

Methodology and Theory

CONVULSING BODIES: RELIGION AND RESISTANCE IN FOUCAULT. By Mark Jordan. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015. Pp. 272. \$24.95.

“Reading takes time,” begins ethicist and gender/sexuality scholar Mark Jordan’s latest manuscript, *Convulsing Bodies*. And indeed, one should take time to read down this “line of scandalous bodies in Foucault.” Jordan engages the bodies through which Foucault reads resistance to power: “lunatics,” publicly executed criminals, nuns in throes of ecstasy or abandon. At the same time, Jordan resists grounding Foucault’s work in the body of the thinker himself—his life, his loves, and his death from “complications” of that “unnamable virus.” The lushness of the author’s prose invites and beguiles the reader, a rarity in academic writing. The merits of the work are not, however, limited to the beauty of its rendering. *Convulsing Bodies* makes two substantive contributions to the study of Foucault, embodiment, and religion. First, Jordan deftly engages the ethical self-making project of Foucault’s later work, most discernible in the *History of Sexuality* volumes 2 and 3 and the “masked philosopher’s” late-life interviews. Foucault’s emphasis on *askesis*—or, as Jordan renders it, “ethopoïesis,” “the making and unmaking of ethical subjects”—has been heretofore largely overlooked by gender and sexuality scholars. Many scholars of religion have criticized Foucault for a less-than-nuanced approach toward religion or a reduction of religion to Western Christianity. Jordan rather suggests that we have misunderstood the thinker’s fascination. “Religious writing,” he notes, “isn’t defined by its subject matter so much as by its liturgical alteration of bodies in time.” *Convulsing Bodies* excavates the religiosity of Foucault’s embodied subjects in their evocation of ritual processes and timely transformation, in their ineffable expressions of resistance. Although its analytical depth most likely precludes this book’s use in all but the most advanced undergraduate seminar, *Convulsing Bodies* should serve as a deft and insightful introduction to the thinker’s corpus (pun intended) for graduate students and senior scholars alike.

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GOD IN THE TUMULT OF THE GLOBAL SQUARE: RELIGION IN GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY. By Mark Juergensmeyer, Dinah Griego, and John Soboslai. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015. Pp. xiii + 155. Cloth, \$65.00; paper, \$19.95.

A spirited essay with a voice as dialogical as the workshops that gave it shape, *God in the Tumult of the Global Square* grew out of a series of transnational conversations inquiring into the place of religion in public life in a post-secular, globalizing world. Principal investigator Mark

Juergensmeyer and his colleagues, with the support of the Henry Luce Foundation, fostered a number of global dialogical encounters between academics and clergy alike, in which boardroom discussions grappled with changing urban landscapes of devotion, from Santa Barbara, California, to Buenos Aires, New Delhi, Cairo, Shanghai, and Moscow. The authorial voice of the volume reads as synthetically as the global workshop venues: while we meet with only the permeable outlines of the metanarratives of secularization and re-enchantment, our authors invite us to participate in an open-ended, global conversation, one that raises many more questions than it purports to answer. Each workshop was convened to bring together impressions, from academic inquiry and lived cultural reality, of how the role of religion in global civil society—as defined by sociologist Peter Berger—had been transformed in recent decades in the workshop’s local landscape. The guiding theoretical voice of the volume is Robert Bellah, himself a participant in the 2008 Santa Barbara workshop. Expanding on his celebrated essay “Civil Religion in America,” Bellah’s contribution to the workshop implored convened scholars to consider the possibility, and the implications, of the emergence of a global civil religion. Chapters weave intermittently through global media and urban cityscapes, from Arabic televangelists to the Falun Gong movement in China and guru devotional communities in North India. Inviting exploration rather than inculcating an intended perspective, this volume promises to engage the seasoned scholar and casual reader alike, sparking critical inquiry as a foundational text for any undergraduate or graduate seminar.

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RECOGNIZING THE NON-RELIGIOUS: REIMAGINING THE SECULAR. By Lois Lee. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. ix + 235. Cloth, \$90.00; ebook, \$89.99.

