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Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santería
(review)

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Katherine J. Hagedorn. *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santería*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 2001. 296 pp.

Communal rituals in African-derived religions of the Americas like Santería and Vodou feature drums and dancing centrally. Over the last few decades such drum and dance forms have become increasingly visible in secular space, raising thorny ethical questions about representation, authenticity, and authority. This is nowhere truer than in Cuba, where the rise of “Santurismo” (a tourist market catering mainly to foreigners who initiate into Santería and other African-derived religions for a fee) draws hundreds of “religious tourists” to the island annually. Katherine Hagedorn provides well-researched and detailed insight into this phenomenon, as well as an important portrayal of Cuba’s legendary *Conjunto Folkórico Nacional*, which, manipulated by the Castro government, regularly performs “folkloricized” renditions of originally sacred dance and drum performance for public (i.e., profane) consumption. A CD recording of twenty masterful samplings by two of the Conjunto’s leading drummers and their ensembles is included with the text, and is well worth the price of the book in itself.

This book is of interest primarily to ethnomusicologists (like the author), dance ethnographers, anthropologists with interests in performativity and the representation of race, and, of course, anyone interested in Cuba and Afro-Cuban religion. Hagedorn’s discussion of the development of the thought and influence of Fernando Ortíz is an especially important contribution to Cuban studies. Secondly, *Divine Utterances* is of interest to religious studies scholars for its rich descriptions of Santería ritual and ritual paraphernalia. Scholars of religion will, however, be disappointed in Hagedorn’s perfunctory engagement of syncretism and her dismissive oversimplification of Cuban Catholicism. To generalize, for example, that all Cubans see the nation’s patron saint, La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, merely as a mask for the Yoruba-derived water goddess Ochún is an uncritical misrepresentation. This flaw is in part explicable by the author’s apparent ignorance of Thomas Tweed’s award-winning book on Cuban Marianism, *Our Lady of the Exile*, which does not appear in Hagedorn’s bibliography. Scholars of Yoruba-influenced religion around the world will likewise find inadequate Hagedorn’s preferred definition of *ashe* (*ache*) as “ritual performative power” (241), perhaps reflecting other significant gaps in her reading.

Beyond these substantive issues, the book has two major problems. First, whereas Hagedorn apparently intends to be creative by inserting “nonlinear motion into the narrative structure of the book” (12), she only confuses the reader with this weird organization; we are not, for example, told much at all about the *orishas* until page 73, or about the transatlantic slave trade until page 185. And second, readers will unwittingly overdose on Hagedorn’s frequent

forays into self-reflection (including the entirety of chapter 1). The book's many valuable insights are bogged down by sometimes overwrought descriptions of her dreams, self-doubt, and dubious initiation into the religion (e.g., "We giggled softly as the liquid brown eyes of a child followed us briefly" [45]; and "... dreams of a panacea shattered by the insistent rumblings of my lower abdomen" [217]). The reader could well do without so much self-reflection, not to mention the redundant reminders that Hagedorn studied with master *batá* drummer Alberto Villareal.

These criticisms aside, *Divine Utterances* is an important book that simply must be read by anyone with serious interest in Cuban culture. Hagedorn has gone to great lengths to understand the performativity of Santería, and her voice straddles the proverbial insider/outsider fence in a refreshing and valuable way. Where she resists the temptation to write about herself, the narrative becomes quite engaging to read, and on the whole the book is an expert and informative analysis of Santería music and dance in both the sacred and profane realms, and a trenchant commentary on what, if anything, constitutes the boundary between the two.

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Marta Bizcarrondo and Antonio Elorza. *Cuba/España: El dilema autonomista, 1878–1898*. Madrid: Editorial Colibrí, 2001. 452 pp.

With the exception of the subject of the Cuban Revolution, no other topic has received better scholarly attention and popular reception than the relationship between Spain and Cuba, before and after independence. Considered an intimate family affair, much deeper in emotions than the relationship with the United States, the link between Spain and Cuba still leaves many stones unturned.

Part of the excellent series published by Colibrí, this is an impeccable volume jointly authored by Marta Bizcarrondo, a history professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, and Antonio Elorza, professor of political science at the Universidad Complutense, who, along with Elena Hernández Sandoica, recently produced a milestone work, *La Guerra de Cuba (1895–1898)* (Madrid: Alianza, 1998). This new work masterfully traces the evolution and death of the experiment of the Partido Autonomista Liberal and peripheral interests that attempted to maintain the linkage with Spain and develop a home rule in which native personalities governed and managed local institutions, subject to many limitations.

The book is aptly titled "the dilemma," because it describes the anguishing choice between the apparently unstoppable road to independence and the