

dation for this iconoclastic folk religiosity. The book's best moments of ethnographic exposure lie not with demonstrating that Santa Muerte veneration borrows, as all folk saint devotions do, from a "quid pro quo" dynamic between the Catholic believer and her supernatural intermediary. More powerfully, Chestnut's multiple visits to working class shrines and *botanicas* reveal a religious community overburdened with the problems of survival in a day-to-day state of mortal fear and economic precariousness from which no one can extract oneself. From one "great leveler" to another, Santa Muerte both embodies and helps Mexican devotees to make sense of their fraught moral, political, and intimate existence under conditions of open warfare, civic alienation and/or exile.

For Mexican police, drug mafia, and ordinary citizens alike, venerating this feminized figure of death (alternately cast as maternal or seductive) lends a certain meditative, all-encompassing quality to her devotion; some municipal police, for example, have stitched a Santa Muerte patch onto their uniforms above captions reading "Fear not wherever you may go, since you'll die where you're supposed to," "When death appears in our path, she is welcome," or "Any day is a good one to die" (107). Not only does Santa Muerte's devotional complex map onto the Mexican neocolonial imaginary of death and sacrifice so roundly analyzed by Claudio Lomnitz, but it also corresponds to topsy-turvy conditions of internal warfare and the unpredictable forms of life and death wrought by it. I was particularly struck by how petitions to Santa Muerte often sought to free or to protect the imprisoned (14f., 38, 59, 93, 151f.) – including the guards of such prisons themselves (108). (Prisons are purgatories that literally "disappear" select individuals from their home communities, and incarceration rates, along with the grim index of civic death they represent, are on the rise throughout Mexico and Latin America more broadly.) The book's strongest chapters ("Brown Candle," "Black Candle," and "Green Candle"), each deal with the symbolic inversion of civic life in the wake of the drug war's balkanization and paramilitarization of ordinary state functions. In a telling moment, Chestnut claims that Santa Muerte "approximates the God of the Old Testament who punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous" (184) – an allusion to the communitarian, us-against-the-world logic of being "devoted to death." Similarly, Chestnut's ethnography reminds us that Catholicism and "Catholic sects," too, are shot through with mythical, worldly death-drives that intensify under daily conditions of civil war.

For all the scholarly merits of "Devoted to Death," this reviewer would be remiss not to draw attention to interpretive lacunae that show up time and again – repeated whenever the book throws a bridge across the worlds separating the North American reader from the working-class Mexican subject. Chestnut's project generally translates mundane aspects of venerating Santa Muerte for a US-based Anglophone student audience. The compulsion to "explain" how Mexican citizens can be "devoted to death" often develops a certain interpretive inertia, avoiding self-critical analysis of how North American *in addition to* Mexican middle-class beliefs and expectations re-

main part of the process of stigmatizing this fast-growing devotion. The author writes largely in a confessional and autobiographic style, a mode of narrative representation that openly invites readers' co-identification with easily digested cultural statements, yet often fails to explore the very conditionality of "understanding" any "religious" form of difference. Some examples will suffice.

At times, the simplified rhetoric of overcoming cultural distance was nothing short of jarring, as, for example, when the author relies on the logic of financial markets to describe Santa Muerte's devotional appeal (e.g., "Since stock in her only recently went public, many have come to her after unsuccessful investments in other saints," p. 59) – a way of describing the popular saint's cult that naturalizes a naïve, state-centric utilitarianism. Other suspect passages in this ethnography (e.g., "Mexicans adore flowers almost as much as they love balloons ...", p. 71; e.g., "A couple of feet away from me, tears streamed down the cherubic cheeks of a teenage goth dressed in black from head to toe and clutching her Santa Muerte as Bride statuette in both hands. Trouble at home, I wondered?" p. 88 – and many other choice examples could have been recruited here) were likely intended as lighthearted humor or local color, but come across as a misuse of space better dedicated to exploring the author's sustained interactions, or getting to know the subjects of his research, instead of offering summary judgments and ethnographic observations from afar. Indeed, for all "Devoted to Death"'s admirably broad survey of popular visualities, newsprint, archival, and ethnographic data on Santa Muerte, there is also a curious, unfortunate thinness to the argument itself.

Nevertheless, "Devoted to Death" provides one of the most alluring long-form treatments of the way in which Mexican narco- and folk-culture have mutually informed and recently coproduced each other. I will happily teach this work as an object lesson in how to carry out, and how not to carry out, meaningful ethnographic work on a topic as sensitive as the criminalization of religious practices in a period of open warfare.

Chris Garces

**Danforth, Loring M., and Riki Van Boeschoten:** *Children of the Greek Civil War. Refugees and the Politics of Memory.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. 329 pp. ISBN 978-0-226-13599-1. Price: \$ 25.00

A devastating Civil War tore Greece apart between 1946 and 1949. As fighting intensified, both sides recognised the danger for children caught in the crossfire. The Communists evacuated some 20,000 children from territory under their control in the north and distributed them to centres in Eastern Europe. The Greek state opened a network of homes to care for a similar number of children within Greece. The rescuing of children from war zones can be compared to the evacuation of children to the countryside during the bombing of London, or the *Kindertransport* from Germany. Such evacuations need not necessarily be controversial, but it has proven to be a hugely divisive topic in Greece.

