

oil, which seemed to confirm her oneiric encounter (p. 175). At this point, the institutions of both the Church and the state intervened. The Coptic pope at the time, Shenouda, consecrated Samya and thereby authorised her seclusion within a monastery; following her sequestration, her hand stopped producing oil, while a poster of the Virgin Mary in her cell began to discharge oil in her place. In her analysis of this episode, Heo examines how Samya's cure and the emissions of oil that followed created a threat of public disorder, *al-balbala*, precisely because 'Christians and Muslims share enough in common to make for a significant controversy over a woman's dream' (p. 188). To defuse Samya's threat to the settlement of sectarian difference and, accordingly, state security, the Church – an unabashed agent of the state – neutralised Samya by removing her unruly, miraculous body from public space.

Throughout her account, Heo agilely traverses 'the slippery slope between national unity and sectarian tension' (p. 241). As she shows, the state's efforts to shore up national unity by policing the terms of sectarianism endeavour to domesticate unruly forms of saintly mediation. Nowhere is this clearer than in the book's conclusion, which discusses the 'differential grievability' (p. 244) of Coptic deaths in Egypt. With keen sensitivity, Heo contrasts the 'Libya Martyrs', 21 Coptic labourers who were brutally executed by ISIS affiliates in Libya in 2015, and the victims of the Maspero Massacre, 28 Coptic students who perished in a clash with the Egyptian Armed Forces in 2011. While the former are celebrated as martyrs to both the Church and the nation, the latter are surrounded only by 'deafening silence' (p. 245). Like saintly excretions, icons of popes, apparitions and relics, death itself cannot escape state designs. And yet, like the other saintly media Heo illuminates, death also necessarily exceeds

such designs. The potential for disorder, for mixing across sectarian difference and, ultimately, for other visions of this and other worlds persists. Few ethnographies – indeed, few books at all – manage to capture this interplay of religiosity, power and potentiality with such grace, thoroughness and vividness.

JEREMY F. WALTON 

Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity (Germany)

Heywood, Paolo. 2018. *After difference: queer activism in Italy and anthropological theory* (WYSE Series in Social Anthropology). New York: Berghahn Books. 180 pp. Hb.: US\$110.00. ISBN: 9781785337864.

How to render difference through ethnography is a more than crucial issue in anthropology. *After difference: queer activism in Italy and anthropological theory* is a book that makes this issue the pivot around which to organise an ethnographic encounter and at the same time a complex reflection on ethnography and anthropological knowledge.

The author uses queer activism in the city of Bologna as the space through which to delve into anthropological theory and deal with challenges and conundrums of ethnographic enterprise and the politics of anthropological representation. Anthropological knowledge is deeply questioned by discourses and actions within the LGBTQ movement – a movement that claims a political identity based on the refusal of any ascribed identity and that values difference as such. Heywood engages in the literature of human rights and the anthropology of ethics: the first part of the book focuses on the notion of an equivocal political 'redness' that multiplies in the diverse definitions met in the Italian field, a multiplicity that nonetheless leaves its classificatory power

unchanged. The issue of *doppia morale* (double morality) identifies the peculiarities of a moral code that works through what the author calls ‘partial fidelity’. These notions are articulated further in the second part through an ethnography of the politics of agreement between the LGBTQ community and a marginal Catholic group within it. The difficulties in defining difference and at the same time producing affinities over how to sustain difference let emerge the paradoxical dynamics of politics and identity.

Anthropological theory, rather than queer theory, plays a prominent role in this work: Strathern, Viveiros de Castro, Holbraad are among the authors brilliantly discussed by Heywood, bringing the reader into the epistemological challenges posed by the relationship between ethnography and analysis. The current of thought in dispute – whether school, style or method – is definitely the recursive turn, which Heywood approaches in the third part of the book as a ‘friendly sceptic’. What Heywood suggests is to widen, not to narrow, the gap between analysis and ethnography. An entire chapter is dedicated to theory without reference to ethnography, against what the author names an ‘ethnographic foundationalism’ aimed at solving the difference between the two. Wondering like Latour ‘Why will recursivity run out of steam?’, recursivity and its devices are analysed in their arguments that ‘perform themselves’ and that are presented as intrinsically impossible to disagree with. The thorough analysis of ontology is aimed at showing how the invocation to collapse the distinction between theory and ethnography actually relies on that very distinction. Instead of adjusting the anthropological concept in order to make it correspond to ethnography, Heywood suggests acknowledging that the two mean different things. The reprise in the last chapter on queer activism recaptures the paradoxes of identity

and partial fidelity within the epistemological reflection on what description is in anthropology, demonstrating the need to maintain the difference between ethnography and analysis.

If it is true that every anthropological description is an actual intervention and therefore has an impact, nevertheless at the end of the book the reader might miss a political and theoretical resume on the activists’ issues. The queer movement in Bologna is well discussed through the anthropological debate on ethics and ontology – perhaps too well. Readers will in the end know more about recursivity and a critical approach that fully explores its challenges, than about the tension between ‘what is and what ought to be’ (p. 4) within the movement and the effects of the political and contrastive aspects found in the field. But the book is not meant to be an ethnography of the radical leftist queer transfeminist movement in Bologna. Heywood’s view is explicitly sidelong and it bravely elicits the LGBTQ paradoxes through the conundrums emerging from Amazonian and Cuban ethnographic fields. The strength of *After difference* lies in the constant investigation of the equivocal relationship between analytical concepts and ethnographic ones.

Perhaps queer activists in Bologna – possibly the most intellectual in Italy – will be tempted by this book to experiment a symmetrical anthropology about the ontological questions their political stances pose to the discipline, or about the ways they misunderstand anthropologists and are misunderstood by them. Surely this is a substantial book, pleasant to read despite the theoretical complexity, a book that reminds the enduring anthropological passion for (the equivocal theory and praxis of) difference.

ALESSANDRA GRIBALDO 
University of Roma Tre (Italy)