Reviews

Introduction: Recent Studies in the Anthropology of Eastern Christianities

In the social sciences, there has been a recent increase of interest in Orthodoxy and Orthodox countries, Russia above all, at a time in which tensions in these areas are on the rise and the relationships between some of these countries, Russia above all, and the EU and/or NATO, are near to their worst. Perhaps it is no coincidence that anthropology has decidedly turned its gaze eastwards, again. In just a handful of years, we have moved from a situation of relative lack of (Western) anthropological interest in Orthodoxy, as photographed by Chris Hann in a renowned study about the anthropology of Christianity (2007), to an opposite situation in which at times the sociological and anthropological study of religion has tended to collapse the entirety of Eastern Europe into Orthodoxy (Gauthier forthcoming), making Orthodoxy not only ‘one among’ but ‘*the one*’ and true religious marker of this entire, vaguely defined area.

When it comes to works centred on Eastern Europe, the last ten years have indeed been characterised by two main expansive trajectories in the galaxy of research that has been called ‘Anthropology of Religion after Socialism’ (Rogers 2005), or even, more broadly, the ‘Post-socialist Religious Question’ (Hann 2006). In part, such trends reflect a situation of accelerated transformations in religious practices and habits, which are also quite visible in the statistics (Pew Research Centre 2017). The first trajectory is made of those ensembles of works dealing with the problem of post-secularism, de-secularisation, and ‘re-enchantment’, especially the differently defined new or renewed spiritualities or forms of religiosity emerging or re-emerging after the fall of the communist regimes (Testa 2020). The second one is, precisely, a growing body of scholarship about the Orthodoxies.

This selection of reviews serves the modest purpose of demonstrating the latter trend: far from being or aspiring to be exhaustive, its aim is just to demonstrate the vitality, plurality, and diversity of the approaches to this question. A possible common denominator of these studies seems to point at the fact that, in the Eastern post-socialist world, religion seems to be eminently and inextricably entangled with

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the sphere of politics – ‘politics’ understood both in the Foucauldian as well as in the more conventional and institutional sense of the word (Köllner and Testa forthcoming). The expression and exercise of power as substantiated in the *powers that be* in the lands east of the current borders of the European Union show a very specific entanglement and mutual transfer (as well as, at times, fusion) of the spiritual and the secular (and eminently the political). Indeed, this specifically Eastern Orthodox form of relationship of the two spheres also offers a fertile theoretical ground to reconcile a Marxist interpretative attitude, insisting on sovrastructural changes in ideology and religion as consequences of political-economic infrastructural shifts, with a Weberian one, which on the contrary tends to emphasise the role of ideological and religious changes (or continuities) in political-economic transformations.

Even though the most ethnographically explored territories in the books presented in this section are in Russia and other former Soviet countries, their authors as well as their reviewers have even wider expertise – Russia, Romania, Poland, Moldavia, Ukraine, Serbia, and Georgia – which altogether form the greatest share of Orthodox countries in the world. In this vast geo-cultural (or geo-religious) area, Orthodoxy has played an important role for centuries, a role that seems to be nowhere near to weakening or disappearing.

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Milena Benovska (2021), *Orthodox Revivalism in Russia: Driving Forces and Moral Quests* (London: Routledge), ix + 193 pp., hbk. £120, ISBN 978036747420-1.

In her very rich ethnographic account, divided into four thematic chapters with introduction and conclusion, Milena Benovska addresses the question of how the resurgence of religion in post-Soviet Russia has been possible and draws our attention to a small group of the most zealous believers closely related to the mainstream religion of Orthodox Christianity, the so-called 'little flock' (*maloe stado*), an expression taken from the Bible. A starting point is the rise of Orthodox Christianity after more than seven decades of self-declared state atheism. In her analysis, the author emphasises that religion has been initiated from above and enthusiastically embraced from below. For the 'bottom-up' developments, the role of the group of most devoted believers is essential because it was formed at the beginning of the twentieth century, survived due to underground existence during the socialist era, and served as an example and source of knowledge and inspiration since the relaxation of laws banning religion from the public sphere in the 1980s. For the analysis of that group, Benovska draws on Davie's notion of 'vicarious religion' (2007) and describes the little flock as a group that is at the core of religious resurgence in contemporary Russia.

