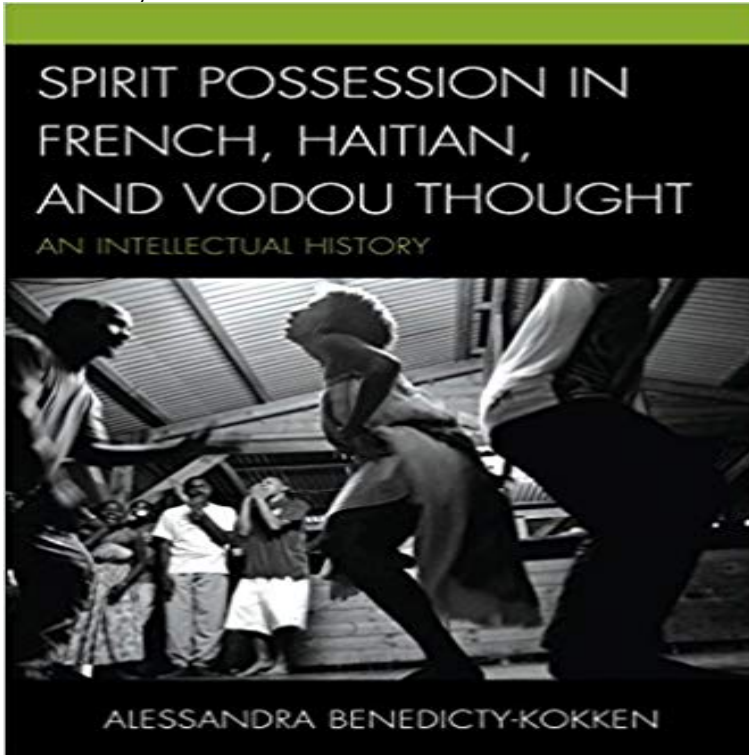


Spirit Possession in French, Haitian, and Vodou Thought: An Intellectual History



This book recuperates the important history that Haitian thought around Vodou possession has had in French critical theory. The author takes the period of the 1930s and 40s, as the centerfold of a more complex network of relations that places Haiti as one of the pivots of a more expanded intellectual conversation around possession, which links anthropology, literature, psychoanalysis, human rights, and visual arts in France, Haiti, and the United States. Benedicty argues that Haiti as the anthropological other serves as a kick-starter to an entire French-based theoretical apparatus (Breton, Leiris, Bataille, de Certeau, Foucault, and Butler), but once up and running, its role as catalyst is forgotten and the multiple iterations of the anthropological other are cast back into the net of Michel-Rolph Trouillot's Savage slot. The book offers the reader unfamiliar with Haiti a comprehensive interdisciplinary study of twentieth and early twenty-first century Haitian thought, including a detailed timeline of important moments in the intellectual history that connects Haiti to France and the United States. The first part of the book is about global dispossessions in the first decades of the twentieth century; the second part points to how the narratives of Haiti are intimately linked to a Franco-U.S.-American discursive space, constructed over the course of the twentieth century, a discursive order that has conflated the representation of Haiti with an understanding of Vodou primarily as an occult religion, and not as a philosophical system. The third and fourth parts of the book examine how the novels of René Deprestre, Jean-Claude Fignole, and Kettly Mars have revisited the notion of possession since the fall of the Duvalier dictatorships.

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