Cambridge Elements

Elements in Magic
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THE GUT

A Black Atlantic Alimentary Tract

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Abstract: If the head is religion, the gut is magic. Taking up this provocation, this Element delves into the digestive system within transnational Afro-Diasporic religions such as Haitian Vodou, Brazilian Candomblé, and Cuban Lucumí (also called Santería). It draws from the ethnographic and archival record to probe the abdomen as a vital zone of sensory perception, amplified in countless divination verses, myths, rituals, and recipes for ethnomedical remedies. Provincializing the brain as only one locus of reason, it seeks to expand the notion of “mind” and expose the anti-Blackness that still prevents Black Atlantic knowledges from being accepted as such. The Element examines gut feelings, knowledge, and beings in the belly: African precedents for the Afro-Diasporic gut-brain axis; post-sacrificial offerings in racist fantasy and everyday reality; and the strong stomachs and intestinal fortitude of religious ancestors. It concludes with a reflection on kinship and the spilling of guts in kitchenspaces.

This Element also has a video abstract: www.cambridge.org/EMG1_Perez_abstract

Keywords: affect, African Diaspora, embodiment, feeling, magic, race

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