With her ethnographic analysis, Benovska tackles the notion of a religious revival after the end of socialism. In her perspective, this term produces a number of misunderstandings because the resurgence of religion has been more complex than we mostly assume. One example for this is the apparent paradox between high levels of identification with Orthodox Christianity and low levels of actual participation in Orthodox practices. Therefore, she suggests the notion of Orthodox revivalism (pp. 33ff.) because it is an academic label and not an emic self-description used by the clergy, religious activists, or by any politicians for the purposes of political mobilisation.

In the following ethnographic accounts, questions of morality, religious authority, conversion, and personal transformations are addressed. When analysing these topics, attention is given to the

existence of multiple moralities, the power of religious authority, and the normative entrepreneurship of the Russian Orthodox Church. In particular, Benovska is interested in personal accounts and underlines ethical reasoning, descriptions of moral torment, and the quest for salvation when analysing the narratives that link conversion, moral imagination, and moral perceptions to the radical personal transformation. In so doing, she painstakingly shows how these narratives ‘recreate . . . both personal experience and certain cultural conventions’ (p. 99).

Particularly valuable and insightful is the ethnographic chapter in which the author addresses the politics of memory and religious nationalism (pp. 132ff.). In contrast to the more individual accounts in the previous chapters, here Benovska analyses collective ideas. One of these examples is *kraevedenie*, the writing on local history and culture. Although established during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it has become much more important since President Putin came to power in 2000. Today, it is an important project that is simultaneously a central state political project, a work of local authorities and institutions, and spontaneous initiatives by local individuals. Characteristic for *kraevedenie* is the semi-professional or amateur status of these writers and activists, the evident sense of patriotism and, sometimes, the addition of fictitious content to historic facts. In *kraevedenie*, ‘national and local symbolism overlap, secular and religious values merge’ (p. 144), as do politics and Orthodox Christianity, a finding that comes close to the notion of entangled authorities, introduced by Tobias Köllner in his study in Vladimir region (2021).

Despite all the aforementioned impressive elements in this work, there are a few minor drawbacks. Although the facts in themselves are described convincingly, I wonder if a more clear-cut definition on notions of the secular would have been helpful because, as the author correctly emphasises: ‘the situation for much of the Soviet period might be better described as “indifference” to religion rather than “atheism”’ (p. 94). What does this mean for the post-Soviet era? Or, might different conceptualisations such as ‘cultural religion’ (Demerath III 2000) or ‘re-enchantment’ (Isnart and Testa 2020) have been better for explaining the complexities described? In addition, I also would like to hear a bit more on the context of these findings: How specific are these findings for Kaluga and the Kaluga region or does it have wider importance for the whole of Russia or at least significant parts of it with an Orthodox majority population? By extension, this also relates to yet another question: To what extent is Kaluga

comparable to the Ukraine, in which Soviet atheism was interrupted by temporary relaxations during the occupation by the German army, during World War II?

To conclude, it is fair to say that Benovska's book is a highly insightful account analysing the role of a small but influential group inside Russian Orthodoxy with great importance for society and the resurgence of religion in contemporary Russia. In the analysis, the author gives considerable ethnographic insights and individual narratives, which provide evidence for the fact that 'the circle of the most zealous believers – the "little flock" – . . . is the basis for vicarious religion' (p. 157). Adjusting the concept to the Russian Federation, Benovska is able to show how this small group is practising religion on behalf of wider spheres of society, thus reviving church life and legitimising a stronger influence of Orthodox Christianity on public life and wider society.

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Tobias Köllner (2021), *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Russia: Beyond the Binary of Power and Authority* (London: Routledge), 165 pp., ISBN: 978-1-138-35468-5

It is truly amazing how undiscovered Russia, or the Russian Federation, is: the largest country in the world, bridging two continents, with a population exceeding 145 million. Academic production on the region, at least in the field of social sciences, remains scarce. And we know little more about it than about North Korea or Albania. Orthodoxy, a branch of Christianity claiming to have 300 million believers,

seems to be equally understudied, despite the fact that anthropology has recently developed a strong subfield with a focus on Christianity itself. Tobias Köllner's book contributes to fill this gap by addressing a centuries-old question of the relationship between religion and politics. His ethnographic study not only throws light on specific conditions in which this relationship is being enacted in contemporary Russia; it also highlights ideological biases permeating the infrastructure of dominating theoretical agendas that possibly contribute to the exclusion of both Russia and Eastern Christianity from multiple levels of academic reflection.

