PASSAGES & AFTERWORLDS

Anthropological Perspectives on Death in the Caribbean

MAARIT FORDE & YANIQUE HUME, EDITORS

Passages & Afterworlds

RELIGIOUS CULTURES OF AFRICAN
AND AFRICAN DIASPORA PEOPLE

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To Ineke van Wetering
and Barry Chevannes

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Bonno Thoden van Velzen and Ineke van Wetering were scheduled to present at the workshop but were not able to attend. Ineke was diagnosed with a serious illness a few months before the workshop and passed away in October 2011. She continued to work with Bonno on their chapter, "The Making of Ancestors in a Surinamese Maroon Society," throughout her illness. The chapter is the last coauthored publication in Ineke and Bonno's fifty-year-long collaboration in the anthropology of Ndyuka culture and society, and we are deeply honored to include it in this volume.

We are indebted to the UWI Cave Hill campus and especially Alison Johnson for administrative support for the workshop. The Campus Research and Publications Fund at UWI St. Augustine has supported the research that went into the writing of the introduction and funded the indexing of the book, and for this we are grateful. Many colleagues have offered valuable critiques and guided us toward important literature, and we'd like to give special thanks to Rawle Gibbons, Paul Christopher Johnson, Aisha Khan, Diana Paton, and the two anonymous readers whose comments have helped improve the depth, clarity, and coherence of the volume.

Introduction

Maarit Forde

Derek Walcott's famous poem "The Schooner *Flight*" evokes haunting phantasmagoria of ancestors lost in the Caribbean's violent past. Sailing toward Dominica, Shabine, the narrator, has a vivid nightmare of the genocide of Caribs, and diving amid the corals, he sees the "dead men," the enslaved Africans who perished in the Middle Passage:

> I couldn't shake the sea noise out of my head,
> the shell of my ears sang Maria Concepcion,
> so I start salvage diving with a crazy Mick,
> name O'Shaughnessy, and a limey named Head;
> but this Caribbean so choke with the dead
> that when I would melt in emerald water,
> whose ceiling rippled like a silk tent,
> I saw them corals: brain, fire, sea fans,
> dead-men's-fingers, and then, the dead men.
> I saw that the powdery sand was their bones
> ground white from Senegal to San Salvador
> —from Derek Walcott, "The Schooner *Flight*," 2: The raptures of the deep

Personal and political struggles in Shabine's life are entangled with memories of massacres in a region "choke with the dead." Like Walcott, many writers and artists have fathomed the ruptures, dislocations, and death in the colonial past of the Caribbean, often through maritime metaphors of sea as the grave of history. In historical and anthropological origin stories as well as nationalist mythologies, lost ancestors are at the core of the "inaugural events"—massacres of First Peoples, slavery, indentureship—fundamental

to the making of plantation societies (Scott 1991, 261). Vincent Brown, whose work on the history of death in the Caribbean has inspired many of the writers in this volume, argues that in the violent, dehumanizing regimes of conquest and plantation, "death structured society and shaped its most consequential struggles," and societies were reproduced in the continued presence of the dead (Brown 2008, 4). In the contemporary Caribbean, socioeconomic inequality and the extraregional power relations behind the ongoing war on drugs have resulted in soaring murder rates in countries such as Honduras, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. State, gang, and domestic violence have led to what to many Caribbean people experience as a painful banality of violent and at times, spectacular death. Whereas trauma and loss experienced during war or natural disasters underpin cultural approaches to death in many other parts of the world (e.g., Kwon 2008; Nelson 2008; Robben 2004a), Caribbean societies have been built on collective loss and disjuncture: persecution of the First Nations, slavery, indentureship, and plantation economy were constitutive of the region, rather than singular, traumatic events (Mintz 1996).

This history of exploitative encounters and violent deaths frames the ethnographic and theoretical concerns of this book, and its chapters speak to the anthropology of death from this specifically Caribbean foundation. However, because of its unusual ethnographic range, the collection explores cultural spheres of death from perspectives that are not often brought together in studies of Caribbean cosmologies or rituals. The authors investigate deathways in postplantation societies in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Haiti, but also in Amerindian societies in Guyana, among the Saamaka and Ndyuka in Suriname, and the Garifuna in Honduras. This ethnographic scope complicates notions of the peoples, histories, and migrations that comprise the Caribbean. In the fringes or outside of the plantation regime, Amerindians, Maroons, and the Garifuna relate to their ancestral past with culturally specific understandings of temporality, continuity, and rupture. The role of dominant discourses, such as Christianity, has been different in and outside of the plantation, which has led to a variety of ways of understanding the relationship between materiality, temporality, and spirituality. The comparative potential of the book is further complicated by the cosmological and ontological plurality revealed in ethnographies of the mortuary culture of heterodox and orthodox Hinduism, Protestant Christianity, Vodou, Orisha, Spiritual Baptist and other religious groups, and historical contexts ranging from slavery to early twentieth-century and contemporary societies.[1]

By bringing together discussions of societies and cosmologies that have been very differently shaped by the empire and the agency of local people, this collection invites us to think of transformations in the culture and government of death that do not align with a simple transition from “tradition” to “modern.” Here the volume resonates with central arguments in Caribbeanist debates on modernity. From this decidedly regional vantage point, the book welcomes an epistemological reconsideration of anthropological concepts and models that seek to make sense of the interplay of pasts and presents, the tangible and the invisible.

The regional specificities aside, the main theoretical concerns of the book are not limited to the Caribbean. The first set of essays, “Relations,” charts cosmological and ontological terrain where the dead share the world, and sometimes the bodies, of the living (Johnson, Mentore, van Wetering and Thoden van Velzen, Hume, Richman). These chapters question the relationship between living bodies and the spirits of the dead, encouraging us to consider culturally specific understandings of sacrifice, possession and divination, but also ontological premises of personhood, agency, and relations. Looking beyond the ritual process of mortuary cycles toward intangible entities and their relations in the material world, these chapters connect the anthropology of death to recent literature on spirits and their social lives (Blanes and Espírito Santo 2013; Holbraad 2012; Johnson 2014; Ochoa 2010).

The second, in many ways related, cluster of anthropological questions in the latter half of the book, “Transformations,” addresses changes in cosmologies and rituals in the cultural sphere of death informed by political developments, state violence, legislation, policing, natural disasters, and identity politics (Cosentino, Forde, McNeal, Price). These chapters speak to questions of alterity, difference, and hierarchy, showing how racialized, cultural, and class differences have been deployed in ritual practice, and how such rituals—and by extension, difference—have been governed in the colonial and postcolonial Caribbean. These discussions bring the anthropology of death in conversation with literature on the government of religion in (neo) colonial contexts (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Geschiere 1997; Paton 2015; Paton and Forde 2012; Ramsey 2011; Román 2007; Romberg 2003; Vaughan 1991). Considered as a whole, the collection expands our understanding of death and the dead in the formation of different selves and communities, and in the power relations that regulate such formations. In this sense, the ontological and cosmological implications of death on personhood and society, as discussed in the first part of the book, are integral to the analyses of the politics of death in the second section.

Theoretical Legacies: Anthropology of Death in the Caribbean

The multitude of Caribbean mortuary rituals and the persistent involvement of spirits in the lives of the living have captured the attention of travel writers, colonial officials, historians, and anthropologists in a region that was long considered not "native" enough for serious anthropological inquiry (Trouillot 1992, 20). While this research tradition reflects the ubiquity of death in the Caribbean, it also reveals another fundamental commonality in the extremely heterogeneous region: the unavoidable proximity of the other (Mintz 1996). Living with cultural and socioeconomic difference marked Caribbean existence from the onset of colonial societies—societies that were not simply diverse but also extremely stratified. The colonial project and, by extension, the European modern relied on the reproduction of otherness and the perceived inferiority of racialized others (Trouillot 2002, 2003; Wynter 2003).

Written in shifting epistemological conditions, the research tradition on "how others die" (Fabian 1972, 549) was first guided by social evolutionary notions of barbarism and civilization, followed by more sympathetic, Boasian depictions, which approached Caribbean deathways with an interest in cultural continuities and traditions in "folk" culture.[2] In both paradigms, representations of ritualizing others produced a temporal distance between them and the time-space of Enlightenment modernity (Trouillot 2003, 38; Wynter 2003). Here the early ethnography of Caribbean mortuary rituals resonated with a disciplinary legacy that Johannes Fabian has identified as an "intent . . . to keep the Other outside the Time of anthropology" (2002, xli). In result, much of what we know of mortuary culture in the colonial Caribbean has been observed through a distancing lens.

