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2013. Giesecking, J. Review of *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research* by K. Browne, and C.J. Nash, eds, and *Queer Spiritual Spaces: Sexuality and Scared Places* by K. Browne, S.R. Munt, and A.K.T. Yip, eds. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers Review of Books*.

Book Review

Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research. Kath Browne, and Catherine J. Nash, eds. London: Ashgate, 2010. xiv and 301 pp., notes, and index. \$119.95 cloth (ISBN 978-0-7546-7843-4).

Queer Spiritual Spaces: Sexuality and Scared Places.

Kath Browne, Sally R. Munt, and Andrew K. T. Yip, eds. London: Ashgate, 2010. xvi and 302 pp., photos, tables, notes, and index. \$69.95 cloth (ISBN 978-0-7546-7527-3).

Reviewed by Jen Jack Giesecking, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

Attitudes toward and acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) people have changed significantly in the Western world over the last few decades, especially for white people and people of means, and this shift extends to geography as well. At the same time, a formal body of literature on geographies of sexualities and LGBTQI geographies has continued to grow with more positive support from the field as a whole; in 2013, this *Annals* book review is the first to examine works on geographies of sexualities. A flurry of recent edited volumes, edited journal issues, and conferences on the subjects of space and sexuality has shifted the attention and respect given this body of work. This review takes up two of these recent geography-focused volumes published by Ashgate, *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research* (2010) and *Queer Spiritual Spaces: Sexuality and Scared Places* (2010), which have taken the work of geographies of sexualities in new, important, and timely directions.

Editors Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash assert in their introduction to *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research* that there are no specific queer methods—instead the volume looks at how these methods and methodologies are designed and enacted. “Queer” is framed simultaneously as a political position, a theoretical

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approach, and a form of self-identification that refuses normative positions and power structures.

The work of queering then refuses any stable or essential notions of sexual and gender identities, and it equally refutes any fixed conceptualizations of race, class, gender, position, context, desire, affect, or power.

A total of 15 chapters written by 18 contributors are organized into a “rhizomatic approach” (p. 16). The varied projects, rural and urban, often Western and sometimes non-Western, and the range of qualitative and quantitative methods and methodologies employed in these chapters highlights the different places and ways queer methods and methodologies can and are being deployed in geographic research. Some of the varying topics include work on an ethnography of lesbian and gay people of Indonesia and LGBTQI homophobic and heteronormative trends people in Second Life (Boellstorff); racializing and queering ethnographic fieldwork with Los Angeles food cart vendors (Muñoz); queering communication between researcher and participants in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Australia (Gorman-Murray, Johnston, and Wiatt); emergences of researcher-participant desire in the field of the Atlantic Canadian coast (Jackman); interviews with transmen in Toronto by an “old-time lesbian” (Nash); an ethnography of the dis/connectivity of objects’ materiality (Graham); and a national census survey of LGBTQI people in the UK (Browne). To queer even the reader’s design, the editors reject categorization and support the overlap and complementary contributions of the authors. Instead there is a general flow from chapters that frame key concepts, to challenging traditional approaches in research design, and then on to rethinking the linkages between queer theories, methods, and methodologies. While the attempt to queer the structure of a reader is noble, it meant many of the chapters were repetitive and lengthy in their descriptions of queer theory and

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this sacrificed room for more interesting analyses of methods and data; however, each chapter's contributions was unique and enriching enough that I gladly read on. Other readers may find it more useful to use the introduction to choose chapters to read by method, discipline, or topic.

Reminiscent of the groundbreaking 1994 issue of *Professional Geographer* on feminist methods, *Queer Methods and Methodologies* is one of the most significant contributions to geographies of sexualities in recent years thanks to its innovative, applied uses of queer theory in the practice, design, and analysis of research. Most exciting are the deep linkages between theory and method that each contributor provides. As Boellstorff writes that the "relationship between theory and data is a methodological problem" (p. 210), i.e. it is not only the choice and use of methods but also the methodologies that link ontological and epistemological positions to those methods. Similarly, the "perpetually unstable" (Nash p. 141) position of the researcher is a common theme throughout in that work on queer methods and methodologies extends this instability to the researched, the research, and even the field itself. In an interesting theorization of the role of time in queer geographical methods, Rooke writes that ethnography can no longer split the past and present, the faraway field and the desk at home, as to do so is to split and privilege the researcher over and from the research and researched (p. 30). I recommend this reader for both advanced undergraduate and graduate level methods courses as a way to reframe and reinterrogate the ways we embark on and assume epistemologies and ontologies, as well as gender and sexuality methods and research courses. Those interested in learning more about ways in which to apply queer theory and advanced their methods generally to their work will also find the book helpful and inspiring.

