood when considered as theatre. Craigo-Snell's first chapter brings a novice quickly through the development of *performance* as a disciplinary term, eschewing definitions in favor of promoting performance as "an analytical tool" (22).

On the other hand, as functional as it is as a very first step into performance studies, the consistent aggravation of the book is its lack of theoretical depth. Craigo-Snell's rather uncritical acceptance of Schechnerian doubleness as the irreducible quality of performance prevents her from fully realizing the potential of her argument. While her argument acknowledges the "plasticity of human identity" (17) and that "we act our way into being" (63), she nevertheless fails to commit fully to her implication that the salient quality of performance is creative rather than repetitious. Repetition is unavoidable in performance, as in most everything else, but, as the book suggests, it is not how it repeats but how it creates that makes performance a unique kind of action.

Juxtaposing Ignatius of Loyola and Stanislavsky in the second chapter, the author reaches a crucial conclusion. “The biblical text is in some sense incomplete, calling out for performance...” The performance might, indeed, rely on a certain repetition or restoration, but only towards performance’s unique capacity to engender “the reality of this text” (65). Bringing into being what didn’t already exist is performance’s peculiar characteristic.

So, Craigo-Snell’s inspiring move is to recommend that activity like liturgical worship creates the individuals who engage in it: “Who we are... [is] profoundly shaped by performing church” (145). But the author’s commitment to understanding performance primarily as ‘restored behavior’ and to a dogma of divine otherness finally undermines the most profound possibilities of her argument. “God’s behavior is not restored,” she writes, “[To] speak of God performing makes no sense if we consider God’s acts to be *sui generis* and recognize that performance is marked by doubleness” (122, 123).

The theological imperative to isolate God from contingency and change seems to demand the argument that there must be a point at which performance stops. This is not a necessary conclusion in the realm of performance theory. From J. L. Austin (whom the book cites) to Erika Fischer-Lichte (whom the book does not), we can trace the development of theory that does not essentialize performance as doubleness, but, instead, locates performance in genuine creativity. Even conceived as absolutely immutable, God need not be insulated from the implications of performance. Where *acting* is understood as creating the thing it has acted, the *sui generis* God asserts itself in existence as what we might call—à la Aquinas—the Unperformed Performer.

There’s much to recommend about *The Empty Church*. Craigo-Snell gives us a much-needed argument for thinking about church as theatre that does not trivialize church. The book offers complex and compelling reasons for the fondness for communal worship that so many question in others and in themselves.

—David Mason
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Zar: Spirit Possession, Music, and Healing Rituals in Egypt by Hager El Hadidi. The American University in Cairo Press, 2017. 176 pp. \$34.95 hardback. ISBN: 978-9-774-16697-6.

Zar is the name for a healing ritual in which spirits, also called *zar*, make their personas present in the bodies of women. Hager El Hadidi’s *Zar: Spirit Possession, Music, and Healing Rituals in Egypt* aims to take the reader into the experiences of *zar* devotees. Her descriptions of *zar* in Cairo are not presented as a comprehensive study of the beliefs and practices across Africa and the Middle East; rather, they illustrate the varied experiences of its initiates. El Hadidi argues that the functional terms common to contemporary performance analysis are inadequate for a practice such as *zar*. In this book, she seeks a scholarly approach that can acknowledge *zar* as a supernatural (26), mystical call (82) from a pantheon of spirits.

El Hadidi asks that her reader accept the *zar* (the ritual and the spirits) without immediate recourse to rational explanation, as she herself did throughout the ethnography (26). The Introduction provides a general overview of anthropological

approaches to spirit possession and their shortcomings. She traces the evolution of her project from her first exposure to *zar*, through its perjorative representation as superstition in films, television, and mass media, her early study of *ziar* ritual amulets as devotional texts, and finally her exploration of the ritual itself as an embodied epistemology. Her scholarly approach weaves a limited but effective engagement with contemporary philosophy and theory into fascinating storytelling and ethnographic collage. This is a valuable study in itself, even more so for its hybrid approach to studying religion, spirituality and performance as embodied experience.

El Hadidi devotes most of chapter 5 to a thick description of a composite *zar* ritual, drawing on years of ethnographic research in Cairo. Aspects of *zar* are clearly performative: the music and trance dance of the *hadra* (the public musical ritual in which devotees go into trance when they hear the tunes of their spirits); divination with coffee grounds or cards; the power of amuletic jewelry dipped in blood; storytelling that reaffirms the identities of spirits; ritual processions with the initiate dressed as a bride; recitation of invocations; call-and-response singing; purification by incense; animal sacrifice and collection of blood; and trance dancing.

This study's 'fictionalized, descriptive style' (70) might trouble readers expecting a more rigorous critique of ethnicity, class, gender, and economies in *zar* performance, but it serves her effort to present a dialogue between storytelling and theoretical discourse very well (30). This style of storytelling is very appropriate to ethnographic collage, which is El Hadidi's overarching methodology. The method and writing style effectively displaces her authority as a scholar and ethnographer by "providing juxtaposed analysis from multiple angles," which she acknowledges is itself a theoretical position (31). This allows her to avoid the technical "charm" of storytelling, resist homogenizing her subjects' experiences, and expose the limitations of a single theoretical framework such as structural-functionalism (31). She sets herself the task of making her theoretical position match the complexity of *zar* itself.

Her descriptions of how *zar* produces meaning in time and embodied practice in space, replicates social structures, and transmits cultural memory are drawn from the work of Arjun Appadurai (chapter 3) and Paul Connerton (chapter 5). She applies the concept of bricolage to articulate *zar*'s transnational hybridity and ability to adapt to changing social and historical forces (57). Wittgenstein grounds her discussion of practitioners' mystical call as an epistemology of imagination (82). Where El Hadidi engages the perspectives of materialist critiques of *zar*—as, for example, a financial transaction; a function of upheaval in Egypt in the nineteenth century; a product of cultural collisions between African and Turkish practices; or *zar*'s origins in African slavery—the malleability of women's experience of spirit possession is always in tension with those critical perspectives on performance.

El Hadidi is interested in how the internal logic of *zar* produces shared meaning in performance. She thus situates descriptions of a fortune teller's 'well rehearsed act' (78), a group of musicians '[putting] on a great show' (143), and the mimicry involved in embodying a spirit persona (85, 105) in an epistemology that understands a spirit world existing parallel to the material world. So situated, *zar* emerges as a particular mode of experience and concept of reality (82) rather a function of theories of representation, presence, or performativity. More could certainly be written about *zar* as material performance: for instance, concepts of rehearsed divination, music ensembles as entertainment, how *zar* is adapted into popular belly dance, and the mimetic aspects of spirit embodiment would do with further critical exploration.

However, El Hadidi's study stands as a caution that such analysis should not dismiss a conceptual domain in which that performance serves to validate the immediate presence of spirits (56).

—*Donnalee Dox*
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