Contemporary analyses of the relationship between the tangible and intangible in mortuary culture, such as the essays in this book, try to avoid the othering strategies of previous paradigms. They seek to portray ritual practitioners as "coevals" (Fabian 2002) rather than barbarians or tradition-bearers, contemplate questions of representation, and consider the socioeconomic and political contexts in which Caribbean people mourn, remember, and communicate with their dead. And yet, the chapters depict relations to the dead that reveal radically different notions of selfhood and time: contemporary people occupying ancestral pasts, or entertaining spirits from different space and time in their bodies. The authors have to make sense of such alterity with vocabularies and concepts deeply rooted in the discursive

legacy of their discipline, an anthropology that distanced the deathways of others from the present tense of the ethnographer. The second half of the book, "Transformations," engages further with the theoretical legacy (or baggage) of alterity and inequality. The writers consider the development of cosmological ideas and ritual practices around death within the long history of structural and physical violence in racially stratified societies, starting from the public torture and executions of enslaved Africans in eighteenth-century Suriname to the immeasurable, cosmologically perplexing tragedy of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. They show that colonial and postcolonial states' attempts to govern death and mortuary rituals have also been attempts to govern difference and perpetuate racialized hierarchies.

To elucidate the epistemological trajectories along—and against—which the chapters in this book are written, I continue by reviewing main arguments in the early anthropology of death in the Caribbean with a specific emphasis on the conceptualization of pasts and presents, and through them, temporally distant others.

The Sacrificing Other

Mortuary culture around "bad deaths" attracted early ethnographers with a promise of radical cultural difference. The unfamiliarity of such rituals and beliefs to observers from different social classes or societies left space for theoretical considerations of others, and thereby selves; tradition, and thereby modernity. Early ethnographers' fascination with sacrifice and cannibalism was, of course, not limited to the Caribbean, as foundational theory in the anthropology of death—James George Frazer, Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss—often referenced uncommon deaths; but the evolutionary paradigm in Caribbeanist literature left a lasting legacy of racist misconceptions of Vodou, obeah, and other religions or worldviews.

The trope of human sacrifice emerged in Caribbean travel writing and ethnography in the late nineteenth century, notably in Spencer St. John's 1884 *Hayti; or, the Black Republic*.[3] The various secondhand accounts of child sacrifice and cannibalism in "Vaudoux" rituals contribute to a particularly hostile depiction of Haitian people and their religious lives ([1884] 1889, chap. 5 and 6; see also Froude 1888, 162; and Udal 1915, 257–260, 267–268, and 286–295). Gruesome stories of ritual child murders were widely circulated in sensationalist newspaper reports of *brujería* and *obeah* across the region in the first decades of the twentieth century.[4] Fernando Ortiz, the Cuban lawyer and

anthropologist, situated human sacrifice within the conceptual framework of criminology and evolutionary anthropology in *Los negros brujos* ([1906] 1973). Ortiz worked with the criminological arguments and vocabularies of Cesare Lombroso, Armand Corre, and Raimundo Nina Rodrigues as well as Edward Burnett Tylor's anthropology (which had also influenced Nina Rodrigues). Drawing on methods not unlike those of nineteenth-century armchair anthropologists, Ortiz analyzed illegitimate rituals as fetishism (*el fetichismo africano*), witchcraft (*hechicería*, *brujería*) and sacrifice (*sacrificio*) (1973, 26–27 and passim).[5] He cited Tylor, Frazer, and missionaries' accounts of late nineteenth-century Africa for comparative examples of rituals and beliefs, evoking the then popular anthropological notion of primitive society as a universal stage in cultural evolution.[6] The theoretical frame of evolutionary anthropology helped Ortiz to create a temporal distance between working-class beliefs and ritual practice—including alleged rituals of human sacrifice—and the postindependence present in Cuba.[7]

Human sacrifice was a recurrent theme in Frazer's opus magnum, *The Golden Bough*. Frazer's comparative study of religion and mythology, like evolutionary anthropology more generally, contributed to the reproduction of alterity in modern North Atlantic. Human sacrifice served as the ultimate marker of otherness, an undisputable indicator of savagery that belonged to the lower stages of cultural evolution. Reading Frazer in light of Franz Hinkelammert's work on Western imaginaries of the other "as the one still sacrificing," Patricia Lorenzoni suggests that depictions of the savage as violent and capable of human sacrifice served to justify colonial violence and expansion (2009; see also Dirks 2001, chap. 9). In Ortiz's discussion of human sacrifice, the production of alterity and the notions of primitive and savage did not rely on spatial distance: Cuban *brujos* occupied the same physical space as the nonsavage and, to Ortiz's initial distress, could be in close communication with middle-class and elite Cubans (Palmié 2002, 216). This proximity had informed much of the protoethnography of the region. Written from within the plantation, early historians', like Edward Long's, accounts of the rituals of the enslaved were not exoticizing sketches of faraway tribes, but conveyed a genuine sense of threat, a fear of the oppressed majority and its rituals, especially night burials where the enslaved were thought to plan rebellions (V. Brown 2008, 212–214). Ortiz's early work promoted the notion and politics of alterity by representing the sacrificing savage as temporally remote, inhabiting a primitive past rather than a civilized present.

Mortuary Rituals as Folk Culture

The 1920s and '30s saw a paradigm shift away from racist and evolutionary perspectives in the anthropology of death in the Caribbean.[8] Franz Boas's antievolutionist position, together with Jean Price-Mars and Ortiz's later work, influenced much of the ethnographic writing on death in the twentieth century and brought about a long-lasting interest in African Caribbean folk culture and religion in Caribbean anthropology. The generally benevolent ethnographies of rural and folk customs that followed, however, tended to downplay the coevalness of the peasant culture they described.

As Ortiz's theoretical interests, politics, and research methods developed in the first decades of the twentieth century, he published more appreciative accounts of Afro-Cuban culture as the foundation for Cuban national culture (Arnedo 2001; Palmié 2002, 2014, chap. 2). Moving further from physical and evolutionary anthropology, Ortiz's later oeuvre explored cultural merging or transculturation, laying the foundation for a national ideological and artistic movement, *afrocubanismo*. Similarly, *indigénisme* emerged in the US-occupied Haiti in the 1920s, largely inspired by Jean Price-Mars's *Ainsi parla l'oncle* ([1928] 1973).[9] Price-Mars's ethnography of rural Haitian culture made a strong argument for the valorization of popular or folk culture and religion as a basis for national culture in Haiti, echoing the promotion of folk culture in nationalist projects in Europe and elsewhere.[10] Drawing on Durkheim, Price-Mars presented Vodou as a religion rather than superstition, fetishism, sorcery, or witchcraft ([1928] 1973, 82–83; see also Magloire-Danton 2005; Magloire and Yelvington 2005; and Joseph 2012).[11] His comparative, Durkheimian approach allowed Price-Mars to bring ethnographic and historical accounts of Vodou into anthropological conversations of rituals of sacrifice, ancestral veneration, syncretism and possession, not as examples of a particular evolutionary stage but as a potential resource for national unity and pride. Price-Mars discredited foreign writers' sensationalist stories of human sacrifice in Vodou as "abjectly stupid" and turned their discursive strategy against themselves: the obsession with human sacrifice resembled Père Labat's eighteenth-century fantasies, and so it was the genre, not Vodou, that belonged to the past ([1928] 1973, 220–222).

