

the author proposes to acknowledge differences without fixating on them, and moving on to solving issues (140 f.). The transformation of payment systems appears then as harboring some of these solutions, but also creating new dangers of their own. The book thus ends with an open call to imagine new worlds and new lives with new payment systems, keeping in mind the multiplicity of everyday practices and the moral, political, and philosophical questions that must be addressed in this endeavor. As a witness to the book's timely character, in the less than two years since it was written, Chinese mobile phone payment systems exploded, and are now used by around 400 million people, a process regulators are still trying to grapple.

Two critical remarks may be called for here. One concerns the fact that by putting too much hope on the transformation of payment systems, the text may obscure the fact that poverty, or extreme differentials in the distribution of resources, depend heavily on many other factors than payment systems, and these need to be tackled directly. Another related critique concerns the fact that the author repeatedly uses, without any reflexive critique, the expressions "wealthy Global North" or the "West" to talk about "us", and "developing" countries to talk about the "poor." Given the book's aims, it is a pity that it does deconstruct these categories as anthropology has done for already a long time. Besides, the author seemingly aligns with his desired readership, all supposedly belonging to the "us," but without situating this group in the processes he describes. The author remarks in passing that the regulatory frameworks and technological infrastructures remain hidden in most of the everyday uses of money, but the book strangely reproduces this invisibility, not showing, either in the text or in any of the 50 images, the everyday life of those who avowedly are in control of the production and management of payment systems. Yet, the current intimate relation between states and corporations is actually responsible for the production of poverty, showing the limits of how much a public good money is today. Limiting reflexivity about their own participation in poverty production today may help to establish a dialogue with them. But it also implies missing a chance to show how the anthropology of money that the book upholds can expose the political limits of current mainstream monetary and financial imagination, and can contribute, as the book hopes to do, to change its distributive effects.

These critiques notwithstanding, the book gives in a very accessible and short text enough arguments for anthropologists to start taking seriously payment systems, technologies, and money uses, in the interaction between states, corporations, and people with very different access to wealth and political participation. It shows these are fundamental components of everyday life, and of any attempt to tackle poverty. It is also a subtle exercise of engaging non-anthropologists, bringing together theoretical insights, detailed description of everyday practices, and dialogical language, in order to contribute to social change.

Horacio Ortiz

Meyer, Birgit: *Sensational Movies. Video, Vision, and Christianity in Ghana.* Oakland: University of California Press, 2015. 380 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-28768-6. (The Anthropology of Christianity, 17) Price: £ 24.95

"Sensational Movies" tells the fascinating story of video movie making, screening, and viewing in Accra, as it developed between 1985 and 2010. Unlike the movies it describes, that are made within a short time span, this book is the long awaited outcome of Birgit Meyer's two decades of ethnographic research on and passionate engagement with the Ghanaian video film industry and a career of groundbreaking theoretical reflection on the material and aesthetic forms through which religion becomes tangible in everyday life. As such, it does much more than documenting a particular form of African popular culture; engaging with the movies themselves, and with their spaces, producers, script writers, actors, set designers, special effect editors, vendors, censors, audiences, and critics, Meyer provides deep insights into a society in transformation combined with some of the most exciting scholarly thinking on religion and media to date. Like the movies that have intrigued her for so long, her book offers revelation and excitement and will inspire anthropologists for many years to come.

Meyer's detailed analysis of the video film industry is deeply embedded in the changes brought about by Ghana's neoliberal economic reforms since the mid-1980s, in particular the deregulation and privatization of the media, and the concurrent rise of charismatic Pentecostalism among urban publics. In this context, video emerged as a new but contested medium for the imagination. The book's central tenet is that video movies, out of commercial necessity, mediate popular imaginaries and structures of feeling in urban Ghana that have become heavily indebted to Pentecostalism. Meyer discerns a close affinity between video movies and popular Christianity in the recurrent format of "film as revelation" and Meyer's multilayered analysis of this aspect makes up the core of the book. Revealing, with the help of special effects, the spiritual forces at work behind the physical reality in the urban scene, private video producers not only reflect Pentecostal ideas and imagery, but also contribute to weaving Pentecostalism into the "sensory fabric" of everyday urban life, shaping how and what audiences perceive, feel, and think. In that sense, revelation is also worldmaking. As such, this is not only a book about the making of video movies, but also about the making of Pentecostalism. One of the great virtues of the book in this respect is that it turns away from churches and pastors as Pentecostalism's main sites and agents and instead places the making of Pentecostalism firmly in the realm of urban media entertainment, identifying video producers as important makers of lived Pentecostalism. Published in the UCPress Anthropology of Christianity series, this work offers scholars of religion important new directions in thinking about what religion is and does, where it is to be found, and how it can be studied.