Köllner invites readers to a critical engagement with Max Weber's notions of power and its differentiation from authority (Weber 1990: 122–176), which shape sociological understanding of politics until today. Weber's paradigms have become embedded in sociological imaginary as collective representations that became integral to the academic common sense and, as such, have rarely been questioned. The book's ambitious aim is to find empirical evidence that would either support or discard Weber's framework by taking a micro perspective on the relationship between politics and Orthodoxy in contemporary Russia. By providing detailed ethnographic accounts of everyday actions and interactions of 'ordinary people', which demonstrate how this relationship is enacted, embraced and articulated concretely, Köllner challenges scholarship produced within sociology and political science, resting on such meta-level concepts. Existing research tackling the interplay between Orthodoxy and politics in Russia has maintained an image of an all-powerful state, instrumentalising the Church for political gain. Russian Orthodoxy, however, re-emerged after severe persecutions during the Soviet era, and plays a crucial role in contemporary society. The strength of Köllner's long-term field research undertaken in the city of Vladimir lies in what often escapes the analytical gaze: it demonstrates manifold subtle modes of influence that both spheres of authority exert on each other. In so doing, he offers an attractive interpretative framework of 'entangled authorities' as a new conceptual tool that allows one to capture empirically and describe the nature of his area of interest more precisely than previously dominating notions. The latter stressed the lack of separation between Russian Orthodoxy and politics (e.g. Meyendorff 1988) that is neither legitimation (as in the Weberian paradigm) nor 'symphony' (a theological concept to depict the cooperation of church and state), without naming the type of connection that it is.

The book explores areas of research that have previously not received the attention they deserve: introduction of religious education in public schools (Chapter 3), property restitution to religious organisations (Chapter 4), the establishment of new festive days that carry simultaneously religious and political symbolism (Chapter 5), and how conservative forces, with their adherence to Orthodox values, are capable of mobilising social support in order to exercise political pressures (Chapter 6). Based on findings stemming from these case studies, Köllner develops his original concept of ‘entangled authorities’ in order to explain that perceived ideological convergencies between the two centres of power are often overruled by the complexity of an open-ended process of cooperation, competition, and open conflict thriving on the local level, which yields many unintended consequences. The actual interaction may just as well result in a mutually beneficial cooperation, as in competition for scarce resources or by fierce conflict. Substantial difference between the envisaged aims and the actual outcomes of the undertaken actions prompts Köllner to differentiate between the three types of entanglement: personal, ideological and institutional, and thus this typology serves him as window through which the shape and structure of the actual political field in Russia should be investigated.

All in all, this book deviates from familiar sociological, or political, studies of politics and religion in Russia. Different levels of interaction simultaneously stimulate and bring into a collision unexpected constellations of varied interests, ambitions, and instances of power. Tobias Köllner’s book gives an excellent example of the workings of these processes and a fresh theoretical framework to conceptualise them.

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Giuseppe Tateo (2020), *Under the Sign of the Cross: The People's Salvation Cathedral and the Church Building Industry in Postsocialist Romania*, (Oxford-New York: Berghahn), 243pp., ISBN:978-1-78920-858-0, \$120.00/£89.00

A Pew Research Center survey from 2017 dedicated to the religious landscape of Central and Eastern Europe found that religion, twenty-five years after the fall of communism, 'has reasserted itself' as strong component of individual and national identity. Romania's case shows a complex intertwining of believing, behaving and belonging (e.g. belief in God 95%, weekly church attendance 21%, Orthodox confessional identification 86%, importance of religion for national identity 74%). The report seems to perpetuate the master narrative of a massive religious revival in the region and of the lingering importance of forms of religiosity in public life after many decades of repressive regimes. In this context, scholars of religion in post-socialism still seem to struggle with an old question under new conditions: 'Why does the history of the region appear to be a history of religion?'

In the last thirty years, this region has been shaped by various significant political, economic and social processes evincing both breaks and continuities with socialism but, nevertheless, 'the religious revival' and 'religiosity' still retain an overwhelming explanatory power with regards to social change. The volume under review represents an important contribution to this debate by closely deconstructing the 'religious revival paradigm' (p.145) without downplaying the role of religion and religious organisations in the public sphere. Focusing on the spectacular 'church-building industry' and the material and symbolic religious interventions (e.g. erecting monumental crosses and performing ritual processions) in the urban environment in present-day Romanian cities, the volume convincingly pleads for a more subtle scalar (p.13) understanding of 'new modes of coexistence' (p.3) between religious identification, secular sentiments and anti-clericalism, individualised and institutional spiritual practices, personal ambitions, economic stakes and sacerdotal careers, religious and political authority and organisational rearrangements.