Using a mortuary ritual to illustrate ritual change, Price-Mars cited Antoine Innocent's 1906 description of a *service mortuaire*, a sacrifice to appease an ancestral spirit. The discussion conveys the central role of ancestors in Vodou, but also locates Haitian ritual practice in a wider analytical framework for rituals of sacrifice. Contrasting Haitian with Dahomean ritual

practice, Price-Mars built an argument about ritual transformation or syncretism in Haiti and foregrounded the interest in cultural continuities or retentions that was to drive Caribbean anthropology, including anthropology of death, for years to come (Price-Mars [1928] 1973, 212–216). His ideas influenced Herskovits and his students, but also a number of other ethnographers and ethnomusicologists (Magloire and Yelvington 2005).[12]

In 1928, Melville and Frances Herskovits found themselves in the middle of a mortuary cycle of a recently deceased man on their first night among the "Bush Negroes" (Saamaka) in Suriname, then Dutch Guiana. They discussed the ritual proceedings as well as the *kunu*, an ancestral spirit of retribution and vengeance in some detail in *Rebel Destiny* ([1934] 1971) and *Suriname Folk-Lore* (1936), arguing that death and kunu "dominate the foreground of the spiritual life of the bush" ([1934] 1971, 70; 1936, 69). Mortuary rituals and ancestral spirits were an integral part of their subsequent ethnographies of Haiti ([1937] 1975) and Trinidad (Herskovits [1947] 1964). The Herskovitses' ethnographic research methods and writing style allowed, for the first time in the research tradition on death in the Caribbean, for Saamaka, Haitian and Trinidadian voices to be included in the analysis: they cited elders' and ritual specialists' responses and expressions, and the field recordings in Toco in 1939 ("Peter Was a Fisherman") featured various songs of local mortuary and ancestral rituals, *reel* and *bongo*.

The agency that emerged in these ethnographies moved the representation of African Caribbean ritual practitioners away from the illogical and savage brujo or obeahman and toward knowledgeable and articulate, if somewhat anonymous or generalized, folk.[13] Sympathetic representations of rural African Caribbean people and their cultural ideas and practices around death and the dead explored the discursive space opened by Anténor Firmin in his *De l'égalité des races humaines: Anthropologie positive* (1885) and further expanded by Price-Mars (Jackson 1986, 95; Magloire and Yelvington 2005, 3).

In Herskovits's and his students' work, ritual specialists and participants reproduced ancestral traditions, their practice legitimized by historical continuity to an African past. The spirits in Caribbean cosmologies were seen as African retentions, ontological links to a past of which the enslaved people were deprived. Herskovits saw a connection between the concept of a multiple soul in West Africa and Congo, and the concepts of soul, spirit, shadow, and jumby [*sic*] in Trinidad ([1947] 1964, 302); suggested that the "cult of the dead" in Haiti was distinctly African, though modified by Catholicism ([1937] 1975, 205); and considered ancestor veneration, burial practices, and the use of the spirits of the dead in magic in Caribbean societies as "purely

African" (1941, 236–242).[14] In *Life in a Haitian Valley*, Herskovits presents the "ancestral cult" as an area in which Africanisms were most clearly marked.[15]

The themes of resistance and violence, prevalent in the exoticizing proto-ethnography of Caribbean rituals and religious practices, were no longer in the forefront in the Herskovitsian literature: while ritual practitioners were logical and had a degree of agency, they were not to be considered a threat to the social order.[16] In the same vein, the policing of Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad and Tobago or the anti-Vodou legislation and campaigns in Haiti did not inform Herskovits' or his students' approaches to these religions. Instead of looking into the socially transformative potential of ritual practice with its implications of non-European power or insurgency, anthropologists wrote less threatening and therefore, differently othering descriptions of folk culture guided by theoretical interests in cultural retentions and social integration.

I have followed early developments in representations of mortuary culture, showing how anthropologists' approaches to time and the other have served to distance "barbaric" or "folk" rituals from the realm of the contemporary and modern. In deeply stratified societies, this kind of discursive labor has for its part served to cement racialized and class difference. At the same time, there is much of value in the early and mid-twentieth-century ethnographies, and the chapters in this collection build on some of the concepts, arguments, and ethnographic evidence of this research tradition. In the following sections of the Introduction, I introduce the chapters of this volume in more detail, embedding them in thematically relevant areas in the anthropology of death. Beginning with questions of social reproduction, the discussion proceeds to debates of social relations between the living and the dead; personhood; commemorialization; and the government of death.

Death and Reproduction

While Herskovits did not refer to Durkheim, Robert Hertz, or Arnold van Gennep in his work, the theme of social integration underpins his analyses of death rituals in Suriname, Haiti and Trinidad: death rituals restored and sustained social cohesion after the loss of a loved one.[17] In *Life in a Haitian Valley*, he draws attention to a commemorative ritual called *mangé mort*, a sacrificial offering of a dinner with various dishes served for deceased family members, which marked the anniversary of death in the family along with a

Catholic Mass (Herskovits [1937] 1975, 212, 259). He describes the activation of kinship roles in mourning (216–218) and the importance of family land as the abode of the ancestors (132). The Haitian kinship system—including the institution of *plaçage* (common law marriage), polygyny, and family land cultivated to support ancestral rituals—was reproduced and legitimated in the mortuary cycle and ancestor veneration (116, 132).

The central authority of elders among the Saamaka in Suriname and in Toco, Trinidad, was reinforced in death rituals (M. and F. Herskovits [1934] 1971, chap. 1; and [1947] 1964, 134; see also Hurston [1938] 1990, 41 on Haiti, and Breinburg 2001, 35 on ancestors in the African Surinamese Winti tradition). For Herskovits, death rituals in Trinidad functioned as a "stabilizing, moral force" ([1947] 1964, 134). Spirits of the dead supported and sustained social institutions and cohesion in Toco, because they enforced ethical and moral codes and sanctioned marriages. Herskovits grounded his interpretation of the stabilizing effect of mortuary rituals and ancestral veneration to a similar function in African societies: "This complex of beliefs is to be regarded as a retention of the African ancestral cult which in Africa is the most important single sanctioning force for the social system and the codes of behaviour that underlie it" ([1947] 1964, 300). Ineke (Wilhelmina) Van Wetering and Bonno (H. U. E.) Thoden van Velzen's chapter in this volume discusses gerontocracy in the Ndyuka society, legitimized by the daily consultations with the ancestors by middle-aged and older Ndyuka men and their predominance in mortuary rituals. In a dramatic turn of events, this patriarchal power structure was challenged by a demon-fighting campaign that resembled witchcraft eradication movements in African societies (e.g., Auslander 1993; Geschiere 1997).

In addition to their role in reproducing moral communities, ancestors' tangible connection to the living at burial sites helped to establish proto-peasant and peasant communities in and outside of the plantation, especially in the institution of family land. Jean Besson's work on kinship and land tenure in rural Jamaica shows how family land, which functions partly as a private burial ground, has been owned and transmitted by descent groups within a cognatic system created by enslaved Africans. Ancestral presence, concretized in family tombs, legitimizes the descent group's ownership of the land and links contemporary generations to enslaved or newly emancipated ancestors (Besson 2002; Horst 2004; see also Richman 2005 on the institution of *eritaj* in Haiti). Yanique Hume's chapter in this volume adds to this literature by exploring the cultural reproduction of space and kinship in mortuary rituals in rural Jamaica, where last rites on family land solidify a

sense of belonging both to the homestead and to the extended family. Hume shows how collective ritual labor in the mortuary cycle reaffirms kinship ties and identity.

