to articulate a ‘je’ in contemporary writing. The succinct Introduction encompasses familiar key contributions to autobiographical/autofictional literary criticism, such as those made by Benveniste, Lejeune, and Doubrovsky, and therefore serves as a helpful overview of developments in writings in the first person. In this way, we are mindful that terminology is especially problematic in this field where genres overlap, resisting categorization, and the volume succeeds in going beyond texts more easily recognizable as ‘autofiction’ and its complex fusion of fact and fiction, even if such exponents of the genre as Chloé Delaume and Christine Angot are represented via analyses by Dawn Cornelio and Nathalie Edwards respectively. As Frédérique Chevillot reminds us in her examination of the prolific if enigmatic Amélie Nothomb, Proteus not only assumes multiple forms but is also privy to the past, present, and future — precious knowledge that is reluctantly divulged. This is a coherent volume inasmuch as all the texts studied here seek to uncover stories and, in the process, grapple with heterogeneous, protean subjectivities, as France Grenaudier-Klijn contends in relation to Patrick Modiano, for example; such narratives simultaneously lay bare the porosity of the boundaries between author, character, and narrator, giving rise to what Aimie Shaw terms ‘chimeric narrators’ with reference to Éric Chevillard. Some of the texts discussed are more self-consciously experimental, evinced by the playful paratext used by Brice Matthieussent to highlight the narratorial disjunctures occasioned by the translator figure who comes to rival the author, a phenomenon explored by Erika Fülöp. This volume suggests that discerning a single subject behind any ‘je’ is a troublesome task, one complicated further still by the fragmented narratives engendered by trauma and mental illness, as Katie Jones, Helen Vassallo, and Laura Jackson demonstrate. A particular strength of the book is its highlighting of lesser-known writers from francophone contexts, as in Samia I. Spencer’s analysis of Iranian born Chahdortt Djavann and Julia L. Frengs and Jean Anderson’s respective studies of French Polynesian writers. What is salient in this section is the extent to which these transcultural texts reclaim the ‘je’ and imbue it with the political, thus making writing, as Spencer notes, ‘un acte social de transformation personnelle’ (p. 118). The theme of the creation and mutation of selves runs throughout this thought-provoking collection, which does much to re-evaluate current trends in first-person writing. As such, this book will be of interest to the specialist literary scholar but also, more broadly, to the student of contemporary French and francophone culture.

IMOGEN LONG
UNIVERSITY OF HULL

doi:10.1093/fs/knv253


During a 1948 journey to Haiti, the French anthropologist Michel Leiris had a bad dream: he was being punished for some transgression against the navy, and had been condemned along with a companion to return to France — in chains, in the bottom of a ship. Was it the storm that had broken out over Port-au-Prince that night that incited it, or something else — Leiris’s long engagement with the French colonial world in Africa, his extended dwelling on zar possession rites in Ethiopia, or one of the Vodou ceremonies he had gone to in Haiti with Alfred Métraux, ceremonies in which the history of the slave trade is evoked, often obliquely, sometimes directly? This scene is one of many fascinating moments in Alessandra Benedecty-Kokken’s rich book on the question of possession as artistic metaphor, intellectual crossroads, and religious practice. The book both studies and exemplifies a process of enchevêtrement, of entanglement — or, as Benedecty-Kokken puts it at one point, ‘enmeshing’ (p. 208). It studies how possession, notably but not exclusively in Haitian Vodou, has served to inspire and shape a wide
The book takes a series of works of ethnography, theory, and literature (including novels by Haitian writers Jean-Claude Fignolé and Kettly Mars) as its objects. It is constructed perhaps most like a work of literature, its plot sinuous, with meanings accumulated powerfully over the course of a reading. There is a counterpoint between longer chapters, which include detailed close readings of certain texts, and shorter ones with flashes of insight that help to situate and reconfigure what has come before and after. There is a lot to hold together here: varied forms of discursive intervention, a constant return to the question of possession as practice itself within Vodou, different geographical sites and historical moments and basic ways of apprehending and acting within the world. But the book does it marvellously owing both to Benedicty-Kokken’s engaging voice and the solid conceptual direction that undergirds the entire work. The enmeshing comes together most powerfully in two wonderful chapters (11 and 12) on René Depestre’s brilliant novel Hadriana dans tous mes rêves (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), a ‘novel that creolizes the reader’ (p. 203). The work, by one of Haiti’s great twentieth-century literary and political figures, has been the subject of some curiously undertheorized criticism over the years, and Benedicty-Kokken offers a bountiful corrective to that by illuminating the ways in which the work engages deeply with the question of thinking and representing possession and, through it, love. In a sense her interpretation of Depestre is the crossroads of the book, the insights here made possible precisely because of the rich cartography she offers throughout the rest of the work. Here and throughout the work, she allows us to see and understand an entangled intellectual and aesthetic configuration, one in which Haiti has been and is at the centre, in a new and transformative way.

LAURENT DUBOIS
DUKE UNIVERSITY

doi:10.1093/fs/knv254