Analyzing video as a technology of worldmaking, Meyer takes a material praxis-oriented approach with particular attention to the specific affordances, power struc-

tures, and usages of video as a medium in the making. This not only brings out the video industry's complex relationship with the legacy of state-sponsored celluloid film making and nationalist and Pan-Africanist cultural politics. Grounding moving images in material things, spaces, and flesh-and-blood people gets us at all the intricacies, ambiguities, and paradoxes involved in the making and watching of movies. While the easy accessibility of video allowed new players and a new aesthetics into the realm of movie making, the portability and mass reproducibility of video also escaped video film makers' control, ultimately challenging the sustainability of film making. For actors, an uncertainty about the boundaries between representing the immoral or the "occult" (e.g., playing a witch) and embodying its real presence – about the reality behind appearances – made the work of acting and imitation an ambiguous and spiritually dangerous affair. Similarly, set designers had to navigate the ambiguity between creating a convincing film shrine and preventing that it become inhabited – animated – by real spirits. And for audiences socialized into Pentecostal regimes of visibility, watching occult or otherwise immoral scenes entailed the danger that demonic spirits might enter their bodies through their eyes.

Meyer's rich ethnography thus reveals how many of the intricacies of popular cultural production in Ghana stem from a coming together of the paradoxical need to portray evil in order to contain it, an age-old theme in Christianity, with indigenous religious ideas about the role of human actions and material media in making gods real and powerful. Her emphasis on the cracks movie making entails, on the instability of the medium, and the transgressive potential of the image, opens up exciting new questions about the unpredictable (religious) life of technology. Rather than reading Ghanaian movies' concern with spirit forces as an exotic African peculiarity, Meyer situates them as part of broader, globalized repertoires of representing the uncanny, as "instances of a broader human quest to picture the unknown." The questions thus raised about the stability of concepts such as fiction and representation and the nature of media or performance will be equally relevant in Western settings.

This approach also allows Meyer some astute interventions in some of the main theoretical debates in anthropology today, most notably the ontological turn. Instead of drawing an in her view unproductive (and often moralized) contrast between "taking seriously" and "explaining away" the spirits, she points to the ontological uncertainty and the "degrees of reality" that she found among her interlocutors and explores the mediations through which a world of lived experience and its specific ontologies and epistemologies are realized on the level of everyday practice. Probing *modalities* of being real and *practices of making* real, rather than only asking what is regarded as real, it turned out that ontologies often had less force and stability and were less "different" and less singular than ontology turners might claim. Throughout the book Meyer shows how a multiplicity of imaginaries born from long-standing (post)colonial encounters informs not only the popular video movies (e.g., in their

fusion of local ontologies of making spirits, Western iconographies of the occult, and creatively reworked colonial stereotypes about African spirituality), but also the ideological critiques of them voiced by the "African cinema" establishment (e.g., in their concern with "African cultural heritage"). It is in this respect that Meyer's approach of the entanglement of religion and film as practices of worldmaking at the interface of the local and the global is extremely productive and of great value to a much wider readership than only those interested in Christianity and film in Africa.

One question that came up while I was reading this book in Accra, enveloped in a dense sensory fabric of religious sounds, concerns the place of sound and hearing in relation to the book's main focus on image, vision, and the "spiritual eye." To be sure, Meyer does not succumb to what Star Wars sound designer Randy Thom once called "the foolish and naive idea that film is a visual medium" and instead, as the title "Sensational Movies" indicates, emphasizes that movies engage audiences through senses other than the eye, including hearing and feeling, and solicit embodied participation. Still, the multiple examples she gives of the role of sound in the "technoreligious transfiguration" of the spiritual and enticing phrases like "divine audiovision in action" ask for a fuller theoretical engagement with the audio dimension of audiovisual media and religious worldmaking practices. The great job Meyer does at digesting and putting to work a wealth of scholarly thinking about images from art history, film studies, philosophy, and more makes all the more desirous of what a deeper plunge into sound theory could yield.

Marleen de Witte

Mildnerová, Kateřina: From Where Does the Bad Wind Blow? Spiritual Healing and Witchcraft in Lusaka, Zambia. Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2015. 315 pp. ISBN 978-3-643-90273-3. (Ethnologie/Anthropology, 49) Price: € 29.90

Based upon anthropological fieldwork in Lusaka, Zambia, in 2008 and 2009, the monograph describes and interprets spiritual healing, defined as beliefs and practices associated with diseases caused by spirit possession, witchcraft, and mystical contagion. The author explores this theme within indigenous health care and African Independent Churches' (AICs) approaches to illness and healing. A second, related theme discusses in detail local perceptions of and responses to witchcraft.

The first chapter introduces the research site, low-income neighborhoods in Lusaka. The second chapter presents key concepts in medical anthropology on health and healing. The following three chapters outline types of traditional and Christian healers and their diagnostic and healing approaches. The sixth chapter discusses the role of spirit possession in how healers' identities are being constructed, while the following chapter describes and analyzes witchcraft beliefs and practices. A concluding section explicitly discusses spiritual healing in the context of witchcraft suspicions. Despite this final chapter's attempt to more explicitly connect witchcraft with the rest