Rituals of divination have also been considered to have a stabilizing function in the mortuary cycle: by gauging agency and motives behind death, including witchcraft, laying out unresolved conflicts and eventually leading toward resolution and possibly reconciliation, divination drew on the authority of the dead to help communities maintain stasis. Coffin divination was a spectacular element of the funerals of the enslaved in colonial Jamaica and Grenada as well as Saamaka and Ndyuka mortuary cycles (Beckwith 1929; Bell 1893, 146; Brown 2008, 66–69; Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering 2004, 79–86 and this volume; Williams [1934] 1979, 190–193). The spirit of the deceased, guiding the coffin bearers, made them stop in front of the abodes of those members of the community who might have contributed to the death, or with whom the dead had unresolved business. Andrew Pearse's team of ethnographers in Tobago in 1954 describe other ways of consulting the dead about possible wrongdoings leading to their demise: "Relatives may make requests [of the corpse] for favours, give messages to the dead for other relatives 'gone before' or command the dead one to come "back back" and "tell ah we who kill you."[18] Karen Richman's chapter in this volume questions the neatly integrating function assigned to divination and other rituals: looking into the moral authority of the dead in Haitian rites of commemoration and divination, Richman suggests that although mortuary rituals allow descent groups in contemporary Haiti to air out social dramas, they do not always lead to closure and resolution for the bereaved.[19]

Although few refer directly to Hertz and van Gennep's work, many anthropological accounts of funerary rituals in Caribbean societies explore the ritual production of death as a process rather than a single event, often with a particular focus on the liminal stage of wake, *bongo*, or other mortuary rituals during which the spirit of the deceased lingers among the living. Martha Beckwith (1929), Jacob Elder (1955), Herskovits ([1937] 1975, 208–209 and [1947] 1964, 301), Zora Neale Hurston ([1938] 1990, chap. 4), Alfred Métraux (1960, 100–102), and Simpson (1957 and 1965, 56–58), but also more contemporary authors such as Stephen Glazier (2006, 179), Jocelyne Guilbault (1987), Karen Fog Olwig (2009), Rawle Titus (2008), and Huon Wardle (2000) describe the communal ritualizing and merrymaking of the wake in various parts of the Caribbean and its diaspora, including Indian Trinidadian wakes (Klass 1961, 129; Niehoff and Niehoff 1960, 132; Vertovec 1992, 206), and contribute to a general argument on the effects of death on social

cohesion and continuity.[20] They emphasize the importance of the community's active participation in funerary wakes and make mention of drinking, games, and obscenity, but also the singing of hymns. A successful wake manages to "amuse the dead . . . and thus send him away in good humor" (Herskovits [1937] 1975, 209), but also relies on "neighbourly hosting and reciprocity" and "the connections that individuals form through wakes to different people and places, including relationships formed and reinforced between the countryside and town" (Wardle 2000, 143).

In the United Kingdom, where Caribbean migrants' mortuary rituals have had to be adjusted because of different living arrangements, communities and regulations, funerals may have subsumed some of the features of the nocturnal wake. Karen Fog Olwig writes of a funeral of a Nevisian man in London attended by other Caribbean migrants based in Leeds. The day trip to London on a chartered a bus produced a sentiment of belonging and togetherness: "with their self-conscious display of support and solidarity, these funerals would thus serve to demarcate the Caribbean immigrants as a community of caring people who assume responsibility for the proper burial of their loved ones and are prepared to travel far to show their last respects to a bereaved family" (2009, 525). Annie Paul describes the "bling" funerals of gang leaders and dancehall artists in Jamaica and shows how elaborately decorated designer caskets, motorcades of luxury vehicles, and other displays of conspicuous consumption help to perpetuate the power of "community leaders" and the links between gangs and political parties (2007).

Debbora Battaglia's perceptive analysis of death and personhood in Papua New Guinea speaks to these Caribbean examples of community building at death: Battaglia sees *segaiya*, a series of mortuary feasts, as an "act of restoration" wherein the bereaved reconstitute, "symbolically and collectively, the relationship they have lost as a part of their own historically situated identities; collectivities of persons are being restored to themselves" (1990, 155). The restoration of collective selves in the face of ever-present death and violence, if not what Orlando Patterson ([1968] 1985) called "social death" in the plantation, has been a major mechanism for society building in the Caribbean. Keith McNeal adds to the research tradition on mortuary rituals and the reproduction of community in his chapter on the development of Hindu funerals in Trinidad and Tobago. Taking the analysis beyond kin groups and communities, he looks into the consolidation of Hinduism in the course of the twentieth century and argues that the discursive, legislative, and ritual production of orthodox mortuary culture helped to solidify Indian Trinidadian ethnicity in the ethnically and religiously diverse society.

Replacing burial, cremation became increasingly common and eventually orthopraxic among Trinidadian Hindus. As a strong and deeply meaningful resource in the production of ethnic identity, cremation has also been embraced by Indian Trinidadians who belong to Christian denominations.

In the introduction to their edited volume *Death and the Regeneration of Life* (1982), Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry explore connections between the Hertzian focus on reproducing the social order in the face of loss and bereavement and the Frazerian interest in symbols of sexuality and fertility in death rituals. While Caribbean anthropology includes numerous discussions of sexual symbolism in funerary wakes as well as analyses of the simultaneity and symbiotic rapport between death and sexuality in the Vodou pantheon, especially in the lwa Gede, and while these discussions in many ways contribute to our understanding of the reproduction of social order, they also show how symbols of sexuality and death are culturally constructed and culturally specific, universal as sex and death themselves might be. Obscene jokes and sexually explicit dancing recur in wakes across the region (e.g., Métraux [1958] 1960 on Haiti; Price and Price 1991 on Saamaka wakes in Suriname; and Guilbault 1987, 289, and Weekes 2014, 37–38, on *kont* dances in St. Lucia). Elder describes bongo songs performed in Tobagonian wake cycles as "openly erotic" and the accompanying dances as "mimes upon copulative acts spontaneously choreographed by 'specialists'" (1971, 20). In Anglo-Caribbean societies such as Tobago, where performances of sexuality are guided by colonially inherited value complexes coined by anthropologists as *reputation* and *respectability*, the liminal space of mortuary rituals allows for exaggerated portrayals of heteronormative masculinity and female sexuality that are rarely acceptable in everyday social life. These subversive performances within the "anti-structure" of the liminal space of the wake (Turner [1969] 1995) challenge and negate the strict moral norms of Protestant Christianity. But like carnival, wakes are always followed by the "structure" of normal society where "the ludic is absorbed and neutralized by the established order" (Burton 1997, 173).[21]

Working with the Dead

Instead of dwelling in a neatly demarcated afterworld, the dead in the Caribbean have been "uncontainable" (Taussig 2001, 307). Afterworlds entangle with the world of the living, as spirits linger in, or traverse, the communities they used to be part of—in spite of the substantial amount of energy and resources invested in some mortuary rituals to guarantee them a safe passage

to the hereafter. Spirits of the dead have long attracted attention in Caribbean ethnography, not only in the context of mortuary rituals but as ancestral spirits, jumbies, duppies, evil spirits, or entities invoked in Espiritismo and kabbalah rituals. Anthropologists have studied the relations between the dead and the living in Caribbean societies from various perspectives, looking at spirits as a source of suffering; as a resource in ritual work such as healing; as agents of possession that work as performative histories, or mouthpieces that allow the subaltern to speak; and as aspects of complex personhoods.

The figure of the anonymous, potentially malevolent spirit lingering in the world of the living intrigued early observers such as Beckwith (1929), Hesketh Bell (1893), Williams ([1934] 1979), and J. S. Udal (1915).[22] Much of the ritual practice defined as obeah in Caribbean courtrooms and media in the nineteenth century and early twentieth aimed at getting rid of malevolent spirits or alleviating suffering caused by them (Bilby and Handler 2004; Forde 2012; Paton 2015, chap. 6). Spirits of the dead were firmly incorporated in the cosmologies of Hindu sugar workers and peasants by the time Arthur and Juanita Niehoff did their fieldwork in Penal and Debe in southern Trinidad in 1957. "The Indian in the Oropouche area is surrounded by a mysteriously shadowy world of spirits, which become particularly active at night," they wrote, and described identifiable spirits such as Dumphries Baba, a white overseer of a sugar estate, or Lamont Sahib, a white plantation owner; and the jumbies that emerged at a drilling site abandoned by an American oil company. Anonymous, dangerous spirits of suicides could cause illness and death, and ritual specialists, obeahmen, were regularly consulted in order to counter possessions by malevolent spirits (1960, 161–165; see also Klass 1961, 183).

A more proactive relationship between the living and the dead emerges in recent ethnographies of ritual practice, especially rituals of healing and divination, based on communication and collaboration with the dead. In Raquel Romberg's work with Espiritistas (who self-identify as *brujos* and *brujas*, taking ownership of the previously derogatory label), Puerto Rican women and men describe their lives with *los muertos*, spirits of their family members and other close ones, and ritual specialists work with a diverse cavalcade of spirits to heal and help their clients (2003, 2012).