The author finds this coexistence inscribed into the ongoing conversion of the urban environment. The *re-consecration* (p.3) of spaces (an important analytical term for the author) offers an excellent vantage point for understanding religion under post-socialist conditions and, more specifically, the presence of the Orthodox Church in Romania beyond 'strictly religious purposes' (p.54, 161–162). The post-socialist

‘organizational revival’ (p.150) of the Romanian Orthodox Church taking place at the intersection of forms of church bureaucratisation, expansion of its economic activities and reinforcement of its media sector essentially shapes the complex space of communal, and even personal, religious life. This correlation of scales, between macro- and micro- social realities, is one of the most fascinating ingredients of this volume. The religious nature of the urban interventions does not exhaust their social, economic, moral and political significance. For example, erecting monumental crosses and building churches are not simply signs of piety or liturgical and pastoral necessities.

As Tateo’s several case studies carefully unfold, these interventions are defined by contestations, contradictions and tensions between competing moral and political claims (e.g. the case of ‘anti-communism’). The various instances of re-consecration of urban spaces mark not an unambiguous affirmation of faith and sacralisation, but rather open up a complex and porous social, moral and political space, secular-religious or religious-secular, that inevitably enables the contestation and articulation of competing stances (e.g. the case of Romanian secular humanists or casual urban anti-clericalism). Moreover, especially in the case of churches/cathedrals building, the massive ‘organizational revival’ of the Orthodox Church and its political and economic ramifications, seems to be more important than the vague expansion of ‘religiosity’ in the public space.

Tateo proposes that the multiplication of public and private pious discourses and practices that accompany urban religious interventions – be they small crosses or big cathedrals – and that emphasise faith as interior disposition, existential engagement or national sentiment should not simply fuel a scholarly interest in ‘religiosity’ and ‘religious revival’ but should rather instigate a more thorough investigation of the economic and political conditions of possibility of reconstructing personal and communal religious lives. More importantly, this perspective allows the author to reveal unexpected continuities between socialism and post-socialism, as well as the porous lines of demarcation between the secular and the religious, between private and public property/funds and among church, state and politics.

At the intersection of anthropology of religion, urban anthropology and political anthropology, the ingenious analytical effort and the impressive wealth of empirical material offered in this volume is organised in six chapters that follow the construction of *The People’s Salvation Cathedral* in Bucharest – - the biggest cathedral in the Orthodox world, the reorganisation of neighbourhoods and city landscapes,

the multiplication of church buildings, the erection of urban monumental crosses and their political lives, the emergence of urban forms of anti-clericalism, the articulation of secular humanist contestation and also the performative Orthodox reaction to 'the other', to the construction of a big mosque in Bucharest.

It is perhaps precisely this methodological endeavour to bring together various scales and dimensions of social urban life (from personal to organisational, from material and embodied to symbolic and ideological) that makes the reading of this volume sometimes difficult in the sense that the reader is pushed to be imaginative in connecting aspects of the empirical material to the author's intricate arguments. After reading these fascinating chapters, the reader might feel the need for a stronger conclusive chapter – one that would better integrate the valuable findings of this important research.

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Tornike Metreveli (2020), *Orthodox Christianity and the Politics of Transition: Ukraine, Serbia and Georgia* (London: Routledge), 196 pp., \$120.00, ISBN 9780367420079.

Following the demise of socialism, religion soon reoccupied a prominent position in the public arena of many central and eastern European countries: houses of worship and religious monuments multiplied, previously disbanded denominations reacquired legal recognition, and religious groups claimed back their space in public education, the media and state financing. In other words, postsocialist Europe experienced a religious revival in terms of public visibility. Against this backdrop, Tornike Metreveli looks at the unfolding of the 'democratic transition and EU integration' (p. 150) from a specific standpoint: that of the operational tactics adopted by religious organisations in Ukraine, Serbia and Georgia.

