

more layered, much richer, and spans millennia of exchange, migration, and belonging” (p. 5). Establishing a firm thesis about the erasure of racism in Iran’s modern history equally mandates the examination of a massive number of diverse sources—including voices of the Black slaves which according to the book are not available—and needs multi-layered scholarship. Otherwise, in the end, one might remain sceptical about a determined interpretation of some of the examined materials—in the absence of cross-checking—and wonder whether they are not forced readings into them. Totalizing accounts or generalizing harsh treatments of certain cases to all Blacks living in Iran, or to all Black servants and all their masters do not do justice to the existing more nuanced narratives that reveal the other side of the dark picture. Is not ignoring them another form of “erasure” that leads to creating another imbalanced story of the Iranian Black servants/slaves?

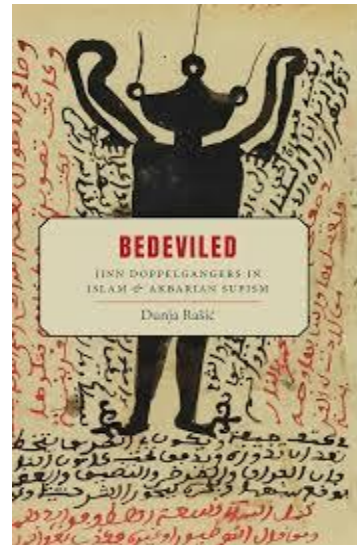
Nevertheless, *The Color Black* deserves attention for being a pioneering work on this subject which opens the way for future research, debate, and scholarship.

Forough Jahanbakhsh*

Dunja Rašić. *Bedeviled: Jinn Doppelgangers in Islam and Akbarian Sufism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2024. Pp. 220. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781438496894. Price: \$99.

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Jinn or *jinnāt* were part of my childhood. Not that I ever had met one—as far as I can tell—but my parents and my maternal relatives would talk about them, warning me not to disturb them and the places where they sleep, usually trees. There was even a family story involving a great-grandmother who, in (pre-partition) India, assisted a female *jinn* in giving birth. Then, I went to public school, where I finally was taught scientific, rational subjects, things that people can actually see: history and *the past*; mathematics and *imaginary numbers*; economics and *the invisible hand of the market*; philosophy and Descartes’s



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mathematical proof of the existence of God; physics and *gravity*, or the Big Bang theory: When I was at high-school, the Universe was seven billion years old; at college it was fourteen billion; and nowadays it is asserted that the explosion happened twenty billion years ago. . . . What are a couple of billion years more or a couple of billion years less when we are talking about *the miracles of science*?

One of the least understood aspects of Islamic teachings in the modern world concerns that class of beings called the *jinn* and referred to several times in the Qur'ān, a misunderstanding coming from the post-Cartesian materialistic conception of the Universe, which excludes the subtle and psychic world, where in fact the beings called *jinn* belong in the traditional schemes of cosmology. To understand the meaning of *jinn*, one must therefore go beyond a conception of reality which includes only the world of matter and the mind (this paralyzing dualism makes an understanding of traditional doctrines impossible) to an awareness of a hierarchic reality made up of the three worlds of spirit, psyche, and matter. The *jinn* can then be identified as beings that belong to the psychic or intermediary world, the *barzakh*, situated between this world and the world of pure Spirit. In Qur'ānic terminology and the *ḥadīth* literature, the *jinn* are usually coupled with *ins* or humankind and often the phrase *al-jinn wa 'l-ins* (the *jinn* and humans) is used as referring to that class of creatures to which God's commands and prohibitions address themselves. Human beings were made of clay into which God breathed (*nafakha*) His Spirit. The *jinn* in Islamic doctrines are that group of creatures which was made of fire rather than earth, and into which God also breathed His Spirit. Hence like humans they possess a spirit and consciousness and have Divine commands revealed to them. On their own level of existence, they are central creatures just as humans are central creatures in this world. But in contrast to humans, they possess a volatile and "unfixed" outer form and so can take on many shapes. This means that they are essentially creatures of the psychic rather than the physical world and that they can appear to humans in different forms and shapes. Having been endowed with a spirit, the *jinn*, like humans, possess responsibility before God. Some are "religious" and "Muslim." These are intermediate angels, the psychic forces that can lead humans from the physical to the spiritual world through the labyrinth of the intermediate world or *barzakh*. Others are malefic forces that have rebelled against God, in the same way that some humans rebel against the Divinity. Such *jinn* are identified with "the armies of Satan" (*junūd al-Shayṭān*) and are the evil forces which by inducing the power of apprehension (*wahm*) and imagination (*khayāl*) in its negative aspect lead

humans away from the Truth which their intelligence perceives by virtue of the innate light that dwells within them.

In the religious cosmos of the traditional Muslim, which is filled with material, psychic, and spiritual creatures of God, the *jinn* play their own particular role. By the elite, they are taken for what they are, namely, psychic forces of the intermediate world of both a beneficent and an evil nature. On the popular level, the *jinn* appear as concrete physical creatures of different shapes and forms against which humans seek the aid of the Spirit, often by chanting verses of the Qur'ān. The *jinn* and all that pertains to them hence enter on the popular level into the domain of demonology, magic, etc., and are a vivid reality for humans whose minds are still open towards the vast world of the psyche in its cosmic aspect. The Muslims of this type of mentality live in a world in which they are aware of God and also of both the angelic forces representing the good and the demonic forces representing the evil. They see their life as a struggle between these two elements within them and about them. Although the *jinn* are of both kinds, the good and the evil, most often in their thought they identify them with the demonic forces that lead humans astray. They are personifications of psychic forces that work within their mind and soul. On the theological and metaphysical level of Islam, the order of the *jinn* becomes understood as a necessary element in the hierarchy of existence, an element which relates the physical world to higher orders of reality. The *jinn* are, moreover, especially akin to humans in that, as was mentioned above, into them also was breathed the Spirit of God. And some of God's prophets, like Solomon, ruled over both humans and *jinn*, as attested to by the Qur'ān.