Todd Ramón Ochoa writes of similar relationships between Cuban *paleros*, ritual specialists in the Palo tradition, and their *muertos* or *Kalunga*, the dead with whom they communicate on a daily basis. Ochoa defines the Kalunga as "the ambient dead" to convey their "saturating yet barely discernable

influence," more like a climate or an atmosphere than a static pantheon of spirits (2010, 37). While the dead often appear as an anonymous mass of spirits, paleros and paleras can communicate and work with responsive dead: *prendas*, cauldrons or urns filled with symbolic materials, are ritual agents rather than objects in that they enable paleros to harness the potential of the Kalunga. "Prenda rules the dead," explained Teodoro, Ochoa's teacher in Palo (11–12, 72). Ritual specialists can also use *firmas*, compacts or inscriptions, to "establish the will of the living over the dead" (154). The relationship between paleros and muertos develops over time, as visions, ritual acts, and exchanges can lead to greater intimacy between the living and the dead, improve communication and increase the efficacy of the pact with the dead (Panagiotopoulos 2011, 86–87). In the context of Vodou, Richman's ethnography has been instrumental in unveiling the cultural logic behind serving the spirits and on the other hand, making spirits serve people (2005; see also McAlister 2012 and 2002, chap. 3, on *zonbi* as forced labor).

Like in Cuba and Haiti, the idea of the dead as serving the living is a longstanding one in the Anglophone Caribbean. J. S. Udal (1915, 281) quotes a British medical officer's report on the widely circulated trope of obeahmen "catching" spirits or jumbies, who were then set to perform endless, impossible tasks, or to cause harm on another person (see also Beckwith 1929, 136–137, on paying duppies for their services). Kabbalah work in Trinidad depends on exchange between ritual participants and spirits, which can be used in work related to healing, court cases, and "cases of emergency" (Houk 1999, 300; Simpson 1965, 23). Steven Vertovec, who conducted his doctoral fieldwork in Trinidad in the mid-1980s, notes the prevalent discourse on jumbies and ritual specialists who can manipulate them among rural Trinidadians, "whether Hindu, Muslim or Christian—African or Indian" (1992, 216).

Personhood and Remembering

Some of the spirits in these "huge cosmic armies," to borrow Romberg's expression (2003, 155), are recently deceased loved ones, family members, and friends. The ritual and symbolic manipulation of the personhood and memories of recently dead members of the community has received much anthropological attention. Ritualized mourning can aim at eradicating the personhood of the deceased from the life-world of the living, like in Beth A. Conklin's work on Wari' funerary practices in Amazonia, including ritual cannibalism, that gradually detach the deceased from the web of relations with the bereaved (2001). The Manuš, a Roma community in France, annihilate

the possessions of deceased members of the group shortly after death and stop uttering their name or evoking their memory. Similar principles of ritualized detachment can be found in the Kagwahiv and Waiwai performances of grief and loss discussed in George Mentore's chapter.

Caribbean mortuary rituals include less dramatic practices of disconnecting the social relations and reciprocal obligations between the dead and the bereaved and making sure that the dead do not return to harm the living. Colin [Joan] Dayan explains the rationale behind serving the dead in Haiti: unless they are ritually fed and remembered, the dead "can become evil and unpredictable" (1995, 264). Indian Trinidadian Hindus "facilitate the potentially lingering spirit's departure" by rearranging the house of the deceased: curtains are taken down, pictures and mirrors are turned to face the wall, and ceramic candles, *deyas*, are lit in the bedroom (Vertovec 1992, 206). In the same vein, Hume's chapter in this volume describes the laborious cleansing rituals required to "turn out" the spirit of the dead in rural Jamaica. In addition to ritual manipulation of space, the deceased can be separated from the living through narratives. The practice of "memorializing" the dead in Jamaican wakes by reciting their life stories as reported by Simpson (1957, 330) resembles Mapuche funerals in Chile, where oratories serve to complete or finish the personhood of the deceased. The oratories, *amapüllün*, present the life of the deceased person as a meaningful whole, as if leading toward a conclusion, and thus enable him or her to move across to the afterworld (Course 2007, 94). A similar rationale underpins the material culture of tombs, their construction, maintenance, and eventual disintegration in Jamaica. Heather Horst (2004) argues that the process of commemorating the deceased by "tombing," building a house for the dead, and then allowing it to fade into the landscape at the mercy of sun and rain facilitates the transformation of the deceased into an ancestor.

Ancestral history is an integral element of many rituals and narratives in the Caribbean. Celebration and invocation of African ancestors are institutionalized in the Big Drum ritual in Carriacou (McDaniel 1998) and in Jamaican Kumina (Bilby and Bunseki 1983; Stewart 2005), and narratives of ancestors maintain First-Time ideology, a historical corpus that is central to cultural and social reproduction, as a "living force" in contemporary Saamaka society (Price [1983] 2002, 12). Paul Christopher Johnson's chapter in this volume speaks to the ritual performances of the ancestral past as a *tableau vivant*, in which the Garifuna "act ancestrally," bringing the past to the present.

Notions of personhood underlying mortuary rituals that ensure the spirit of the dead does not linger among the living, and on the other hand, rituals of commemoration, remain undertheorized in Caribbean anthropology.[23] We also know little about the cultural norms and politics of remembering and forgetting that determine which dead are commemorated and reanimated in public and private rituals, or which deaths become part of collective memory. Equally deserving of further anthropological attention in the region are emotional responses to death. Experiences and performances of grief and loss at death—including "bad" or untimely death caused by state, gang, and domestic violence—would merit careful analysis that could increase our understanding of the cultural contexts of affect, but also lead to more sensitive and complex representations of Caribbean people.[24] In this volume, Hume and Richman pay attention to emotional responses to death in Jamaica and Haiti, and affect is at the forefront of Mentore's discussion of certain Amerindian experiences and expressions of grief and loneliness and the cultural logics of retaliatory death, *parawa*. This focus on affect has deep theoretical and representational implications. Valorizing what he calls the emotional base of embodied lived experience, Mentore writes of affective action in humanistic terms, approaching Amerindian "life lived as poetry."

Spirits and Selves

This review of the anthropology of death in the Caribbean has moved from early studies of how others—antimodern savages or atavistic folk—ritualized death and associated with the spirits of the dead toward approaches that do not hesitate to think of the cultural production of death as part of modern and evolving societies. This does not mean that cultural difference and different sources of cultural knowledge have become muted in anthropological discussions of the dead. As shown below, recent work has revealed ontological premises in Caribbean cosmologies that differ radically from ideas of being in Christianity or the version of modernity informed by the Enlightenment. But instead of presenting these differences as "mentalities" that belong to other times and places, or simply as ancestral continuums of cultural heritage, anthropologists discuss them as part of complex and changing societies. Alterity becomes a research problem rather than an ethnographic by-product; careful studies of power relations in the cultural sphere of death challenge inherent, and unquestioned, hierarchies in knowledge production.

The cosmologies and ontologies unfolding in the first part of the book complicate and expand anthropological understandings of selves and personhood, relations and intersubjectivity in relation to the dead.[25] Mentore's chapter on spirits, bodies, and socialities in Amerindian cosmologies in Guyana is particularly critical of modernist anthropology in this regard. The persistence of Enlightenment ideas in anthropological vocabularies and models limit the ways in which we can write, and think, about selfhood and time. Mentore shows how Waiwai relations between the spiritual vitality of the dead and the bodies, emotions, and memories of the living undermine notions of linear time and being that have informed much anthropological theorizing on death and mortuary culture. For these Amerindians, death is not a "passage" to an "afterworld"; it is not the end of a modern, embodied self. According to Mentore, "the Amerindian self cannot be considered as possessing any authentic original singularity." Instead, he explores the intersubjective construction of selves by caring, caretaking others. Central to this "intimate alterity" is the sharing and exchanging of spirit vitality, a source of unintentional power that invigorates the body, keeps it alive, and provides it with will and power.