The three case studies indeed seem to lend themselves to comparison in many respects: Orthodox churches represent the majority of the religious population; they all share an history of imperial rule first and of socialist/soviet polity after; they are all negotiating a future EU membership and have gone through warfare (or still are, as for the case of Ukraine). Serbia and Georgia are both marked by the hegemonic presence of a national church in the religious market, while Georgia and Ukraine experienced peaceful revolutions also after 1991

and have territorial contentions with the same neighbouring state, Russia.

Part I is composed of two chapters and interweaves an historical overview on Orthodox church-state relations in the three countries with basic notions of Orthodox theology on political, social and anthropological aspects (as for the concepts of *symphonia* and *synergia*). It thus provides an introduction to those readers less familiar with Eastern Christianity that is certainly exhaustive but also at times inaccurate – as when the Mensheviks are equated to the Whites during the Russian revolution (p. 39). The overarching theoretical structure of the volume lies on the difference between narratives and practices enacted by religious organisations – namely the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) and the Ukrainian Orthodox Churches of Moscow and Kiev Patriarchate (UOC-MP and UOC-KP respectively) – and on a three-pronged approach to their operational tactics. Depending on the attitude of their secular counterpart, churches can approach political forces combining three main patterns: constructive-accommodative, confrontational-reformist, and competitive-nationalising. In fact, the author observes, ‘when religious institutions fear being denied a place in the political system, churches confront the government and accumulate political influence, broadening their sphere over the political process’ (p. 10).

Chapter 3 opens Part II by comparing the role played by churches during the revolutions of the last thirty years. Not much about being a priest but rather about the politics of priesthood in Serbia and Georgia, Chapter 4 includes long interviews to priests reflecting on politics, society, Europe and transition. If the goal of the author is indeed to look at how churches influence daily politics, then reporting sermons is one brilliant way to observe how this process unfolds on the ground: far from performing solely pastoral and liturgical duties, parish priests in Georgia can become influential figures preaching on geopolitics, bioethics and morality in front of a large (virtual) audience.

The words of parish priests let us also sneak a glimpse into local level dynamics of the post-Cold War era, where networks of far right-wing neoconservatism draw new transnational bonds. For instance, one Georgian cleric identifies ‘the threats of invasive foreign policy . . . not coming from (Orthodox) Russia . . . but from the European Union-backed LGBT community’ (p. 87). Seen in this light, the author observes, Vladimir Putin ironically becomes a champion of traditional cultural values rather than a danger for territorial integrity.

Yet the volume's most original contribution is Chapter 5, a compelling ethnographic account of village church life in Ukraine in times of war, which definitely breaks new ground and offers a novel perspective on the plasticity of religious belonging and practice. Metreveli's approach has much to commend itself insofar it takes seriously the importance of churches in offering shelter, performing rituals and – most importantly – prayer: the latter is understood by both clerics and the faithful as an important ethical practice and even a patriotic commitment.

With reference to public religious symbolism following Kyiv street protests in fall 2013, Catherine Wanner (2014) argued that religion is 'capable of playing an expedient role in the process of forging a new governing and moral order'. The laws promulgated by the Poroshenko government – which simplified the process of interdenominational transfer – seem to work in a comparable way. Priests of the UOC-MP who had celebrated mass in old Slavonic for decades and who avoided praying for the Ukrainian soldiers at the front would find themselves discharged in favour of new priests who would say mass in Ukrainian. The outburst of the war forces people to take sides, and churchgoers who have attended the same church for decades would show their attachment to the church building and the language of the mass rather than to the parish priest or the denomination itself.

A closing remark on the title. The author is aware of the problematic nature of the concept of transition and avoids equating it to 'the process of change leading to liberal democracy and market economy' (p. 5). Instead, transition 'for churches is largely about having influence on daily politics' (Ibid.). Yet there are moments when the teleological sin within the transitional paradigm emerges: for instance, when the author defines some Georgian regions as 'lagging behind in . . . cultural aspects' (p. 121), or when he gives credit to the ideological void theory, according to which 'religion somehow filled the ideological gap left by Communism's departure' (p. 51). Such an approach tends to privilege breaks over continuities and to give for granted the effectiveness of socialist atheist policies and social engineering on people.

