

of everyday life. Better if brought up at the start of her introductory section to integrate the sequence of theoretical ideas that are to be critical in her work, we learn that an approach to everyday life is central to human existence, representative of complex interactions, based on ordinary objects, reflective social change, featured in people's social roles, and implicates the multidimensional lives of people. She could have taken these points at the outset and extracted the valuable features of her theoreticians to give the reader what she thought of the main points. Without these guideposts, the first section is weak.

When Robin moves to the archaeology, we do not fare much better. Instead of using the framing points to structure her discussion of the archaeology of everyday life, she takes on the effort by archaeological topic: household, gender, landscape, and space. These she ultimately critiques by remonstrating the colloquial uses of everyday life in archaeology, though she does awaken the reader to innovative possibilities in the examination of everyday life. Robin argues, as if novel, that all people leave behind materials and spatial traces of their everyday lives and that an examination of ordinary materials and spaces will provide an effective context for interpreting social organization, power, change. This is what we all are aiming for.

The heart of her theoretical stance is revealed in her chapter on methods. Here Robin brings in her personal experiences and work at Chan, the site that features in the subtitle of her book. Interesting perspectives and concrete examples from her fieldwork are woven loosely to her theoretical discussions with select comparative examples. These discussions bring together a diversity of perspectives, embracing academic and lay thought, bridging humanistic and scientific divides that promises to result in a critical archaeology of everyday life. Robin presents these ideas as distinct.

The core of the book focuses on the archaeology of Chan, situated in the Belize River area not far south from the significant but minor center of Xunantnich, considered the administrative power under which Chan operated. Chan itself has an elite administrative compound surrounded by smaller and larger residential units that make up the Chan community. The locale is typified by good cultivable land for farming. Her data show that the community managed the landscape with an intricate organization of terraces to control water distribution. This complex modified landscape was integrated by residential and field structures that grew over time in relationship to the local geography. Robin proposes to evaluate Chan's residences in the context of the Belize Valley; her reference is not comprehensive and leaves large data sets developed by the Belize River Archaeological Settlement Survey out of her comparative discussion. These data would bolster her arguments on the importance of everyday life where residential distribution of exotics, special artifact types, and the consideration of everyday household assemblages featured as a significant component of analyses. The exclusion of these data is surprising and suggests a narrow focus and an incomplete view of the region.

The coverage of sustainability, a vital topic when examining the historical ecology of the tropics, Robin un-

accountably sets her data apart. She takes her valuable data on successful forest management as evidence of the special place a small community might have in the larger setting, suggesting that Chan developed sustainable practices while the major center of Tikal had unsustainable extractive practices. Why would the detailed paleobotanical work at Chan, remarkable in the Maya area, not cast significant doubt on assumptions of forest and environmental destruction that prevail in the academic and popular literature? Increasing research and published studies have been chipping away at the belief that forests and fields cannot coexist. These data from Chan play particularly well in this light. It would seem that the Chan case is more likely the norm not the exception and could be used to undermine the received wisdom that the Maya destroyed their environment.

In this book, Robin contends that her perspective incorporating the common farmers is exceptional among Maya research; that her attempt to consider the qualities of everyday life stands apart of the leagues of Maya research. Her research, as presented in her earlier edited volume on Chan does set a new standard on the presentation of residential research, though there are other comparable works. She incorporates comparative study of residential data from her research group; Robin has not incorporated other relevant data both from the nearby Belize River area of El Pilar, nor other data from the greater Petén. These data from everyday settings of large and small residential units would corroborate and fortify her position that the general Classic Maya populace had, qualitatively if not quantitatively, access to exotics and that everyday life matters were as varied as they were common.

I could not agree more with Robin's conclusions that building models without considering the majority of the populace, the farmers, is flawed. As well, to consider these majority simply as passive components fails to recognize the fundamental basis of agrarian economies. No elite administration could survive without the active engagement of the mainstream. In fact, while unexplored in Robin's book, it may well be that, ultimately, the disconnection of the administration with the farming populace lead to the so-called "collapse" of Maya civilization.

Anabel Ford

Román-Odio, Clara: *Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural Productions*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013. 192 pp. ISBN 978-0-230-34000-8. Price: £ 55.00

Gloria Anzaldúa (1942–2004) lived a life all too short, but she left a mighty legacy. Though Chicana feminism has a long trajectory, dating back to the 1970s at least, the publication of Anzaldúa's seminal work in 1987 marks a watershed not only in Mexican American women's art and letters, but for third world feminist studies and for academic discourses and liberation movements well beyond her immediate sphere of engagement. Her concepts and vocabulary have shaped and informed the way that scholarship is undertaken and assessed. Clara Román-Odio's book, "Sacred Iconographies in Chicana Cultural

Productions” is a recent shining example of Anzaldúa’s influence.