What Sylvia Wynter might call the "ontological sovereignty" (Scott 2000, 136) of Amerindian ideas has not been compromised by colonialism, slavery, and the plantation in the same way as African Caribbean cosmologies. Mentore describes an unintentional spirit vitality, which implies a different approach to individuals, spirits, and agency than the Ndyuka concept of ancestors (van Wetering and Thoden van Velzen), Trinidadian *jumbies* (Forde) or Haitian *mò* (Richman). Nevertheless, neither the Amerindian nor the African-inspired (to borrow Todd Ramón Ochoa's term) cosmologies discussed in the chapters make a clear distinction between life and afterlife as autonomous spheres. The realm of the dead is not clearly distinct from that of the living; there is no ontological rupture between the conditions of being and no longer being (Espírito Santo 2015; Goldman 2007; Holbraad 2012). Relations to the dead materialize when the Garifuna "act ancestrally" (Johnson); when the dead, mò, return to declare the true reasons for their passing (Richman); when the Ndyuka bring their daily worries and problems to the ancestors' attention after offering them a drink (van Wetering and Thoden van Velzen); or when a dutiful kinsman avenges the death of a Waiwai with the aid of a contracted spirit (Mentore). The "ambient dead" (Ochoa 2010)—such as ancestors, kabbalah spirits, orishas, or the lwa—call into question notions of selfhood that have become normative in biomedicine as well as much of the literature on identity politics in the Caribbean.

Porous or penetrable selves, bodies that can be occupied by different entities, resemble the concept of dividual, partible, or composite personhood discussed in the body of literature that has become known as New Melanesian Ethnography. Dividually conceived selves, writes Marilyn Strathern, "are constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produce them" (1988, 13; see also Herner 2013; LiPuma 1998, 2000; and Mosko 2010). The participants in *misas blancas*, Spiritist rituals in a Cuban community in Chicago, construct their relatedness to the spirits of the dead through mimesis, sympathetic impersonation of the spirits, for example, through clothing, accessories, and gestures. The blurred or porous boundaries between ritual practitioners and their spirit guides, the practitioners' acquiescence to the will of the spirits, and the impact of patron orishas on the destiny of their "children" problematize the idea of an autonomous, individual self (Pérez 2012, 368–370).[26] In a similar vein, Diana Espírito Santo writes about the development and expansion of selfhood through Cuban mediums' connections to multiple muertos (2015). Orishas, ancestral spirits, and other entities are "recognized as being on, around, and within practitioners' bodies" in Santería, more like "copresences" than otherworldly entities mediated through the body (Beliso-De Jesús 2014, 504). In these accounts of Cuban religious practice, relations between the living and the dead are characterized by movement, proximity, and distance rather than a divide between here and hereafter, or possession of a ritual practitioner by an external deity.[27]

In some Caribbean cosmologies discussed in this volume and elsewhere, the dead are ritually and conceptually separated from other, "higher" spiritual entities such as orishas or the lwa. Possession by the dead is ritually and discursively distanced from possession by higher spirits. Johnson describes negotiations over this separation in Brazil and Cuba in his chapter. Garifuna ancestors, he argues, do not possess their living descendants in spectacular possession-performances, like those of orishas or the lwa, and although possession-trance may take place during the lengthy ritual of ancestor veneration, *dügü*, it is not the climax or the purpose of the ritual. The ancestors' presence manifests through "acting ancestrally" or "becoming ancestral" by performing tasks and chores associated with ancestors. This mimetic or sympathetic practice can be understood as a tableau vivant produced by ritual participants rather than momentarily visiting, external spirits.

A different, though related, perspective on the reproduction of ancestral presence underpins Richard Price's ethnography of Saamaka history and remembering. Price's emphasis on stories allows for a nuanced understanding

of the agency of ritual specialists as well as ancestors and shifts the focus from the dancing, drumming, or possessed body toward narrating, remembering subjectivity. Tooy, a Saamaka healer in Cayenne, French Guiana, shares his profound historical and ritual knowledge with the Prices, but also with other Saamaka, circulating stories about ancestors such as Antamá, a warrior who fought for the liberty of his people in the 1760s. Ancestors and their acts become relevant and contemporary in Tooy's rhetoric, so that his narration is closer to time traveling than remembering, and they participate in Tooy's social world "just as family members and other people do" (Price 2008, 150–157, 288; see also Herskovits and Herskovits 1936, chap. 13).

Mentore points toward the disparity between Waiwai and other Amerindian experiences and anthropological models based on binary, dialectical thought. He questions anthropology's ability or willingness to truthfully represent radically different subjectivities such as Amerindian perceptions of selfhood (see also Viveiros de Castro 2013 and Johnson 2011).[28] Fathoming similar problems in epistemology and representation in Melanesian anthropology, Edward LiPuma cautions against excessive relativism, which renders the dividual other so incommensurable to Western notions of personhood that anthropological representation becomes impossible. Important for the discussions of the spirits of the dead in this volume, LiPuma argues that a singular emphasis on dividuality obscures the increasing role of individual aspects of personhood in modern Melanesia (2000, 151). Modernity and modern subjectivity have, of course, a different history in the insular Caribbean than in Melanesia or Amazonia, and the possibly composite personhoods discussed in much of Caribbean ethnography are informed by modern modes of production and cosmopolitan sensibilities.

Transforming Death

In making sense of death in highly diverse, stratified and often violent societies, the writers in the second half of this book advance anthropological understandings of death in the nexus of state power, social stratification, and alterity politics.[29] Since the paradigm shift in Caribbean anthropology influenced by *The Birth of African-American Culture* (Mintz and Price 1992), the historical conditions in which Caribbean people relate to the spirits of the dead have received more attention. Communication with the dead as well as rituals of commemoration have been shaped by the logic of capitalism in plantation and postplantation societies (Richman 2005; Romberg 2003), migration and transnational mobility (Johnson 2007; Rey and Stepick 2013; Richman 2005),

materiality and technology (Espírito Santo 2010; Palmié 2014; Paul 2007), and natural as well as political catastrophes or state violence (Dayan 1995, 263–267; James 2012; Pichler 2011; Price 1995; Richman 2012; Scott 2014; Thomas 2011). Richard Price's chapter contrasts Saamaka justice and executions with the violent punishments of the enslaved within the plantation regime. Price argues that public corporeal punishment in Saamaka society appropriated elements of plantocratic cruelty, so that punishments and executions considered unjust and defied by the enslaved were accepted as legitimate when implemented by the Saamaka themselves. Thus the fundamentally violent social order of the plantation served as a resource for cultural reproduction in a Maroon society, guiding the development of the Saamaka justice system.[30]

Donald Cosentino looks into transformations in Vodou cosmology in the context of political upheavals from the Duvalier dynasty to Aristide, and finally, the devastating 2010 earthquake and the subsequent cholera epidemic in Haiti. Exploring artistic representations of death, he describes the changing relations between Bawon Samdi, Gede, and zonbi in what he calls a "revolution in Haitian mythological thought regarding death and afterlife arrangements over the last generation." The family of spirits linked to death and sexuality, the Gedes, have evolved along with social and political transformations.[31] While Bawon, the sinister paterfamilias of the spirits of death in Vodou, and zonbi were emblematic of state terror and violence under the Duvaliers, ritual and artistic representations of Gede proliferated in the years that followed. However, the chain of catastrophes beginning with President Aristide's overthrow and leading to the 2010 earthquake and the subsequent cholera epidemic brought so much death to Haiti that the Bawon receded and Gede's raucous mix of the lethal and lascivious became irrelevant in Haitian eschatology.

Whereas the eschatological shifts in Haiti are based on people's relationships to lwa in contexts of insecurity and uncontrollable change, the ritual transformation of Indian Trinidadian funerals as described by McNeal appears to have been a more teleological process. Hindu funerals, and especially the treatment and fate of the body of the deceased, have changed substantially since the period of indentureship, and meanings attached to cremation have transformed accordingly. Hindu activists have used cremation as a point of reference in debates over religious orthopraxy, but it has also served more general Indian Trinidadian identity politics—"postcolonial 'Indian Renaissance,'" as McNeal puts it. The appropriation of cremation as a marker of ethnic identity in a multicultural society has empowered Indian Trinidadians to subvert oppressive structures and articulate identity claims.

Not only has praxis transformed; the symbolism of cremation has become more potent and experiences of the ritual more powerful.

McNeal's and my own chapter look at the colonial state's attempts to govern mortuary rituals in Trinidad and Tobago, but while McNeal emphasizes religious activists' roles, in my chapter the focus is on legislative and discursive measures aimed at shaping working-class mortuary culture. I argue that relationships to spirits as performed in mortuary rituals threatened the colonial project of "civilization," but also the notion of a rational and autonomous individual who was central to protonationalist thought. Radically different cosmological and ontological perspectives unsettled political projects aimed at producing civilized colonial subjects or, alternatively, citizens capable of self-government, and the government of death in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth sought to alleviate these concerns. It has, for its part, contributed to the sedimentation of class difference and inequality in Trinidad and Tobago.

