

Nevertheless, *Global Trajectories of Brazilian Religion* is a welcome addition to the scholarship on Brazilian religions specifically and the patterns of religious globalization more broadly.

Kelly E. Hayes, Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis (IUPUI)

Experiments with Power: Obeah and the Remaking of Religion in Trinidad. By J. Brent Crosson. University of Chicago Press, 2020. 328 pages. \$90.00 cloth; \$30.00 paper; ebook available.

Experiments with Power is an ethnography of rural southern Trinidad focused on what practitioners call the threefold path—the little-known, overlapping Afro-Atlantic movements of Spiritual Baptism, Orisha, and Kabbalah. At various times, all three have been called superstition, or *obeah*, and so denied the privileged status of religion. Still criminalized in other parts of the anglophone Caribbean, in Trinidad and Tobago obeah is disavowed and contentious and yet people also understand it to make a difference in certain situations, to get things done.

Divided into three sections, the book as a whole is framed by interludes narrating the spiritual journeys of a young woman gunned down, along with two friends, by the police in southern Trinidad in 2011. The first section considers what J. Brent Crosson calls the moral and racial limits of religion. It thoughtfully and critically examines debates about the rituals that people did on the streets during protests against the police killings and in the graveyard—what Trinidadians would call spiritual work, high science, or obeah. It takes up questions of the relationship between religion, violence, and the law, using spiritual workers' discussions of religion as experiments with occult powers to flush out the racializing effects of the separation of religion from violence and power in contestations over obeah. The book argues that obeah has been associated with harm to help purify religion of its own entanglements with violence and politics. In this section Crosson also rethinks the recent focus on virtue ethics in the field of the anthropology of religion by engaging with his interlocutors' practices of an ethics of balance, of contemplating not only whether a practice is good, but also what it is good for.

The second section explores the ways in which Trinidadians use spiritual work to negotiate agonistic and amicable intimacies between different ethno-racial and religious groups, particularly between Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians. The formulations of such differences have been important as spurs of conflict and desire but also as sources of power. Not only does obeah make a difference, then, but working across

differences makes good obeah. Chapters in this section take up the politics of blood and the care for animals in sacrifice and, importantly, the art of the crossover, practitioners' working across reified religious boundaries without converting or syncretic mixing. This fascinating section raises for this reviewer the question of the South Asian side. Readers would have benefited from more of the perspective of Indo-Trinidadian spiritual workers, how they see what they do, and whether/how they work with non-Indo-Trinidadian clients. In this section on the complexities of crossover and mixing, the author crossing over more with his subject matter would have enriched our understanding of obeah/science.

The brief third section is about science, a synonym for obeah. In conversation with spiritual workers and feminist Science Studies scholars, Crosson engages in a comparison and redescription of science as we typically use that term and the science that spiritual workers undertake that allow us to rethink both science and religion. He examines the interconnected modernist projects of scientism and neo-Pentecostal Christianity as they define science and religion through the racializing exclusion of superstition or black magic. In contradistinction to these, and challenging the way that most readers likely think about science, Crosson defines science to cover both work in the lab and work in the Spiritual Baptist temple or Orisha palais.

This book presents the reader with highly sophisticated analysis and grapples with current trends in research across a number of fields. This means that only the most advanced undergraduate students, along with graduate students, will be able to grasp its significance. It would fit well in courses on Afro-Atlantic religions, religion and violence, ethics, and ritual. It would make a particularly interesting addition to courses on science and religion.

J. Brent Crosson wisely does not attempt to tell us what obeah really is, but rather what obeah can do. But what obeah does, religion does equally well. And so Crosson keeps in sight the power circulated through the differences made between these two categories, religion and obeah. Readers gain a better understanding of the ways in which power and divine powers are performative through Crosson's shared conversations with Trinidadian spiritual workers about their experiments with power—of spirits, the state, or god(s)—their channeling and catching power and powers on streets and in temples. Covering a woefully understudied set of traditions and making important and timely interventions in Religious Studies, Anthropology, Science and Technology Studies, and African Diaspora Studies, this is a must-read for scholars across these fields and beyond.

Alexander Rocklin, Otterbein University