Systematizing the secular and the non-religious has not always been an easy task. A profusion of terms and unintended binaries has confounded the social sciences in the past twenty years. Here, however, is a volume that seeks to clarify the vocabulary necessary for the study and analysis of both. Central to this very necessary clarification is dealing adequately with the relationship between secularity as a reaction to, and an engagement with, religion. This seems like the best time to do this, a period of time after Taylor having elapsed; Lee’s book is a timely intervention. The two opening chapters lay out in clear terms how we can distinguish between substantial and insubstantial secularity. A total of five hypotheses are presented following this broad review, based principally on understanding the practices, embodied and spatial, of unreligious people. The first four hypotheses are concerned with the various ways in which being non-religious is

understood as indifference, dormant religiousness, alternative spirituality, and antagonism toward religion through defined atheism. The fifth, one as yet unexplored by social science, is that unreligious people respond to religious themes and practices in ways that are similar to but broadly distinct from those of religious people. Lee takes a relational approach to her work by reconsidering “the idea of secularism as a system in which institutions respond to religious diversity by taking a neutral stance.” The subsequent four chapters outline the empirical work done on the taken-for-granted unreligious everyday through examinations of clothing, group solidarities, affiliations, and existential cultures. For example, Chapter 5 outlines how a variety of relationships rely on a tacit understanding of hybridized non-religious convictions, reflecting their implicitly social character. This is often highly contested. This is a book that expertly binds the empirical and theoretical concerns of an under-researched set of groups in society and comes down in favor of a substantial understanding of the unreligious. Rather than a mere reaction against the dominance of the institutionally religious, unreligiousness is an orientation that produces landscapes and commitments of its own. Most of these commitments, even those that rely on an anti-religious position or an intellectualizing of a non-religious position, are not drawn against a singular caricature of the religious. To this time, these have been difficult to discern but are now made easier by Lee’s book. Its empirical contribution, though worn lightly, is powerful. I would recommend this as a text for any course in the social sciences struggling to escape the unhelpful binaries of theist/atheist, religious/non-religious, or religious/secular practices.

Eoin O’Mahony
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THE PROBLEM OF INVENTED RELIGIONS. Edited by Steven J. Sutcliffe and Carole M. Cusack. New York: Routledge, 2016. Pp. x + 152. Hardback, \$160.00.

“Invented religions” is a loose category first popularized by Carole Cusack’s book *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction, and Faith* (2010). The category, which competes with similar designations such as “hyper-real religions” and “parody religions,” is meant to direct analysis toward traditions such as Discordianism, Pastafarianism, and Jedism. These traditions, many of which are based in popular fiction, are united in declaring themselves to be “invented” and thereby rejecting the strategies of legitimation found in other religions such as claims of divine revelation or an ancient heritage. The chapters in this book were originally published in the December 2013 issue of *Culture and Religion*. The authors share a goal of extending, complicating, and problematizing the concept of invented religion. Invented religion remains a messy category and the authors do not always seem to be in complete agreement about which religions should count as

“invented.” But to dwell on these categorical boundaries is to miss the point. The editors argue that invented religion should not be regarded as an “exotic niche” within the field of religious studies, but rather as a theoretically capacious set of case studies. A key example of this is T. Taira’s chapter exploring how invented religions provide a new opportunity to study discourses about “religion.” Taira uses the example of Chris Jarvis, an unemployed English man who was asked to remove the hood of his Jedi robe while visiting an employment center. Jarvis, who identifies his religion as Jedism, filed a complaint of religious discrimination and received an apology. The media mocked the entire incident. Taira argues that this episode reveals much about how discourses about “religion” are produced and the power dynamics inherent to this process. These kinds of insights make *The Problem of Invented Religions* significant for those interested in theory and method for religious studies and not just those exploring the margins of the field.

Joseph Laycock
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INVENTING AMERICAN RELIGION: POLLS, SURVEYS, AND THE TENUOUS QUEST FOR A NATION’S FAITH. By Robert Wuthnow. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 247. Cloth, \$29.95.

In this clear, timely book, Wuthnow explores a subject both ubiquitous and curiously elusive to critical engagement. Wuthnow narrates the history of religion polling to raise questions about how Americans’ self-understanding is constructed and managed. The narrative is staged via numerous well chosen historical episodes, each illustrating Wuthnow’s concern about the lack of critical interrogation of and insufficient nuance within polls. Polling emerged from the Progressive Era’s zeal for technical problem solving, tethered to some notion of civic good, and focused initially on institutional and demographic mapping. As national organizations emerged following World War II (especially George Gallup’s, one of the first to attempt measuring “religious participation”), polling underwent transformations that, Wuthnow suggests, raises questions about their utility, accuracy, and public significance: the 1960s turn from “scientific” understanding of religion to cultural sociology; the 1970s attempt to fill gaps in public knowledge (especially about evangelicalism); the 1980s use of polls by evangelicals to shape normative identity; and professional pollsters’ subsequent influence on solidifying ephemeral categories and privileging “hot-button” social issues. Along the way, Wuthnow contends, methodological questions proliferate alongside a gap opening between professional pollsters and academics. Wuthnow shows convincingly how polling cannot get to the depth and complexity of religious identities. Aside from the considerable value of the subject and his narration, Wuthnow also concludes by laying out areas whose true importance has eluded pollsters:

secularization, religious “nones,” the definition of “religion” itself, and practice. Wuthnow’s account could be strengthened by greater attention to what constitutes a public or an audience for polling, and how public skepticism about polls parallels a broader legitimization crisis in politics. But though some comparative opportunities are lost along the way, this is a strong and distinctive work.

