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Book Review - Sacral Grooves, Limbo Gateways: Travels in Deep Southern Time, Circum- Caribbean Space, Afro-Creole Authority

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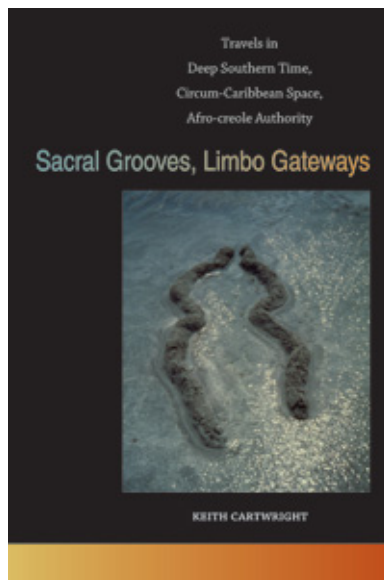
Sacral Grooves, Limbo Gateways: Travels in Deep Southern Time, Circum-Caribbean Space, Afro-Creole Authority by Keith Cartwright (University of Georgia Press, 2013: ISBN 9780820345994, \$24.95)

Along the coast of Georgia, the natural structure of the salt marshes are striking—little waterways winding, connecting, diverging, almost fractal in design, or as Keith Cartwright describes them in chapter one of *Sacral Grooves, Limbo Gateways*, “rhizomatic.” Through describing the rhizomatic structure and nature of the marshes, he physically connects the reader to the decentralized but connected nature of the American South’s more hidden cultural origins—Senegambian folk tales, Geechee/Gullah settlements, praise houses and shout circles, Vodou, and Santería, as “undercurrents” that are often ignored but integral to the writing, music, and religious practices in the South throughout post-colonial American history.

Among the many topics and connections covered throughout the book, readers will gain insight into the Vodou influences on Creole and jazz music, the African tale of Cumba permeating Gullah/Geechee culture (and even names), and the vast cultural connections between Africa, south Florida, and Cuba. Especially of note to Georgian readers is the first chapter, in which the Gullah/Geechee heritage within coastal Georgia is thoroughly analyzed. Cartwright’s chronology of Jacksonville as an example of why a city’s West African influences can be so hidden—

institutionalized cultural repression—connects well with a later explanation of the resurgence and suppression of Vodou culture in post-Katrina New Orleans.

“Rhizomatic” is also an accurate way of describing Cartwright’s style throughout *Sacral Grooves*, as the book has a temporally decentralized feel. The chapters may be separated by geographical region, but Cartwright jumps through time at a rapid pace, moving from the multitudinous connections between the transatlantic slave trade to the writings of Zora Neale Hurston and back to his own personal experiences. This unique style reflects the disjointed-yet-connected structure of the cultural connections well, and while this may not be the easiest read as a result, especially for those looking for a straightforward chronological structure, the style seems more immersive within the context of the material.



Sacral Grooves is written for an audience with an academic background. While many terms exclusive to the content are defined in-text, one should be familiar with modernity and post-modernity before reading. For example, the postmodern meaning of rhizome, as opposed to the botanical meaning of rhizome, is better understood if the reader has some knowledge of postmodernism. An extensive list of cited references and a subject index are included at the back of the book. While these are helpful, a glossary of terms would be useful for readers who forget what a particular cultural term, used three chapters ago, means. Because of the lack of a glossary, this would be a tough book to use

as a reference source as opposed to a read-through monograph.

Overall, Cartwright provides an entertaining and detailed read in *Sacral Grooves*, and if the reader can embrace the book's disjointed-yet-connected style, they can easily be immersed in

these invisible cultural undercurrents of transformation and ancestral authority in the Deep South.

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