

Kevin Lewis O'Neill: *Hunted: Predation and Pentecostalism in Guatemala*. Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press

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This book deals with criminal acts and human rights violations by individuals claiming the status of Pentecostal pastors. In a Guatemala City where he says 200 independent Pentecostal 'centres' take in drug addicts on an industrial scale, mostly funded by the victims' relatives, Kevin O'Neill has drilled down on one centre and a small number of individual cases, observed over a ten year period, recorder in hand and ethnographer's pen at the ready.

The centre described here is owned by a pastor who goes hunting for drug addicts and captures them violently. He imprisons them in overcrowded heavily secured premises where they are, essentially, enslaved. They undergo a 'theological therapy' of daily sermons from itinerant preachers whose message oscillates between rebirth by self-discipline and a resignation that their fate is in divine hands. If they gain the pastor's trust they accompany him on hunting trips to find new inmates. Those trips are an opportunity for escape, but escape to what? Most likely fugitives will they fall back into the world of addiction and die as a result. Usually they are recaptured, with the accompanying beatings.

The book is written in the breathless tone of investigative journalism, but the author is not a journalist, a detective or a lawyer and indeed he shows that to try involving the 'authorities' in the case is pointless. When he went to the police he was told if he submitted a formal report they could indeed enter the premises and free the inmates – but, again, where would the inmates go once released? Guatemala, which is a staging post in the traffic of drugs from South to North America, has no official addiction treatment system, little public health provision and indeed barely has a state aside from its all-powerful army.

O'Neill's agonizing, sometimes toe-curling and often too long and inconclusive, about his role as ethnographer, openly recording every conversation, is balanced presumably by his awareness that this 'research site' will yield a rich, though poisoned, vein of information and eventually a successful publication. He is drawn into a relationship of friendship and dependence with his 'key informant', until he 'buys' the man's freedom from the pastor for one hundred dollars. A few months later his friend is killed walking across a four-lane highway.

The story will unfortunately not come as a surprise to Guatemala-watchers, but it is a necessary addition to the literature on Latin America's Pentecostals, whose number exceeds a hundred million. By (thankfully) confining modish theoretical reflections to the footnotes he has produced a highly readable text. But it lacks background: readers, especially novice students, need to know about global Pentecostalism and also about the disintegration of society in Guatemala. The book should also carry a health warning: anthropologists should think hard before taking the role of journalist, detective or lawyer, and certainly before developing close relationships with people involved close-up in abuse and exploitation, as perpetrators or victims. If O'Neill considered writing a section on the ethics of research and

then rejected the idea, that is understandable, for these are very difficult issues which call for more than agonized introspection. But his readers should consider them.

David Lehmann's books include *Struggle for the Spirit: Religious Transformation and Popular Culture in Brazil and Latin America*