

Popular Spiritualities: the Politics of Contemporary Enchantment, edited by Lynne Hume and Kathleen McPhillips. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. 226pp., Hb. £55.00, ISBN-13: 9780754639992.

Popular Spiritualities is a collection of fifteen papers by a range of contributors from Australia, the UK and North America. The papers describe a variety of different contexts and behaviours but they have a common underlying theme: the emergence and need for spirituality and community. The book examines the effects of postmodernism on spirituality and contemporary culture, and argues that the shift away from traditional, mainstream religious practices has not resulted in a secularized world that is devoid of spirituality, but, on the contrary, in an increased need to rethink theological and spiritual boundaries. The spiritual is being relocated from its more traditional manifestations and understanding, and becomes entwined with the political, the social and the popular aspects of life. Following on from Weber's notion of the disenchantment of the West, the papers argue for re-enchantment through the employment of a number of practices which engage in religiosity and experiences of the sacred.

The concise but extremely comprehensive introduction provides the anchor for the range of experiences that we are faced with. The experiences that follow are loosely categorized into parts: Part 1: *Re-enchantment Tropes in Popular Culture*; Part 2: *Queer Enchantment and Religious Borderlands*; and Part 3: *Disrupting the Rational: Enchantment as Political Response*. These groups convey the breadth of the discourse on the spiritual that can be articulated through representation in a fantasy novel or a superhero to the political frontiers of gay activism and ecopaganism. Every paper reveals a new dimension of the subject and conveys the motivations of the author in their professional and very often personal quests to transform the mundane into the spiritual. Two particularly heartfelt responses come in the form of Hodge's post-modern pilgrimage in search of Atlantis (in chapter three) and Carden's case study of queer politics (chapter seven). Hodge undertakes his research on tourism as a case study, which he shares with his partner Gabriela Coronado, in what he describes as "a kind of second honeymoon" (27). This firsthand account framed against a theoretical background offers an incisive perspective to the reader. Similarly, Carden takes the reader on a journey as he explores how performance and ritual can be employed to create spaces for lesbians, gays and transgender people and specifically draws on his own experiences in the queer community at the University of Queensland in Brisbane in the 1990s. In his account religious symbols and spaces become re-appro-

priated, thus providing the foundations for identity-based politics.

The relationship between technology, the media and consumerism is found to be compatible and mutually enriching in many of these chapters, and hence the pertinence of the title, *popular spiritualities*, cannot be overstated. One of the strengths of the book is the level of criticality and its application of deconstruction, especially in the chapters that look at feminist spaces and spiritual expression (such as chapters two and nine). This makes it cutting-edge. Spirituality has the potential to transform identities, shape experiences and build communities. There is also a high level of empirical research that takes the form of case studies, qualitative interviews and participant observation. This enhances the level of scholarship as well as expanding the readership.

With regards to the readership I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the spiritual dimensions of cultural life in the West. It has a particularly wide potential readership because of its interdisciplinary nature, which explores borderland positions between not only different disciplines but also different methodologies, which range from the highly theoretical to the highly reflective. As well as giving the reader a snapshot of spiritual experiences within popular culture, it also conveys the potential that spirituality holds in the post-modern age for change and innovation. The introduction contains a quotation by Frohlich that encapsulates the aims and objectives of the book: “multiple choices about one’s place in the cosmos leads [*sic*] to a spiritual bricolage” (xvii).

In the post-modern age of fragmentation and unstable identities *Popular Spiritualities* offers hope by addressing crucial questions about self-knowledge, identity and community. It also demonstrates that in the post-modern age spirituality has encompassed all dimensions of life, from the personal to the political and pragmatic, and this is not localized to one region but to the Western world. And the fluidity of experiences conveys the continuing evolution of spirituality.

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