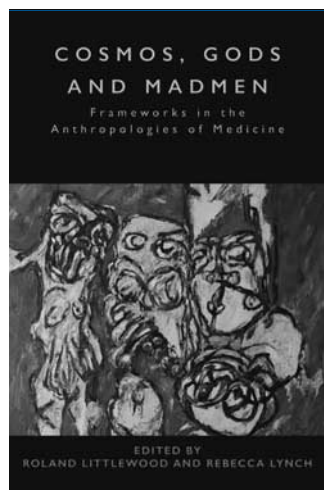


Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge, Femi Oyeboode
and Rosalind Ramsay



Cosmos, Gods and Madmen: Frameworks in the Anthropologies of Medicine

Edited by Roland Littlewood
& Rebecca Lynch. Berghahn Books.
2016. £60.00 (hb). 220 pp.
ISBN 9781785331770

This anthropological pantheon traverses Africa, the Caribbean, the Americas and Europe. While it would have been tempting to illustrate it with exotic or sensational images, their absence immerses the reader in ornately descriptive ethnographic accounts while introducing the art of anthropological writing in which pictures have been painted with words.

Some chapters are universally readable while others probably suited for the anthropology scholar. For instance, non-experts may find themselves reaching for a dictionary as they seek to comprehend occasional content like ‘... the Cartesian artifice of a solipsistic, indulgent, individualism subverts the elegance and intellectual beauty of existential life’ (p.10). Arguably, this interrogatory process also contributes to the reader’s scholastic growth.

In Panama, readers are introduced to the Black Christ of Portobelo and the ‘miraculous healing’ powers of this unconventionally black statue with roles alleviating sickness as well as the deviant behaviour of burglars and drug dealers, contributing to spiritual forgiveness and reintegration of the marginalised.

In Ghana, the therapeutic palette of healers – Pentecostal, psychiatric, juju, magic and alternative spiritual – emphasises the multiplicity of alternatives available. In the internet era, ethnographic descriptions of the *Sakawa* occult acquaint readers with elaborate religious rituals used to facilitate scams, internet fraud and the pursuit of wealth. Insightful discourses into ‘supernatural’ fortune and contradictory fusion of sacrifices, indigenous African Christian faith, and witchcraft defy imagination. Propagated through rumours, social and electronic media, status is perpetuated.

One of the most intriguing chapters explores ‘Ecstatic Contemplation’ in the USA, involving the focusing of energies through recurrent clitoral stimulation and orgasms. It is posited that the practitioners, a number of whom previously had addiction difficulties, invariably substitute one external agency of addiction for another sensory one in their quest of self-control and power.

In traditionally catholic Peru, the growth of Pentecostal churches and conversion to ‘new’ Christian faith practices becomes increasingly intertwined with indigenous customs

moulding therapeutic options in the quest for healing and the management of mental disorders across rural and urban societies. While in Haiti, perceptions of sorcery and poison in the evolution of the zombi state serve as a vehicle of social cohesion in health, disease and death. The chapter evokes vivid mental imagery describing the role of zombification in the social history of Haitian society and postulates zombis may be mentally ill though not recognised as such.

In the ‘cosmologies of fear’ in UK, the author persuasively argues the influence of modern cultural responses in the medicalisation of anxiety with changes in cosmological attribution and labelling of distress, hitherto shifting agency from the spiritual and faith realm to the clinician and pharmacological interventions. Here the pendulum swings from expanding spiritual interventions in some parts of Africa and South America.

The theoretical framework on role of evolutionary psychology in religion and contemporary diagnosis of schizophrenia is thought provoking. It postulates that agency, agent detection, theory of mind and metarepresentation are useful concepts in the understanding of religious thinking and psychosis.

This scholarly volume invites reflection on the morphing and metamorphosis of faith and spirituality across societies as they deal with health and disease.

As adapted from the Greek classic *Oedipus Rex – The Gods are Not to Blame* (Ola Rotimi) or are they?

Oyedede Ayonrinde South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK. Email: deji.ayonrinde@slam.nhs.uk

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Collaborative and Indigenous Mental Health Therapy

Tātaihono—Stories of Māori Healing and Psychiatry



Wiremu NiaNia, Allister Bush, and David Epston

Collaborative and Indigenous Mental Health Therapy: Tātaihono – Stories of Māori Healing and Psychiatry

By Wiremu Nia Nia, Allister Bush
& David Epston.
Routledge. 2017. 180pp.
£33.99 (pb).
ISBN 9781138230309

This book makes a compelling case for collaboration between mainstream psychiatry and indigenous cultural practices. In New Zealand where this book is based, and where I work as a UK-trained psychiatrist, Maori case workers mediate between psychiatric services and Maori patients, a connection that may otherwise be strained, given the adverse colonial history and continuing cultural differences.

Wiremu Nia Nia, a traditional healer, and Allister Bush, a child and adolescent psychiatrist working in Poirirua, push biculturalism further by combining traditional healing with mainstream clinical practice, even when there is a spiritual component that is not accessible to all members of the team. This account of their work is aspective, through the narratives of patient, relative,

healer and doctor, so that all frames of reference are included. An account of Maori world views puts these narratives in context.

Through these fascinating stories we learn how adverse events may be transmitted through more generations than the two that we may be accustomed to in the nuclear family. The history of this is complicated: the late cultural effects of colonisation, rifts in the grandparent's generation and further back, and the continuing presence of the dead among the concerns of the living. It is in this context that conditions such as depression, psychosis or a cultural manifestation of disorder are interpreted. The traditional healer acknowledges Western psychiatry, and adds the expertise that comes from their own community. At times this role may not be substantial, when there does not seem to be a marked spiritual or cultural component, and at other times it is the Maori healer's intervention that changes things for the better; in either case assisting the psychiatrist in directing their efforts.

One parallel for this is pastoral psychiatry, as practised in European institutions of the past and in some parts of the USA

today, which relies upon a Christian model to complete the bio-psycho-social-spiritual approach.

How can different belief systems work together for the benefit of patients? How might a family respond to someone who understands illness from a cultural perspective? How might a cultural healer help a family whose grievances from a family rift stretch to multiple generations? This book answers these questions and demonstrates how bicultural practice can work with Maori and other indigenous belief systems. In the process, it illuminates how such cultures determine the experience of mental disorder, with well-illustrated practical examples.

Colin Dewar Canterbury District Health Board, Christchurch, New Zealand.
Email: Colin.Dewar@cdhb.health.nz

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