This literature that examines mortuary culture in its sociohistorical, political, and economic contexts is not disputing the symbolic weight placed on origins and the past in anthropological and historical theorizing on Caribbean mortuary culture. The past is, however, approached as a symbolic referent that performs important conceptual and political work in the present rather than a historical trajectory toward cultural origins (Scott 1991). Whereas studies focusing on the African background of Caribbean death culture have shown how history—or at times, the authors' ideological projection of history—have influenced contemporary ideas and ritual practice and how the past lives on in the rural or working-class present, literature on the changing historical contexts of death invites us to ask how sociocultural transformations and political economy affect the ways in which Caribbean people conceptualize the dead and the ancestral past. Spirits of the dead can inspire anthropological inquiry into the "social framework[s] of memory" or the employment of the past in contemporary construction of history, identities and political rhetoric, rather than the search for origins (Scott 2014, 126; 1991, 279). Unlike the early, evolutionist accounts that situated African Caribbean rituals on the other side of the temporal juncture separating primitive from modern, or the nationalist and Herskovitsian interest in relics of an ideologically preferred past that validated folk culture, anthropology of death that takes seriously contemporary politics and social and economic contexts does not distance its subjects from the present, the historical moment they share with the authors and readers of ethnography. Historically sensitive anthropology of the dead and the living can therefore

seek and approach coevalness in its representation of ritual participants, and treat difference and alterity as subjects of analysis rather than a guiding principle in the ethnographic process.

In her afterword, Aisha Khan probes a question that underpins this introduction and shapes the essays that follow: how to write about others' rituals and cosmological understandings of death—passages and afterworlds—while doing justice to multiple truths and temporalities? Art, she suggests, can help bridge the realities of the observer and the observed. Khan's account of Dickens's classic *A Christmas Carol* shows how fiction can expose the binaries of Western epistemology and help us see beyond the "cognitive struggle" between sense and sensibility that encounters with death can produce. In the poem that opens this introduction, Walcott's verse conveys Shabine's immersion in the sea where the dead and the past flow into his, and perhaps our, sensory present.

The metaphorical potential that draws us out of our epistemological and ontological comfort zones can be particularly compelling in visual art. Haitian artist Frantz Zephirin's painting *The Resurrection of the Dead* (2007) on the cover of this book invites the viewer to a family's impending reunion with a deceased member. In this ritual of "retrieving" the dead, beautifully described in Richman's chapter in this book, the bereaved pay a ritual specialist to summon the dead from *anba dlo*, under the water, where the deceased has dwelled in "liquid oblivion" for at least a year and a day. We do not see the living; instead, myriad individual faces of the dead look on as the one who has been summoned returns to the mourning family in a casket ebbing in the waves. Bawon Samdi, Grann Brijit, and other lwa of death guard the transition and open a door to a dark, cobwebbed passageway that connects the subterranean waters to the everyday world of the bereaved, out of sight. The viewer swims in the waters of the afterworld, looking into the forbidding passage that leads back to the world of the living, perhaps reluctant to enter.

Lacking the imaginative space offered by symbolic ambiguity and burdened by its conceptual baggage, ethnographic prose can only strive to evoke equally powerful questions, sentiments, and memories of the "ultimate unknown" as poetry or art. But having shared their interlocutors' losses, participated in their send-offs and commemorations, and witnessed their encounters with the dead, ethnographers—including those writing in this volume—can deepen our understanding of different ways of knowing about death as well as our shared humanity in the face of ends, exits, and returns.

Notes

I am grateful to Paul Christopher Johnson, Aisha Khan, and the two anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful and constructive comments that helped me restructure and clarify this introduction.

1. Although this collection of essays does not have the encyclopedic ambition of presenting a comprehensive account of mortuary culture across Caribbean societies and religious communities, the exclusion of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean is unfortunate, because much of the contemporary literature on the spirits of the dead focuses on Cuba and Puerto Rico (e.g., Beliso-De Jesús 2014; Espírito Santo 2015; Holbraad 2012; Ochoa 2010; Panagiotopoulos 2011; Román 2007; Romberg 2003; Wirtz 2014). Todd Ramón Ochoa and Marta Moreno Vega, who work on Cuban and Puerto Rican religions, were part of the workshop that initiated this book project, and their contributions to the conversations at the workshop have informed many of the chapters. The introduction attempts to bring the chapters of this book into conversation with some of the arguments in the literature on the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and other areas of the region.

2. The changing epistemological conditions (which have often been muted in the literature) coincided with struggles for enfranchisement and citizenship, nationalism and European as well as US imperialism in highly unequal societies. The research tradition on death in the Caribbean reflects anthropologists' changing understandings of the positions, rights, and needs of rural and working-class people as well as Maroon and Amerindian communities.

3. Suspicions of cannibalism were widely circulated in early travel writing on indigenous populations in the New World, such as the Tupinambá and other groups in Brazil (Léry [1578] 1990; Staden 2008) and in the Caribbean (Boucher 1992; Hulme and Whitehead 1992). Eighteenth-century observers of plantation societies, such as the planter historians Edward Long and Bryan Edwards, did not include speculation on cannibalism or human sacrifice in their descriptions of Jamaica. Moreau de Saint-Méry (1797–1798) briefly mentions fears of cannibalism on a plantation in Saint-Domingue, but does not elaborate on these or link them to "Vaudoux."

4. A well-known example of an obeah-related murder or sacrifice that received media attention across the British Caribbean was the notorious Monchy murder case in St. Lucia in 1904. Three men were sentenced to death by hanging for murdering a twelve-year-old Barbadian boy, Rupert Mapp, "for purposes of obeah." Reports of the murder, the search for the perpetrators, the court proceedings, and the execution were published in *St. Lucia Voice*, but also in the *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, the *Dominican*, *Antigua Standard*, *Limón Weekly News* and *Port of Spain Gazette*, and possibly other newspapers in the region, in October–December 1904. On the media coverage of obeah-related murder cases, see Lara Putnam (2012); Reinaldo Román (2007, chap. 3).

5. In Tylor's 1871 *Primitive Culture*, animism or belief in spiritual beings as the original form of religion emanates from people's attempts to understand what causes death and the difference between life and death, as well as anthropomorphic visions in dreams (387).

6. See Palmié (2002, 216) on Ortiz's use of Tylor in building an argument about the degenerative effect of Afro-Cuban *brujos* on the Cuban society as a whole.

7. Ortiz's account of the sacrifice of white children by Afro-Cuban brujos reflected and fueled a moral panic that developed in Cuba and spread around the region after the 1904 murder of a little girl who came to be known as *la niña Zoila* (Helg 1995; Ortiz [1906] 1973, 102–107; Palmié 2002, chap. 3; 2013, 87). White elites' unease with universal male suffrage in the newly independent Cuba shaped the intellectual climate of Ortiz's early work, and social sciences, including his publications, contributed to the discursive production of brujos and by extension, Afro-Cubans as primitive savages, unsuited for the rights and responsibilities that came along with citizenship (e.g., Bronfman 2004; Cooper 2012; Palmié 2002; Román 2007, chap. 3).

8. This shift was preceded by Anténor Firmin, John Jacob Thomas, and other Haitian and West Indian writers' "vindicationist" responses to racist historians, ethnographers and travel writers; the Empire "writing back" (e.g., Smith 2002).

9. Kate Ramsey (2011, 180) proposes that Price-Mars's work may have influenced Ortiz's new perspective on Afro-Cuban culture and religion; see also Stephan Palmié (2002, 248–254) on the influence of Cuban ritual specialists and especially Fernando Guerra on Ortiz's thought.