In a more applied approach, *Queer Spiritual Spaces: Sexuality and Scared Places*, edited

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by Kath Browne, Sally R. Munt, and Andrew K.T. Yip, dives into the purportedly incongruous topics of non-heterosexualities and spiritualities by asking, “What are queer spiritual spaces and what happens in them?” (p.1). The editors chose their focus on spirituality given that while religion has faltered for many, especially in the West, spirituality persists. Given the paucity of work on this subject, the authors banded together as an interdisciplinary research group of geographers, sociologists, digital media scholars, and cultural studies scholars and collected new data from 150 LGBTQI people about their experience of spirituality and spiritual spaces. The editors also brought in previously conducted research by younger scholars in the form of co-written chapters with editors. Collaboratively written and researched in ten chapters by seven contributors, the research in *Queer Spiritual Spaces* covers different spiritualities per chapter and splits the book between the experiences and spaces of traditional believers such as Muslims (Yip and Khalid), and non-traditionalists such as the Michigan Womyn’s Folk Festival (Browne) or Findhorn community in Scotland (Browne and Dinnie). The editors frame the book through an introspective introduction on the role of the sublime (Munt), and geographical literature review on Western spirituality (Yip), and conclude with a thoughtful analysis of the collective patterns and standalone contributions of the authors (Browne). Dividing chapters by spirituality felt oversimplified at times as it siloed interesting arguments by spirituality; however this structure will be useful for those studying a specific religion or spirituality.

Using a queer theoretical approach similar to *Queer Methods and Methodologies*, the authors of *Queer Spiritual Spaces* give primary import to their participants’ experiences of spiritual space. Such spaces include both pre-existing in official structures and fleeting, transcendent, and immanent moments of the sublime. The chapters on traditional spiritualities

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highlight the side-by-side welcoming and refusal of LGBTQI people in UK Quaker, Muslim, and Buddhist spaces and congregations pushes the readers to rethink assumptions of prejudice and the mechanisms of homophobic and heteronormative oppression at work in organized religion. Those chapters on the non-traditional spiritualities offered the most insights as to the production of these types of spaces for LGBTQI people. This work also speaks to the tenuous acts of resistance involved in these constructions, namely in the ways non-traditional spiritualities lap into other parts of everyday life and include sexuality as part of spiritual practice. For example, Riordan and White's work on LGBTQI online believers in the Second Life platform and in various chat groups shows how the virtual spiritualities and spaces can produce collectivity and senses of the infinite often limited by organized and material religiosity.

Queer Spiritual Spaces troubles the simple narratives of disconnect between LGBTQI people and spiritual space, while also highlighting the difficulty of locating an experience and/or belief that is often indescribable. Repeated discussions of the way inclusive and exclusive spaces, acts, and dogmas play out is a key theme throughout the book, and such analysis furthers the geographical literature related to studies of justice and injustice. I was left waiting for the authors and editors would explore the way resistance and resilience in these situations, and I hope that future scholars can pick up this important question. I was also surprised that there is no mention or case study of the Metropolitan Church of Christ (MCC), a devotedly LGBTQI church based mainly in the US, which as a wholly positive LGBTQI traditional spirituality could have greatly broadened the tone and work of the book. The book's greatest strength in its innovation and contribution to an understudied and conflictual aspect of intersectional identities and spaces, as well as its greatest weakness in being a relatively new body of literature.

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These readers demonstrate how queer geographical approach is an essential part of the geographer's toolkit as it destabilizes norms associated with unequal social, cultural, political, and economic structures as well as uneven geographies. For scholars of sexualities and queer theorists, the informative role of space and place become apparent not only in analysis but in the actual practice of research as well. These readers fill many holes in the literature but point out that much remains to be written regarding geographies of sexualities, particularly beyond the Western sphere of US, UK, and Canadian experience; with deeper analysis of the intersectionality of race and class identities; and with greater attention to bisexual, transgender, transsexual, and intersex people who remain at the margins of geographies of sexualities. Now, however, the possibility of queering and recognizing the stories of difference has been amplified from the methods of our work to larger, more sublime experience of everyday life.