Lyndon K. Gill, *Erotic Islands: Art and Activism in the Queer Caribbean*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2018. xxx + 280 pp. (Paper US\$ 26.20)

Some ethnographers are griots who rely on ethnography to reveal certain truths about the world. Lyndon Gill is one such scholar. Attentive to the transformative power of language, story-telling, and multiple registers of world-making, he reveals the power of “*eros* as a lens, vital for surveying the elaborate topography of connections we share as political, sensual, and spiritual beings” (p. 11). *Eros* drives Gill’s text, coursing through the intimacies of friendship, desire, aesthetics, and loss—all presented with great vulnerability across each page of this book. *Eros* gently underscores the rich contours of queer cartographies that emerge in processes of mas mastery, calypso song, and cybernetic community building.

Erotic Islands is grounded in “site-specific artistry and activism as the principal coordinates by which to launch an ideological and semantic remapping of the very notion of erotic desire itself” (p. xxiii). First articulated by Audre Lorde in “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” (1978), the erotic is taken up here as a complex philosophical proposition. Gill reconceptualizes this proposition as the “new erotic”—“a perspectival trinity that holds together the political-sensual-spiritual at their most abstract ... [to describe] various formal and informal power hierarchies (the political), sexual as well as nonsexual intimacy (the sensual), and sacred metaphysics (the spiritual) simultaneously” (p. 10). He does so by interweaving fieldnotes, historical analysis, and an ethnography of aesthetic praxis.

The introduction provides a detailed examination of Lorde’s concept of the erotic, mapping out its limits and potential, and showing how the concept has been mobilized (or not) in scholarship. This examination is coupled with an important description of Gill’s methodological interventions, one equally informed by *eros*. As significant as his theoretical interventions, his methodological interventions aim to disrupt the colonial gaze that has historically defined anthropological subjects. Rather than providing “anecdotal displays” (p. 13), he centers his body, his experiences of participant observation, and the vitality of black queer voices to bring together the different narrative rhythms that create black queer cartographies.

Following the introduction, the story begins with the first of his fieldnote sections. With “From Far Afield: A Queer Travelogue (Part I),” Gill formally disrupts a genre that is known to be a tool of colonial domination: the travel diary. This—and all of the following travelogue sections—are at once an articulation of black queer desire, sexuality, sensuality, pain, and quotidian life *and* an archive of people, places, and story. Gill brings to life the close quarters

of his lovers' homes, his interlocutors' gazes, his friends' personalities. But he does something else, too. The fieldnote section immediately requires readers to question their role in the process of both consuming and interpreting knowledge. To read the fieldnotes is to enter into the space of his intimate thought, his vulnerabilities, his world. We risk becoming voyeurs if we are not attentive to the intentions of his revelations.

Each travelogue section is followed by a chapter pairing that provides provocative historical and ethnographic examinations of distinct sociocultural institutions. In the first historical-ethnographic pairing, Gill dives into the world of Carnival masquerade designer, Peter Minshall. In the second pairing, we read about the famous calypso singer, Linda McCartha Monica Sandy-Lewis, aka "Calypso Rose." And in the last chapter pairing, we read about the "Friends for Life" network and chat rooms. In each of these chapter pairings, we are introduced to the historical background of the particular sociocultural institution. The first two chapter pairings reveal how queer survival—Peter Minshall's and Calypso Rose's survival, for example—is rooted in artistry, and the erotic power of the spiritual-sensual-political in the creation of art and music. The last chapter pairing, a loving and necessarily rage-filled critique of how the social negligence and international medicalization of the HIV/AIDS pandemic affects Trinidadian and Tobagan men, also demonstrates how community groups like Friends for Life have been "consistently successful at reaching populations of working-class, underemployed, or unemployed urban men of African descent who overwhelmingly self-identify as gay" (p. 167).

By the time we reach the edges of this cartography, we are perfectly positioned to consider the erotic potentiality of black queer diaspora, in response to Gill's call to expand the foundations upon which we theorize black queer life. As such, this book provides an invaluable resource for scholars, artists, and activists who wish to expand their own uses of the erotic as a site for reimagining that "fleshy intersection between the self and everything else" (p. 216).

Ana-Maurine Lara

Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon

amlara@uoregon.edu