Metreveli's volume shows once more that the public presence of churches indeed matters (p. 145). Resorting to a mixed-methods approach, the author alternates a focus on grassroots and an institutional level, thus showing both impressive linguistic skills and a vast command of the literature at the crossroads of the sociology of religion and political science. The choice to juxtapose both quantitative

and ethnographic data from three different countries is ambitious but definitely pays off, as it succeeds in tracing patterns of religious and societal transformation in the former socialist bloc.

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Valdimar Tr. Hafstein and Martin Skrydstrup (2020), *Patrimonialities: Heritage vs. Property* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 102 pp., \$20.00, ISBN 9781108928380.

In the autumn of 2021, I will return to teaching a folklore studies and cultural anthropology graduate seminar on cultural property and cultural heritage after a gap of fifteen years. When I first taught a similar course in 2004, the key works that I might read alongside my students seemed relatively few and many were obvious choices. Authors on my first syllabus were mostly scholars who came to the ethnographic and ethnological study of heritage and property having already established their careers working on other topics. One key exception is Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, a co-author of the book under review here.

Hafstein, with his co-author Martin Skrydstrup, belong to the initial generation of scholars who entered into the study of cultural property and heritage with intentionality from the start of their careers. Over the past two decades they have contributed significantly to a literature that is now vast and sophisticated as well as to an interdisciplinary and disciplinary field that is now (relatively) mature. One sign of these developments is the need for short orienting volumes such as Hafstein and Skrydstrup's *Patrimonialities: Heritage vs. Property*. Wanting a brief volume that positions heritage and property within the same conceptual frame, I intend to open my upcoming course with a discussion of *Patrimonialities*. I anticipate that the volume will be widely used in similar fashion. Beyond the classroom, the volume offers an excellent primer for established scholars new to the topic and it also provides specialist readers with a distinct and generative theoretical conceptualisation of cultural heritage and of cultural property.

Over the course of five brief chapters dividing up eighty-eight pages of text, the authors introduce their two topics and the linkages that join them into a single 'patrimonial field'. They alternate between extending their theoretical argument and supporting it through brief evocations of actual cases explicated ethnographically and historically. Some of these derive from the authors' own research and others

derive from the scholarly literature. Some of their case material has been discussed often (e.g. the Parthenon Sculptures) but much of it is not widely known. The authors thus do a great job of bringing specialist studies to a wider professional audience, situating such work within a useful general framework.

A review cannot substitute for the volume itself, but the authors historicise, contextualise, and conceptualise cultural property as a ‘technology of sovereignty’ and cultural heritage as a ‘technology of reformation’. In doing so, their arguments are compelling. Building on the work of theorists of sovereignty and governmentality – as well as upon some of the best ethnographic work by folklorists and anthropologists on heritage and cultural property within national, regional, global, and (post-)colonial contexts – the authors offer a productive framework for understanding cultural heritage and cultural property, one that is particularly useful for seeing how they can (sometimes) be (repeatedly) transformed into each other. The volume also tracks the special role that UNESCO and other international intergovernmental organisations and processes have had in precipitating and promulgating property and heritage discourses, policies, and practices across diverse societies. The authors’ examples are all well-chosen and reflect a diversity of tangible and intangible cases as well as international, national, post-colonial, colonial and local situations.

The study of policies and practices related to cultural property and cultural heritage is now a mature field with a multilingual, polycentric and multidisciplinary literature that is indeed vast. No authors or volumes – whether brief or monumental – can take it all in. There are innumerable aspects of the patrimonial field of relevance to Hafstein and Skrydstrup’s arguments that cannot be folded into their brief treatment. I expect that their framework, though, will be increasingly useful in future work on this greater array of topics and contexts, from heritage tourism to bio-prospecting. For readers of *AJEC*, I want to explicitly note that while the authors’ case studies are worldwide and often globalised, the volume includes a significant range of European examples and the authors – both established figures in European folklore studies and ethnology – demonstrate their commitment to, and embeddedness within, European scholarly networks.

Patrimonialities is an early title in a new (2020–present) Cambridge University Press sub-series called ‘Elements in Critical Heritage Studies’. ‘Elements in Critical Heritage Studies’ is part of the larger ‘Elements’ series, which, according to the publisher’s current website, aims at: ‘combining the best features of books and journals’. The

publisher is hoping that ‘Elements’ titles will ‘consist of original, concise, authoritative, and peer-reviewed scholarly and scientific research, organised into a focused series edited by leading scholars’, manifesting the intention to ‘provide comprehensive coverage of the key topics in disciplines spanning the arts and sciences’. *Patrimonialities* is one of seven sub-series titles published to date. Other volumes in the ‘Elements in Critical Heritage Studies’ series include *Native Americans in British Museums* (Jack Davy), *Heritage Tourism* (Yujie Zhu), and *Heritage Justice* (Charlotte Joy). ‘Elements in Critical Heritage Studies’ is likely to be of considerable value to a range of people working in and on cultural heritage studies.

