Terry Rey & Alex Stepick

Crossing the Water and Keeping the Faith: Haitian Religion in Miami. New York: NYU Press, 2013. xiv + 265 pp. (Paper US\$ 24.00)

This study of religious practices among Haitians and Haitian-Americans living in Miami or between Miami and Haiti is an indispensable contribution to contemporary Haitian Studies, and more generally, the sociology of religion. Terry Rey and Alex Stepick argue that the categories termed “religious” and “transnational” must be considered by any scholar working “on” or “in” Haiti, or any professional working “among” or “with other” Haitians. In fact, the book could have been named “transnational transubstantiation” (p. 202). It addresses the history and current landscape of Catholicism (Chapters 1–3), Vodou (Chapter 4), and Protestantism (Chapter 5) in Miami, compares religious practices in Miami and Haiti, and identifies certain transnational relationships between the two.

The introduction sets up the theoretical framework, which finds its most compelling illustration and articulation in the final chapter and conclusion. Rey and Stepick place their work at the heart of the debate between “the two streams of thought on religious capital, the European, which is dominated by the influence of [Max] Weber and [Pierre] Bourdieu, and the American, dominated by rational choice theory” (p. 156). Drawing on Bourdieu’s term *collusio*, which refers in a sense to “the rules of the game,” by which opponents agree to disagree while following the same rules, they claim that despite the seemingly distinct and often polemical differences among the three religions, Haitians share a “unifying *Haitian religious collusio*,” undergirded by “the generation and quest for ‘salvation goods’ in the form of ... especially *worthiness*” (p. 5). In focusing for the most part on the majority of Miami’s Haitian community—that is, its most economically and socially destitute—they demonstrate how the history and status of *botpipel* (boatpeople) unquestionably marks the experience of most Haitians seeking not only solace, but especially worthiness. They argue that the ability of religion to offer “a sense of dignity and respect that transforms boat people into people, beasts into gods” (p. 201) is nowhere better exemplified than by Haitians.

In this context, Little Haiti, where they have conducted most of their research is most certainly a “religious marketplace” (p. 186), one in which the currency is the promise that the seeker will be restituted the self-respect taken away by the complexly and overwhelmingly traumatic experience of immigration to the United States in the most dispossessing of circumstances. Through statistics, anecdotes, fieldwork, and the stunning use of the visual and literary arts (notably Félix Morisseau-Leroy’s poetry and Édouard Duval Carrié’s paintings), they illustrate that there are in fact many more similarities than dif-

ferences among the three religions as practiced by Haitians. In drawing on field-work based in large part on sustained conversations with specific interlocutors (i.e. Mirlène Jeanty, Thomas Wenski, Gérard Darbouze, and Jules Campion), the book offers a superbly captivating narrative of how religious figures working between Haiti and Miami have been at the heart of Haiti's history since the 1980s.

Rey and Stepick excitingly leave their readers "hanging" as regards three (huge) topics, upon which, hopefully, they will one day expand: the notion of "syncretism," a word they use without making reference to the way the term has been called into question by, for example, Leslie Desmangles or Miguel De La Torre;¹ the relationship among Haiti's Tilegliz movement, liberation theology, and the Charismatic Renewal; and the debate around Haitian Vodou. They seem to subscribe to Stephen Palmié's criticism of the academy in *The Cooking of History: How Not to Study Afro-Cuban Religion* (2013), questioning whether "scholarly literature has exaggerated the reach and pervasiveness of Vodou in Haitian society and culture" (p. 88). If they adapt Bourdieu's concept of *collusio* to bridge what they argue are the not-so-different differences between American and European sociologists of religion, it might be similarly interesting for them (or their readers) to address someday what might be an equally false debate around the (non)ubiquity of Vodou. These cliffhangers attest to the way their book offers an extremely up-to-date state of affairs as regards Haitians and the more complex socio-political implications of religion in a trans-Caribbean context.

In 2004, De La Torre's *Santería* provided an astute understanding of how and why the religious practices associated with Cuban Regla de Ocha have been adapted by its practitioners in the U.S.-American landscape. Now *Crossing the Water and Keeping the Faith* thoughtfully, strikingly, and caringly introduces readers to the other important immigrant community that redesigned Miami's urban landscape over the past half century, courageously taking on the fraught complexities of comparative research among three religions and between two nations.

Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken

Division of Interdisciplinary Studies, Center for Worker Education,
City College of New York, New York NY 10004, U.S.A.
abenedicty@ccny.cuny.edu

1 Leslie G. Desmangles, *The Faces of the Gods* (1992); Miguel A. De La Torre, *Santería* (2004).