The anti-Communist account, long promulgated by the Greek state, has maintained that the children evacu-

ated to Eastern Europe were “abducted” or “kidnapped.” Furthermore, state-endorsed histories assert that the children were de-Hellenized in Eastern Europe, converted into non-co-ethnic “Slavs”; enemies of the Greek nation. Many of these children were prevented from returning until the 1980s and many Macedonian speakers, although Greek citizens by birth, are still refused to return on grounds arguing that they are not ethnic Greeks. What began as a political ideological conflict mutated into a nationalist conflict between Macedonia and Greece. The authors do an excellent job of narrating and analysing these topics in terms that nonspecialist readers may easily understand, and in relation to general anthropological discussions of refugees, diasporas, exile, home, and the fear of small numbers (i.e., minorities).

The popular term for this historical episode has been *paidomazoma*, literally “rounding up children.” This word references the Ottoman practice of taking children from non-Muslim areas, converting them to Islam and raising them as “janissaries” – elite guards and officials within the Ottoman Empire. Its application to the Civil War mythified the evacuation of children, and lodged it in the popular imagination as a sinister crime against the nation. The word *paidomazoma* evokes automatic visceral condemnation – as if the Communists were Minotaurs devouring Athenian children. Adherents to this version rarely consider that the Greek state opened foster homes for children first, and also evacuated children from war zones in 1948. The term *paidomazoma* is, however, only applied to Communist evacuations abroad. This elision exemplifies the selectivity characteristic of what the authors term a “political community of memory” (as distinct from an “experiential community of memory”).

This well written book demythicises the *paidomazoma* by exposing it to contrary evidence culled from the oral and written testimonies of the children and other witnesses, archival documents, and historical sources. Myths die hard, if you can manage to kill them at all, as the authors found out in the course of research. When they presented a paper at Princeton University, Nicholas Gage, the author of the bestselling novel “Eleni,” refused to countenance shifting his favoured term “kidnapping” to “evacuating.” His novel (an anti-Communist classic, one of Ronald Reagan’s favourite books) told how the Communists executed his mother as punishment for spiriting her children away to the government side rather than allowing them to be “abducted” to Eastern Europe. As he put it, and I paraphrase: “Why would my mother have died for us if things were so rosy in Eastern Europe?”

Throughout the pages of “Children of the Greek Civil War” the reader can feel the heat from the gauntlet of fire that the authors have walked through. They have been denounced and threatened multiple times by those who, like Gage, refuse to reconsider their version of the past. The authors’ courage in dialoguing with the exponents of various communities of memory is admirable. More than that, it gives their book balance, and a credibility that could conceivably initiate the process of reconciliation between the Greek right and the left called for in the book’s conclusion.

Two compelling chapters centre this volume, one presenting narratives from children who were evacuated to Eastern Europe, the other filled with personal accounts of children who went to Queen Frederica’s “children’s cities” inside Greece. All the children describe the incredibly fraught situation of their villages and their families during the Civil War. In many cases parents sent their children away because they did not have food to feed them, or because the dangers of war were too great. The authors label this a “spectrum of coercion” ranging from consent to abduction, and they do present stories of soldiers luring children onto transport lorries with the offer of a loaf of bread, or taking them by pure force. This sort of kidnapping was not, however, that common as they established by speaking to hundreds of participants in the events. The interesting point is, rather, that children supposedly abducted from the Greek state and those cared for within the state have much in common. They were generally well looked after and given valuable education. Coming from rural villages, the children gained a new view of themselves and developed new goals in life such that return to the village became impossible even after only a few years away. Many ended up in Greek cities or as migrants to Australia, Canada, and the USA. The main difference was that children who remained inside Greece were returned to their families within a few years, while only a few thousand children from Eastern Europe were allowed back before 1951. After that, the Cold War shut them out for at least 25 years.

The authors state at the outset that one of their goals is to “restore agency to children as active subjects by analyzing their own accounts of their childhood experiences” (8). This is tricky. If agency is understood as the individual ability to make choices and enact plans in difficult situations, or take decisions that run counter to expectations and demands, then children below the age of 14 in 1948 did not have much agency. This may be inferred from their own accounts. What this study does give them is a voice; a chance to represent themselves and what they endured in the late 1940s and after. At a certain point these children became adults and the oral testimonies collected in this book do reveal the agency inherent in later life course – decisions to repatriate or migrate to Canada, set up a transnational associations to anchor a particular community of memory, or even to tell off a Greek border guard for using intimidation tactics. This book illuminates the agency involved in the construction of memories and life histories *after* childhood during the Greek Civil War. It is precisely the idiosyncratic trajectory of these stories that make them valuable histories at odds with the ideological or nationalistic histories that have done so much damage to Greece.

Charles Stewart

**Deliss, Clémentine** (Hrsg.): Objekt Atlas. Feldforschung im Museum. Bielefeld: Kerber Verlag. 2012. 507 pp. Fotos. ISBN 978-3-86678-650-9. Preis: € 35.90

“Objekt Atlas” ist der Katalog zu der ersten Ausstellung, die Clémentine Deliss am Frankfurter Museum der Weltkulturen kuratiert hat, seitdem sie dort im April 2010