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Sociology and Anthropology of Religion

FERNAND DUMONT: A SOCIOLOGIST TURNS TO THEOLOGY. By Gregory Baum. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press. Pp. xii + 138. Cloth, \$65.00.

Baum frames this book as a “summary and interpretation” of the theology of Quebec sociologist and theologian Fernand Dumont, as expressed primarily through Dumont’s *L’institution de la théologie* (1987). Baum’s short work reads more like a guide to understanding present-day Quebec church and society, by means of a conversation he initiates on Dumont’s theology, which, he avers, has yet to be appreciated. Baum maintains that Dumont’s entire work can serve as a rich source of reflection for Quebec thinkers especially. The book’s five chapters correspond to themes examined in Dumont’s work mentioned above, each examining the role of the theologian in relation to the believing community, the magisterium, the Catholic tradition, the critiquing of culture, and the ways of doing theology today in Quebec. Baum highlights three insights from Dumont’s theology: that there is no set division between secular culture and religious faith; that it is the faith of the believing community that animates the Church; and that believers remain Catholic by symbolic identification. This last point is interesting. Dumont likens one’s belonging to the Catholic tradition to how one belongs to a nation: even when there are disagreements with how governments rule, a person still remains committed to that country. Probably most interesting in the conversation Baum develops are the critical questions raised. For instance, Baum queries the manifest tension between Dumont’s utopian socialist aspirations and the security he locates in more conservative past expressions of Church as institution. Baum is also critical of Dumont’s failure to critique the fervent conservative movement that has riddled the Catholic Church these many decades. A persuasive and eloquent read, this book is for anyone captivated by Quebec culture, and for those concerned with where the Catholic Church is heading in light of the promise held—and deferred—by Vatican II. Readers lacking sufficient backgrounds on Quebec’s history, culture, or the Catholic tradition need not feel reluctant to pick up this book. Baum illuminates historical contexts, and he intersperses his

reflection with helpful contemporary examples to clarify Dumont’s ideas, engaging comparisons from contemporaneous thinkers such as Blondel, Maritain, Metz, and Taylor.

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A SOCIOLOGY OF PRAYER. Edited by Giuseppe Giordan and Linda Woodhead. Ashgate AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Series. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015. Pp. ix + 239. Paper, \$39.95.

This edited collection contains a broad swath of material that seeks to connect prayer to its varied sociological settings. Housing a total of eleven essays (in addition to the introduction and conclusion), the selection is anything but monotonous. With locales ranging from Toronto to the Philippines, and categories such as gender, age, spatiality, and religiosity, this concise work achieves its goal of representing prayer as a complex social phenomenon through several different contexts. Building on the foundational sociological analysis of prayer put forward by Marcel Mauss, each author demonstrates how prayer can be private and public, both sacred and secular. Of course, this achievement is supported by in-depth analyses and the effective use of empirical data. Many authors even include data sets and tables to help the reader visualize the connection between prayer and social action, as well as the immense diversity present within the sometimes-enigmatic act. Moving away from the idea that prayer is confined to some set of ordained parameters, the works contained within this volume coalesce to trace its evolution from established form to dialogic freedom. The role of prayer as initiating a subjective shift permeates all of the included articles, suggesting the need for a more nuanced definition when approaching prayer as a social act. This work is a much-needed addition to both sociology and religious studies as it seeks to invigorate older scholarship while also investigating the dynamism of prayer in post-Christian societies and beyond. It is highly recommended to advanced undergraduate students and to graduate students seeking solid empirical research combined with clear, concise case studies.

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TALKING TO THE DEAD: RELIGION, MUSIC, AND LIVED MEMORY AMONG GULLAH/GEECHEE WOMEN. By LeRhonda S. Manigault-Bryant. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014. Pp. i + 278. \$24.95.

Manigault-Bryant employs an “ethnohistorical approach” to examine how South Carolina lowcountry women use the spiritual practice of talking to the dead to both preserve and propagate Gullah/Geechee culture and religion. Before turning to an explicit discussion of this practice, she meticulously unpacks the religiosity of seven