

institutions. Taft emphasizes how this is a pity as 'the centrality of girlhood to the global economy and to global civil society provides a theoretically rich reason for looking at the political identities and practices of teenage girl activists' (p. 6).

Another of Jessica Taft's key contributions to existing scholarship is her argument that the discourse on youth's political apathy is a stereotype that in fact renders youth activism invisible and underestimates the abilities of young people. She demonstrates how they are too often associated with political inaction and individual youth activists are seen as exceptions to the stereotypically 'normal' apathy of their age cohort. Taft shows how girl activists see nothing exceptional in their activism and believe that anyone can be an activist. Taft encourages adult activists to take these views seriously and proposes that social movements in general could benefit from including girl activists as empowered participants. Their enthusiasm, hopefulness and faith in a more just world could contribute importantly also to the adult activists' worldviews. *Rebel Girls* is successful in bringing a fresh viewpoint to social movement studies. It succeeds in highlighting the voice of the young girl activists as political actors and thus shows the benefits of ethnographic research in disclosing the subjective experiences and perspective of the often marginalized actors.

LAURA LYYTIKÄINEN
SOCIOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
laura.lyytikainen@helsinki.fi

MAYBLIN, MAYA. *Gender, Catholicism, and Morality in Brazil: Virtuous Husbands, Powerful Wives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Pp. 224. ISBN: 978-0-230-62312-5.

One of the major contributions of the anthropology of religion has been to raise critical questions about some of anthropology's most basic concepts. Religious life in different cultures challenges how we understand seemingly basic ideas such as belief, personhood and experience. Maya Mayblin's ethnography of Santa Lucia, a small, rural community of cash-crop farmers in northeastern Brazil, provokes the same kind of questions about the concept of morality. It is a detailed and sensitive discussion of the everyday struggles of men and women over the course of their lives, drawing on deep and fascinating life-history interviews, as well as participant observation. This forms the basis for an argument about moral thinking and moral practice in the making of the person and her relationships. Families and gender roles in peasant societies in Latin America are by no means a new topic for anthropologists. This book, however, engages thoroughly with this extensive literature and offers a provocative and original take on many familiar issues from the region.

The central claim of the book is that Santa Lucians perceive an inescapable contradiction between the Christian ideal of marriage and the inherent sinfulness of the everyday life of married men and women. On the one hand, it is God's will that men and women marry and raise children, but on the other hand, growing up, falling in love, and setting up a

household puts people's moral lives at risk. Santa Lucian Catholics have a rather practical concept of evil, in other words. Everyday social requirements and obligations involve a lot of hard work and bring out in people 'bad' emotions and behaviors, including lust, but also jealousy, anger and other unavoidable aspects of life in a small community. The book then discusses the number of ways in which people in Santa Lucia deal with their own evil natures. In essence, they frame the contradiction of social reproduction in terms of the suffering they must endure to live a good life. To face the evil of everyday life and still be able to persevere is the highest moral value in Santa Lucia. Moreover, the pursuit of this value further structures relations between genders and provides different moral subjectivities for men and women. Women, for instance, are suffering caretakers and nurturers, while men are struggling workers who provide for the family.

The book deals mainly with what Fortes calls the developmental cycle of domestic groups, that is, the cycle by which households form, grow and give rise to new households. Such cycles reveal the contradictions between nature and culture within the kinship system and the ways that societies work out institutions which can manage and overcome those contradictions. Mostly these are rites of passage, and Mayblin lavishes attention on the rituals that Santa Lucians use to turn the wheel of life around again. Yet, she is not satisfied with finding a few neat functional or structural patterns. She emphasizes how Santa Lucians draw upon a discourse of suffering as a moral value to understand the course of their own lives. She identifies this talk as a moral practice, a form of agency through which people may craft an identity as a moral person and member of a moral community. Moreover, she argues that a morality based on an inherent conflict between selfish desire and social obligation, or nature and culture, is specifically a Christian one, and thus not necessarily a universal analytic frame for understanding the practices of kinship and gender. Rather, Santa Lucians play out their Christian values in these domains.

This material is connected to one of most interesting and ethnographically rich parts of the book, a lengthy discussion of *peito aberto* (open chest), a kind of debilitating back pain. It is brought on by hard work, either lifting a heavy load or giving birth to a child. This leads to a fascinating description of the healers called *rezadores*. In the symbolic idiom of this condition, *rezadores* have a greater capacity to bear the burdens of everyday life because they are stronger and more closed to these outside influences on their inner life. Through magical ritual, *rezadores* close the chests of those who are too open and give them back their strength. The symbolism of the inside and outside of the body extends also to evil eye, which *rezadores* can also cure. A *rezador* draws out the evil from inside the bewitched person and takes it into herself, ritually taking on the burden of sickness and suffering it on the behalf of the victim. In Santa Lucia, women's emotional labor of mothering and suffering is so tough it sometimes takes a professional to do it. Women's bodies are the site, both ritually and in everyday talk, for mediating the suffering that comes with a woman's adult life.

The book starts with courtship and marriage and ends with the raising of children. Along the way, there are significant discussions of family violence and gender inequality, the connection between the household and the economy, and class inequality and power. At several points in her analysis, Mayblin engages with the larger historical and sociopolitical context which Santa Lucians' families occupy, but she refuses to reduce their lifeworld to material forces. Rather, Mayblin sees the agency of Santa Lucians in

BOOK REVIEWS

the creation and maintenance of this system. Santa Lucians make their hard lives into a virtue, but for Mayblin they are not deluded by a hegemonic ideology. Nor is their moral valorization of suffering simply a veiled critique of power and inequality. Indeed, Mayblin's informants see rich and powerful people as having a greater capacity for good, and a greater obligation to do good by helping others. Mayblin points out that inequality is accepted as a fact of life in the Santa Lucian moral vision. Their morality does not neatly map onto the terms of critique of capitalism in the West. Rather, Santa Lucians seem to be interested in making a moral argument for interdependence and empathy rather than liberation. Because she treats morality as a kind of practice, a way of shaping oneself, one's relationships and one's world, Mayblin is in a better position to see this possibility.

In the end, I was left with the question of how different moralities are articulated. Mayblin does not explore the possibility that men and women, young and old or rich and poor, might have different kinds of moral practices that participate in a dialogue. Even though the data is very person-centered, the book is an ethnography of the moral practices of Santa Lucian culture, mostly in the form of examples of narrative discourse and ethnopsychological categories. This book will, however, certainly contribute to the theorization of morality. Similarly, this book is in touch with a number of longstanding issues in feminist anthropology and Latin American studies. Santa Lucia will inspire students and scholars to revisit and revise many settled positions.

RYAN SCHRAM
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
ryan.schram@sydney.edu.au