Chelsey L. Kivland, *Street Sovereigns: Young Men and the Makeshift State in Urban Haiti*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2020. xxvii + 274 pp. (Cloth US\$29.95)

In *Street Sovereigns*, Chelsey Kivland draws on years of ethnographic research to reframe the way we think about political agency, sovereignty, and state-making in Haiti. The story is set in the Port-au-Prince neighborhood of Bel Air, where young men take part in a shifting array of local organizations known as *baz*. For men living in Haiti's slums, "the *baz* has become the *nomos* of their worlds" and *baz* groups have become central to social, economic, and political life in the city (p. 5). While other commentators have dismissed such groups as entrepreneurial criminal gangs, Kivland offers something different—a nuanced, sophisticated, and compelling account of why such groups formed, how they function, and why it is that *baz* groups are bound up with the violence, insecurity, and state predation they seek to overcome. The result is, simply put, one of the most important studies of contemporary Haitian politics.

The Haitian state is often said to be weak or absent, although it is intimately present in people's lives (sometimes through its very absence). Decades of neoliberal structural adjustment have resulted in the privatization of state-owned enterprises, a corresponding loss of tens of thousands of public sector jobs, and a shift to project-based modes of governance and development. One outcome of this has been the increased importance of *baz* in political mobilization, electoral contests, and the distribution of international aid. Another outcome has been a seemingly endless series of crises that have destabilized the country and made *ensekirite* (insecurity, in the broadest sense) an everyday fact of life. Kivland's fine-tuned ethnography casts new light on these transformations and puts those who have been most directly affected by them at the center of the story.

Each chapter centers on a key concept that is explored ethnographically, but the entire book also weaves a subtle and at times heartbreaking narrative that takes us forward and backward in time. Chapter 1, "Defense," explores how *baz* members seek to *fè leta* (make the state) and defend their neighborhood. Chapter 2, "History," offers a much-needed account of the seemingly new phenomenon of urban "gangs" in Haiti, tracing their origin from the *makout* bureaus of the Duvalierist era to the political organizations of the first decade of the democratic transition and the militant neighborhood defense groups that emerged in response to state terror by the military junta that ruled from 1991 to 1994. Chapter 3, "Respect," explores how *respè* anchors social relations in Bel Air, where it serves as a "complex political philosophy that both extended and challenged commonplace understandings of democracy" (pp. 90–91). Caribbeanists will of course be familiar with Peter Wilson's famous

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account of respectability and reputation, but in Haiti *respè* is not the same as respectability, and Kivland's account contributes greatly to an increased understanding of this central Haitian concept. Chapter 4, "Identity," explores how urban men are seen by others and how they *want* to be seen by others. As one of Kivland's interlocutors notes, those outside Bel Air see him only as a criminal, even as he and other baz leaders work to subvert this identity and to be recognized as community leaders worthy of respect. Chapter 5, "Development," shows how baz groups work with international aid organizations and situate themselves as key brokers between nongovernmental agencies and the communities that aid workers seek to help. Yet, development projects have often led to rivalries between groups, and the timescale of fleeting aid projects (which never aim at durable development or sustainable infrastructure) have only served to increase poverty and insecurity. Chapter 6, "Gender," explores the role of masculinity in social and political life in Bel Air. Kivland's account of the bodily dimensions of sovereign agency, and the place of pleasure and feeling in political life, and her distinction between activity (the work baz leaders do in the community) and work (waged and unwaged labor) break new ground in the anthropological understanding of sovereignty and political power in Haiti.

The conclusion finally names the style and form of the book's argument—the spiral. Here, Kivland takes inspiration from the Haitian writer and artist (and Bel Air native) Frankétienne, who pioneered the surrealist art movement called spiralism. The spiral "complicates a linear theory of history" and helps us think anew about how forces on the margins can impact the center (p. 213). Through it all, Kivland masterfully weaves an analysis that is rich in ethnographic detail and sophisticated in theoretical insight. She helps us make sense of the sweeping changes taking place in Haiti today and offers space for Haitians themselves to tell us about their lives. There is a remarkable humility to her analysis; the result is a work of deep and profound respect.

Greg Beckett

Department of Anthropology, Western University, London ON, Canada
gbeckett@uwo.ca