10. In Caribbean cultural politics, the growing body of literature on "folk" religion informed nationalist and protonationalist movements and institution building (Ramsey 1995; Thomas 2004). The appropriation of ethnographic knowledge of "folk" rituals and religion took an exceptionally sinister turn in Haiti, where the future dictator-for-life, François Duvalier, studied "national Vodou" under Price-Mars. During his brutal regime from 1957 to 1971, Duvalier tactically deployed symbols and performances of Vodou, drawing on the power vested in the secrecy of its rituals to entrench his position and to discipline and punish the same "folk" whose religious beliefs and practices were understood as the foundation of national culture (P. C. Johnson 2006; Trouillot 1990).

11. The argument and its political implications for Afro-Haitian culture challenged social Darwinist approaches to "primitive" thought and racist depictions of Haiti and Vodou. *Ainsi parla l'oncle* preceded much of the sensationalist literature on Haiti that presented Haitian society as primitive and premodern (and served to justify the American occupation of the country), such as William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1929). In his later publications, Price-Mars challenged some of these hostile but widely read accounts of Haiti and Vodou (Magloire-Danton 2005, 6).

12. Price-Mars corresponded with Melville Herskovits since 1928 and hosted Melville and Frances Herskovits during their 1934 field trip to Haiti, assisting them in the arrangements and providing them with expert advice (Fluehr-Lobban 2005). The aftermath of the US occupation was a moment of intense ethnographic interest in Haiti: Alan Lomax recorded over 1,500 songs in the country in 1936–1937; Harold Courlander visited Haiti for the first time in 1932 and returned over twenty times; Katherine Dunham made her first field trip to Haiti in 1936; George Eaton Simpson did fieldwork in Léogâne in 1937, and like Dunham, met Price-Mars several times during his stay; and Zora Neale Hurston worked in Haiti in 1936–1937.

13. In *Rebel Destiny*, which reads more as a popular travel journal than an ethnography, the Herskovitses portray several Saamaka elders and ritual specialists, identifying them by name and including many direct quotes of their ideas and explanations. Katherine Dunham's *Island Possessed* ([1969] 1994) includes similar depictions of ritual participants in Haiti.

14. On African retentions in death culture, see also Leonard Barrett (1976, 108–109); Roger Bastide ([1960] 1978, 60–61); Alfred Mendes (1950); and George Simpson (1965, 102).

15. Joseph J. Williams, whose *Psychic Phenomena of Jamaica* was published in 1934, connects Jamaican mortuary rituals "back to their origins in distant Africa" and cites various reports on the mortuary culture of West African societies, including Rattray on Ashanti funerals. He concludes that Jamaican "revivalism differs little from the ancient Ashanti paganism and is necessarily antagonistic to every form of Christianity" ([1934] 1979, 180–186, 216). Unlike Herskovits, he does not develop the notion of retention; nor does he present rural Jamaica in very favorable light. For a more recent take on African retentions in Jamaican mortuary rituals, see Marjorie Brown (1985).

16. On connections between obeah and revolts during slavery, see, for example, Edward Long ([1774] 1970); Bryan Edwards (1796); Diana Paton (2012, 2015); on Vodou and the Haitian Revolution, see, for example, David Geggus (2002).

17. This is not to say that Herskovits's approach aligned with structural functionalist models—he was always primarily focused on the question of African retentions and cultural change, dismissing Bronisław Malinowski's work as ahistorical and ignoring contemporary contributions to the study of religion in Africanist anthropology, such as E. E. Evans-Pritchard's 1937 *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande.* Walter Jackson (1986, 110–111) discusses Herskovits's relationship to functionalism and especially Malinowski, whom he brought to Northwestern as a visiting lecturer in 1933.

18. Death Customs of Tobago, Andrew Pearse Collection, Box 1, Folder 6, 19, West Indiana, UWI St. Augustine. Herskovits and Herskovits (1936, 107) explain how the Ndyuka used to bury those who died in suspicious circumstances face down. The deceased would not be able to rest before revealing who had caused the death by sorcery.

19. On the sequence of mortuary rites, see also Colin [Joan] Dayan (1995, 264) and Alfred Métraux (1960, 102).

20. Jocelyne Guilbault (1987) and Wardle (2000) also make a point of the substantial variation in the ritual content of wakes in St. Lucia and Jamaica, respectively, and draw attention to the agency of individual participants, including musicians.

21. For a critique of reputation and respectability, see Besson (1993) and Carla Freeman (2014); the original model was introduced by Peter Wilson (1973).

22. Jumbies or duppies have also been discussed by Barrett (1976, 41–44); Dobben (1986); Elder (1971, 31); Kean Gibson (2001); Herskovits and Herskovits (1936, chap. 13); Melville Herskovits's Trinidad field diary, MG 261, Box 15, Folder 88 , in Melville J. and Frances S. Herskovits Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division, New York Public Library; Zora Neale Hurston (1990, 43–56); Aisha Khan (2004, chap. 4); and Simpson (1965, 24–25, 76–78).

23. On ritual production of forgetting in different societies, see, for example, Course (2007); James Green (2008); Heonik Kwon (2008); Cecilia McCallum (1999); João José Reis ([1991] 2007); Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992); Bilinda Straight (2006); and Paul Ricoeur (2006).

24. The anthropology of grief and mourning can be traced back to Radcliffe-Brown's work on the Andaman Islands. See also Renato Rosaldo ([1989] 2004); Scheper-Hughes (1992); and Shepard (2002). On "good" and "bad" death, see Maurice Bloch and Jona-

than Parry (1982); Dorothy and David Counts (2004); and the special issue of *Curare* (Alex and Heald, eds. 2008).

25. On culturally specific understandings of personhood and relations to the dead, see for example Battaglia (1990) on Sabarl Island society in Melanesia; Beliso-De Jesús (2014) on Santería; Beth Conklin (2001) on the Wari' in Amazonia, Western Brazil; Desjarlais (2003) on Nepal's Yolmo Buddhists; Goldman 2007 on Candomblé; McCallum (1999) on the Cashinahua of Western Amazonia; Todd Ramón Ochoa (2010) on Palo; Anastasios Panagiotopoulos (2011) on Afro-Cuban divination; Sharp (2006) on memory work and mourning among families of American organ donors; or Bilinda Straight (2006) on the relationships between the deceased and the bereaved in Kenya.

26. See also Johnson (2011) for an insightful discussion of the development of the concept of "spirit possession" along with early modern notions of personhood and property.

27. Drawing on Roger Bastide's work on Candomblé, Marcio Goldman shows how initiates and orishas are mutually constructed in ritual practice, as a generic substrate, or *ache*, is made into a "saint" while the initiate is made into a "head." The resulting embodiment or coexistence of the initiate and the orisha means that the relationship between them should not be reduced to possession in the sense of a temporary occupation of an individual by an external deity, nor as a transformation of human "heads" into orishas, but a becoming, or movement, in which a relation of affect is established to the divine (112–113). Martin Holbraad's discussion of communication between divinities and *babalawos* in Ifà cosmology in Cuba is based on a similar ontological principle of movement between transcendent and immanent relations, in which babalawos elicit transcendent deities into immanence in ritual practice, including the incantation of *moyubbas* for the spirits of the dead. The movement, or flow, between conditions should not be understood as rupture as in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but rather as "motile" practice, in which divinities and the dead move closer and further from ritual practitioners and objects (2012, chap. 5).

28. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (e.g., 1998, 2013) has made important contributions to anthropological debates of selfhood and subjectivity in Amazonian socialities.

29. Since the foundational work of Bloch (1971) and Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington (1991, chaps. 6 and 7), anthropological theory on death, the state, and the biopolitical management of death has been advanced, for example, by Agamben (1998); Bernstein (2012); Firth (2001); Franklin and Lock (2003); Jean Langford (2009); Christopher Nelson (2008); Richard Price (1995); Antonious Robben (2004b); and Scheper-Hughes (1992, 2015).

30. The violence of slavery and the plantation has been analyzed as a resource for cultural reproduction in discussions of the *petwo* side of Vodou (Apter 2002; Deren [1953] 1983, 62; McCarthy Brown [1991] 2001, 101), *zonbi* (McAlister 2002, 107–109), and *palo* in Cuba (Palmié 2002, 176–181).

31. Katherine Smith has suggested that Gede's phallocentric antics and bravado have in the past three decades have begun to reference young, transgressive, urban masculinities, *vagabondaj,* in the impoverished neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince (2012; see also Deren [1953] 1983 and McCarthy Brown [1991] 2001).