Román-Odio’s work is a critical mapping of Chicana art and literature focused especially on the Virgin of Guadalupe that deploys Anzaldúa’s categories, particularly the borderlands, the theory of crossing, and *nepantla*, the ancient Nahuatl philosophy of dwelling in the existential middle space – between physical and spiritual and conceptual worlds. The book is delineated by six chapters and nine illustrations, which she deftly contextualizes and interprets through a robust interdisciplinary methodology combining history, literary analysis, and visual studies. Her agenda is to analyze “the emancipated selves that Chicanas produce at the juncture of transnational capitalism, colonial expansion, and globalization” (1). This focus on the disruption of global technologies of exclusion, domination, and control is a unique and necessary aspect of the analysis. She writes: “Chicanas look beyond local histories and confront new asymmetries produced by transnational systems in the era of globalization. Empowered by the rich traditions of their indigenous spiritualities, Chicanas expose the failures of these systems that claim to pursue the betterment of all, while actually remaining indifferent to, or possibly ignorant of, the poor of color and the poor around the globe” (2).

The first chapter “enfleshes” Chicana iconography and theory, producing a genealogy of Chicana feminist thought, while arguing that, contrary to popular assumptions, Chicana critical labor engages global discourses and realities, challenging the mythical hegemonic distinction between the local and the international. She does this by focusing mostly on two seminal Chicana artists: Ester Hernández and Juana Alicia Montoya. Her conclusion is that through their transnational work, Chicanas create an “alternative epistemology.” Her analysis demonstrates the ways in which “Chicanas serve as a bridge to the first US feminist movement of women of color, US *third world feminism* – a movement that espouses a transnational feminist methodology and embraces the struggles of third world women from around the globe” (47).

The second chapter is for me the crux of the book. In it, she develops Anzaldúa’s *nepantlismo*, filtered through Walter Dignolo’s critical theory called “border thinking,” also originating in Anzaldúa’s work. Through her masterful readings of the works of Chicana artists, including Yreina Cervántez, Santa Barraza, Lilliana Wilson, and Consuelo Jiménez Underwood, she argues that these artists have moved beyond the colonality of *nepantla*: “these artists are rethinking identity and history, using the borderlands as spaces for symbolic productions that transgress material relations of power and privilege. Thus, from the original meaning of ‘being at the threshold of two worlds,’ *nepantla* has come to signify a technology of crossing through history, myths, and ideologies, the material and spiritual: a new category in feminist theory that continues to sustain the artistic feminist visions of US women of color” (74).

Even while I would have liked to see Román-Odio more clearly articulate the distinction between theories of borderlands, and *nepantla*, I appreciated the new mean-

ings she brings to the terms. As I see it, “borderlands” is also about being in the middle – paradoxically, a border connects and divides, but it centers the possibilities for transgressing that very border in crossings. Whereas *nepantla* is dwelling in the middle. Still, scholarship is about exchanging ideas, and she has added fruitfully to the conversation.

Chapter three puts the focus on Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the stories told about her. She focuses on various writings, arguing: “Chicanas are not marianistas in the reductionist sense of the term. On the contrary, they use the iconography of the Virgin of Guadalupe to respond to and to challenge their own spirituality, as well as to develop a prophetic vision that empowers their struggles against earthly oppressive forces that often derive from sexist constructions” (78). This chapter also does a nice job of developing the transcultural connections between Guadalupe, Tonantzin, and Coatlicue.

In chapter four Román-Odio argues that Chicana cultural productions engage the political imaginaries and realities at both a local and global level. Here again she nuances the tension between the theories of borderlands and *nepantla*: “Border crossing, which emerges from the state of being in *nepantla*, will serve to produce an alternative epistemological approach to dominant ideologies” (101). She concludes with a clarification: “These artists do not give definite answers, but they help to demystify globalization by speaking about its failures and colonial legacies and, most important, by bringing the world’s most invisible population into the light” (117).

Central to the final chapter, “Queering the Sacred,” are the writing of Carla Trujillo and the visual art of Alma López, who have both brilliantly (re)imagined Our Lady of Guadalupe as a lesbian feminist. Román-Odio states: “López’s and Trujillo’s recasting of the Virgin of Guadalupe represents, not an essentialist notion of the sacred, but a provisional political sacred that puts out of order, spoils, and denaturalizes heteronormativity” (143). I also appreciated that this chapter provides an expanded definition of spirituality: “By spirituality, I mean the merger and appropriation of Western and non-Western spiritual traditions – a healing form that resists oppression and assimilation – and a politics that generates social justice for the dispossessed and marginalized” (123).

Her conclusion reiterates the main arguments, placing the work of Chicana sacred iconographies within the context of global struggles. Among the many strengths of this work are the extensive interviews the author conducted with artists and writers. I wish she would have engaged the growing literature in Chicana/o religious studies to a greater extent, but the book is nonetheless impressive in its impressive command of sources from many different fields. I recommend it.

Luis D. León

Schaumburg, Katrin: Bonyatsi. Heirat, Status und Beziehungsstrategien in einem südafrikanischen Township. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2013. 279 pp. ISBN 978-3-643-12205-6. (Kölner ethnologische Studien, 34) Preis: € 29.90