

the slave trade and the Portuguese colonial state. Rarey engages deeply with the literature and uses a wide range of sources as he develops detailed arguments about the amulets, their uses in countering the colonial gaze, and their function as portable archives. This inspiring book demonstrates how the smallest objects can still open a window to past worlds that have been ignored for so long. As such, the book is of interest not merely to specialists and students of the African diaspora and Black art history but to everyone interested in early modern material cultures.

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CATHOLICS IN COLD WAR MEXICAN POLITICS AND CULTURE

Love and Despair: How Catholic Activism Shaped Politics and the Counterculture in Modern Mexico. By Jaime M. Pensado. Oakland: University of California Press, 2023. Pp. 358. \$85.00 cloth; \$34.95 paper.
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In a thoughtful exploration of Catholic participants in Cold-War-era Mexican politics and counterculture, Jaime Pensado lays bare many historiographic misconceptions. Rejecting notions of a religious worldview marked by its homogeneity, institutional rigidity, and reactionary politics, Pensado instead persuasively demonstrates the dynamic roles of Catholic thinkers. Using comprehensive evidence, he offers a vision of a sophisticated countercultural moment. The inclusion of religious activists reveals a non-militant, non-socialist, and increasingly tolerant ideology open to changing gender roles and spiritualities. He provides few absolutes but presents a largely sympathetic view of the center-right religious world, highlighting how actors swung from devotions of love to lows of despair.

Impressive sources develop and support this new vision. Pensado's archival work alone merits praise, using repositories from across Latin America, the United States, and Europe. Beyond this, 30 interviews flesh out clerical experiences and give voices to significant actors. An analysis of over 80 films reveals cultural struggles over ideas, images, and morality that played out on Mexico's silver screen in a golden age. Pensado also draws from Federal Security Directorate (DFS) surveillance files on Catholic activists and offers insight into governmental paranoia. Most voluminous, the combative Catholic journalism allows Pensado to trace how ideas and practices changed over time and in context.

Written in an engaging style, this book follows a rough chronological order as it addresses themes between the 1950s and the early 1970s. This key era includes postwar changes,

the Mexican Miracle, women's suffrage, the *xipiteca* countercultural movements, and the initiating of a dirty war in Mexico. The first part of the book covers early interactions between modernity, youth cultures, and student activism. It is especially strong on gender and the roles of young women. The second part develops how the ecclesiastical intellectuals wrote combative criticisms of state repressions, imperialism, and social ills. It explains how many Catholics reacted in the aftermath of the government-directed massacres at Tlatelolco (1968) and Corpus Christi (1971). Priests and youths alike chose paths of resistance that ranged from armed struggle to community outreach to leaving the faith entirely. Part 3 returns to culture. Pensado examines *la Onda* movement as it developed in film and music, how media shaped debates over sexual liberation and contraception, and how members of the Church interacted with other elements of countercultural society. This includes historians, with a reappraisal of how the faithful received important revisionist works on the Cristero rebellion (1920s–30s). Throughout, the author aptly weaves multiple sources and an enormous roster of characters into a cohesive interpretation.

Pensado's intervention has much to offer as a skilled repudiation of the many histories that assumed a monolithic and reactive Church, whose dogmatic adherents remained isolated from broader culture and the arts. He argues that the massacres of 1968 and 1971 turned many of the religious center from an activism of love to a more passive despair (or even violence). A more compelling question might address the nature of that love. Given priestly passivity in the face of state violence, and the painfully gradual nature of tolerance for sexuality and difference, adherence to Catholic sensibility and moral responsibility often seems callous or even fanatical. Many seemed far too ready to render unto Caesar. Changes that he attributes to Catholic activism (such as growing grassroots movements) might connect more directly to the faltering Mexican Miracle. That Mexicans of all stripes might find unity in opposition to imperialism, totalitarianism, and state repression seems unsurprising, and not terribly connected to piety. That Catholics might object to films depicting unconventional sexuality or gratuitous crucifixions likewise does not shock.

Clear and well written, this book is essential for all levels of scholars and yet accessible enough for non-academics. In an era of political, social, and religious divides, this important work offers a brilliant vision of the real and transnational counterculture in 1960s Mexico.

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