Ghouls, *ifrīts*, and a panoply of other *jinn* have long haunted Muslim cultures and societies. These also include *jinn* doppelgangers (*qarīn*, pl. *quranā*), the little-studied and much-feared denizens of the hearts and blood of humans. The book now under review seeks out *jinn* doppelgangers in the Islamic normative tradition, philosophy, folklore, and Sufi literature, with special emphasis on Akbarian Sufism. Muḥyī 'l-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (1165-1240) wrote on *jinn* in substantial detail, uncovering the physiognomy, culture, and behaviour of this unseen species. Akbarians believed that the good God assigned each human with an evil doppelganger. Ibn 'Arabī's reasoning as to why this was the case mirrors his attempts to expound the problem of evil in Islamic religious philosophy. No other Sufi, Ibn 'Arabī claimed, ever managed to get to the heart of this matter before him. As well as offering the reader knowledge and safety from evil, Ibn 'Arabī's writings on jinnealogy tackle the even

larger issues of spiritual ascension, predestination, and the human relationship to the Divine.

Dunja Rašić is a researcher at the University of Religions and Denominations, in Qom, Iran. She has also authored *The Written World of God: The Cosmic Script and the Art of Ibn ‘Arabī* (2021). This book is the first solid treatment in English of *jinn* in Akbarian Sufism, which is the least studied aspect of Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings. Rašić has a firm grasp of Ibn ‘Arabī and articulates his recondite teachings in clear and simple language without compromising the nuances of his ideas, being a very welcome and important addition to the literature on *jinn*, a subject which, from time to time, offers the readers some remarkable texts such as Anand Vivek Taneja’s *Jinnealogy: Time, Islam, and Ecological Thought in the Medieval Ruins of Delhi* (2018), or Amira El-Zein’s *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (2009).

Divided into four chapters (Neither of the East nor of the West; Signs on the Horizons; The Devil Within; and The Red Death), Rašić’s *Bedeviled* explores the world of doppelganger *jinn* in medieval Islam and the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī, whose devotees not only continue to pore over his works for wisdom but also preserve and pass down some of our understanding of doppelganger *jinn*. In Islamic tradition, “a *qarīn* was generally understood to be a *jinni* companion and a doppelganger of human beings. Each *qarīn* was thought to be conceived at the same time as its human. When a child is born, a *qarīn* enters its heart.” *Quranā’* are usually evil or mischievous beings who whisper to humans to tempt them to either follow whims and passions or to do bad things. While we find *jinn* discussed in the Qur’ān and a collection of prophetic narrations, the concept of *jinn* predates Islam and has strong ties to pre-Islamic Arabian folklore traditions. In different regions, local oral traditions make their way into Islamic debates about *jinn*, including *qarīn*. In Palestinian oral tradition, the idea of evil doppelgangers may have given rise to tales of a female demoness, *Qarīnah*, who was a succubus, seductress, and murderer of pregnant women and children. The belief in *Qarīnah* was likely inspired by tales of Lilith, the first wife of Adam, who, like *Qarīnah*, became a succubus, seduced men, and harmed children. *Qarīnah* could appear as a beautiful woman and, in the Iraqi tradition, we encounter stories of men marrying her.

As Rašić observes, “the main difference between a *qarīn* and *Qarīna* is reflected in the fact that *Qarīna*’s cruelty is not reserved for a single person. *Jinn* are disgusted with menstrual blood which seems to attract *Qarīna*.” What these discussions highlight is a concern with identifying boundaries and categorizing *jinn* by medieval thinkers. Ibn ‘Arabī saw *qarīn* as “a devil within the blood and hearts of humans.” For the Sufi

mystic, both *jinn* and *qarīn* were not only supernatural entities; they were also ways of probing theological issues and problems in society. Through writing about them, Ibn ‘Arabī not only tried to make sense of evil, but also, “to show how humans, *jinn* and, even the Devil himself, might be saved from it.” Indeed, “Sufi works often made no distinction between the act of taming a *qarīn* and the purification of the lower soul.” Given how closely tied *quranā’* were to humans, advice on how to deal with them often meant advice on how to deal with the individual self. A righteous human being who resists temptation offered by *qarīn* could actually convert the *qarīn* to Islam, as they will follow the piety and good actions of the person they are tied to.

Bedeviled offers a niche and exciting exploration of *jinn* doppelgangers in Islamic thought; it lays out both clearly and concisely debates Ibn ‘Arabī and others were having about the *qarīn* and gives the reader an excellent introduction to the world of *jinn* studies. In both medieval and contemporary societies in the Middle East, *jinn* are an active part of how people interpret the world around them and, while there is a lot of complexity and nuance in how people interact with these ideas, to imagine a world in which *jinn* are not part of the cultural landscape in the Islamicate would be difficult to understand or comprehend. Both medieval and contemporary debates about *jinn* are not merely about exchanging chilling stories, as we have become accustomed to doing with ghost stories, but are about grappling with moral issues, boundaries, religious obligations, and the edge of human knowledge. Rašić’s book will surely not only be of interest to those who are interested in *jinn* but also to those who are interested in the concept of doppelgangers and how different cultures think about them.

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