

based on cultural context. The ubiquitous “AIDS is war” metaphor is shown to aid in understanding some aspects of the disease but to distort important details and contribute to stigmatization of individuals with HIV/AIDS. At its best *Breaking the Silence* weaves close readings of texts and images with deft analysis; at its weakest the author’s analytical voice gets overwhelmed by descriptions of the featured texts. In some places *Breaking the Silence* embodies contradictory tendencies. For example, Grünkemeier excoriates one novel as nonliterary because it is openly didactic and has a moral (read religious) agenda, while she extols another novel for its promotion of the moral philosophy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

With *Breaking the Silence*, Grünkemeier makes a strong case that South African literary genres as well as other creative modes have begun to break the culture of silence surrounding HIV/AIDS by representing that silence and the opaque communications surrounding the epidemic. This book will be helpful to those who are looking for an introduction into explicitly HIV/AIDS-related literature and certain prominent metaphorical tropes embedded in HIV/AIDS discourses. Grünkemeier’s expansive descriptions of the texts and careful identification of underlying messages will be useful for scholars conducting cross-cultural analysis.

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RELIGION

Marion Kilson. *Dancing with the Gods: Essays in Ga Ritual*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2013. xi + 148 pp. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. \$60.00. Cloth.

Kilson’s book is a rich and detailed exploration of Ga religious beliefs and practices. Kilson employs a case-study approach to understanding Ga cosmology and ritual, including agricultural rites, the response to twin births, and naming. The book is a collection of previously published essays on research conducted in the 1960s; it is thus primarily a historical account of Ga ritual from this time period. Considering the relative continuity of some aspects of African religion over time, however, the book provides the ethnographic context necessary for understanding Ga religion today.

The Ga are a Kwa-speaking people who live in coastal towns in southeastern Ghana. In the 1960s they numbered approximately 236,000. Kilson worked in Accra’s oldest Ga settlement with migrant laborers, traders, and marginal elites. The book thus contributes to the literature on urban migration in Africa. Kilson dedicates several chapters to the structure of Ga ritual practices, highlighting both verbal and nonverbal aspects. The other

chapters address the themes of mediumship, harvest rituals, twinship, naming, and kingship. Several chapters are short, consisting of two or three pages of transcriptions and translations of Ga libations.

One of the book's most important contributions is its classic symbolic approach to African religion. Ga consider *kpele* their indigenous religion, and deem it crucial to (and synonymous with) their ethnic identity and cultural heritage. Despite numerous outside influences on *kpele*, the Ga consider it to be uniquely their own. Kilson's consideration of her informants' views on their religion, which may contradict the historical reality, is itself an important anthropological contribution.

The book also provides rich symbolic analyses of key themes in the study of religions in Africa, including twinship, sacrifice, and mediumship, which many contemporary anthropologists have all but left behind. Although libation is a theme familiar to scholars of African religions, it is often taken for granted, remaining underexplored in the literature. Kilson explicitly examines the structure and meaning of libation in Ga religion. She shows that careful analysis of this and other ritual acts reveals the structure of Ga cosmology, including the hierarchical ordering of the five classes of beings through which Ga order and thus make sense of their social world. According to Kilson, libation "establishes contractual relations between mortal human beings and immortal spirits." Through libating, human beings acknowledge their inferiority to (and dependence on) divine beings, "partially fulfill their obligation to honor them," and coax them into fulfilling their duties to their human counterparts (16). Another of the book's strength is its careful attention to both verbal (e.g., prayer) and nonverbal, embodied (e.g., dancing) aspects of Ga ritual. Kilson analyzes the relationship between taxonomy and expressive form, which she argues contributes to the overall consistency of form and meaning in Ga religion.

The chapters on mediumship are especially engaging. While chapter 6 focuses on a single medium, Yoomo Dantserebi, chapter 7 examines the practice of and meaning behind mediumship, "the most powerful occupation open to women, and one of the most prestigious" (82). Kilson explains that women are inferior to men in Ga cosmology and are subordinate to them in Ga social life; they are "left-handed people" . . . incapable of rational thought" (83). Despite this, women acquire considerable autonomy and status as mothers. Childless women fall short of the status of full social personhood, and barrenness is considered the worst possible fate. As childless women and women who are ambivalent about motherhood often become mediums, Kilson sees mediumship as a powerful way for Ga women to address their inherent inferiority and the challenges of childlessness or maternal ambivalence. For example, mediums' apprentices become their "sociological children through whom they achieve the emotional security and social immortality that most women acquire through their reproductive capabilities in Ga society" (86).

Although there is much to be gleaned in Kilson's analysis of 1960s Ga ritual, some questions remain. What is the status and prevalence of the "*kpele* cult" (xi) today, given the increased influence of Islam and Christianity,

which many anthropologists simply chose to ignore in the 1960s but no longer can? Kilson described Yoomo Dantserebi as “a devout believer in an ancient tradition which she knows is passing” (63), yet there is no mention of the forces threatening Ga “traditional” religion, forces that have no doubt intensified since the 1960s. How accurate was Kilson’s (and Yoomo’s) characterization? What is status of Ga mediumship today?

Although Kilson occasionally alludes to aspects of the research process, such as her evolving outsider/insider status in Ga society, the book exemplifies the “detached anthropologist” style of writing, which a younger generation of anthropologists would hardly recognize today. Readers would have benefited from hearing more about Kilson’s experience as a female anthropologist working in the 1960s, and her reflections on what has changed both in Ga society and in anthropology since then. Despite this, the book is a solid contribution to the scholarly literature on religions in Africa and is of interest to scholars and students of Africa alike in the fields of anthropology, history, religious studies, and African studies.

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LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND THE ARTS

Katrina Daly Thompson. *Zimbabwe’s Cinematic Arts: Language, Power, Identity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. xii + 237 pp. Acknowledgments. Abbreviations. Notes. Bibliography. Filmography. Index. \$80.00, £58.00. Cloth. \$27.00, £19.99. Paper. \$22.99, £16.99. EBook.

Katrina Daly Thompson has made a fine contribution to scholarship on African cinema, offering a much needed broad study of Zimbabwean screen culture that complements historical studies like James Burns’s *Flickering Shadows: Cinema and Identity in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Ohio University Press, 2002) and briefer studies of postcolonial Zimbabwean media by Sarah Chiumbu, Winston Mano, Kedmon Hungwe, James Zaffiro, and Giuliana Lund, among others. The book will be of interest to Africanists and scholars of cinema alike, appealing particularly to those interested in media policy (including broadcasting), language policy, literature, and postindependence Zimbabwean cultural history. Thompson takes a broad-based approach to screen media, and her engagement with processes of culture and power presents the category of “cinematic arts” as encompassing a range of media and viewing experiences relevant to the everyday lives of Zimbabweans from a variety of backgrounds. In addition to Zimbabwean film, Thompson examines broadcast television, local media policy, spectatorship, and the reception of media produced outside Zimbabwe. The introduction and