Patrimonialities is both a fine overview of present thinking and present circumstances in the realm of cultural heritage and cultural property and a productive explication of a useful conceptual framework that can animate new research and impact new policy. Critical heritage scholars and scholar-practitioners working on heritage/property issues will want to read it. And will very likely benefit from it too.

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Modeen, Mary and Iain Biggs (2021), *Creative Engagements with Ecologies of Place: Geopoetics, Deep Mapping and Slow Residencies* (London: Routledge). 258pp; 71 colour illustrations; ISBN Hb 9780367545758, £120.00; ISBN ebook 9781003089773, £25.89

‘Place’ seems to have become a pivotal concern across much of the social sciences, humanities and arts, both helped by, and helping, the rise of ‘environmental humanities’ as a contemporary form of arts and sciences intermingling. For the Humboldts, and many before them, such intermingling may have been the obvious way of approaching the world, but a ‘possessive individualism’ took over as a secular successor to institutionalised religion, disciplining and framing our modes of inquiry into rigid discursive structures of exclusion. Rebellion against this is nothing new; ‘environmental humanities’ may be the latest in line, or just another attempt by the hegemony to retain control of the rebellion. Shining a critical light on these developments, this inspiring book by Mary Modeen and Iain Biggs proposes an innovatively undisciplined approach drawing on art practice. A protagonist of creative ethnology, this reviewer has been engaged in related undisciplined acts of inquiry and brings that perspective to bear on the review.

The book's title indicates that the reader can expect three strands of inquiry into ecologies of place to be explored through creative practice. This places the work at the intersection of multiple more or less disciplined approaches. Publication in the series 'Routledge Research in Culture, Space and Identity', edited by Jon Anderson in Cardiff University's Department of Planning and Geography, suggests a target readership that may not immediately include anthropologists. However, the book offers much that should be of interest to anthropologists and ethnologists, and not just those of us interested in 'place' (whatever we mean by that).

In ten chapters the authors take the reader on a wide-ranging journey. Chapter 1 provides an overview of new thinking about ecosystems, reviewing historical actions and theories, briefly contrasting indigenous belief systems and Western philosophy and then exploring the book's core terms: 'geopoetics' and 'deep' or 'slow' mapping. Chapter 2 looks at the basic actions of seeing, listening and acting as methods, considering the visible and invisible, phenomenal and numinous. 'Deep mapping' is explored further in Chapter 3, which reviews examples of creative practice engaging with the environment, and place-based research conducted in 'slow residencies'. The three scene-setting chapters are followed by a broad range of detailed case studies: Christine Baeumler's collaborative and educational 'Call to Eco-Action' (Chapter 4); a philosophical meditation on the interplay of perception and cultural memories of place (Chapter 5); creative communities of practice (Chapter 6); emergent practices from new interdisciplinary activists (Chapter 7); Gibi Lee's 'Curation of the Land' (Chapter 8); and the Beuys-inspired work by Alexander and Susan Maris (Chapter 9). The final chapter, raising the issues of 'field-work' and *notitia* (the latter understood by the authors as a particular form of attention or listening), serves as a kind of 'anti-conclusion', interweaving active creativity, applied intelligence, and an openness to the shifting demands of a changing environment.

The authors 'take "geopoetics" to be an approach to engaging with place in all its aspects from the perspective of an ecosophy' (4). They speak of a 'fourth ecology', drawing on Guattari's 'ecosophy', which identifies the three ecological fields of environment, society, and compound self. However, while using Guattari's notion of 'ecosophy', they draw sparingly on his thinking, 'preferring to identify [their] concerns with the field of geopoetics seen through the lens of mutual accompaniment rather than one that continues . . . to replicate the presuppositions of possessive individualism' (p. 9).

The authors' emphasis throughout is on 'lived experience', approached from a perspective of 'disciplinary agnosticism', producing 'a loose weaving-together of related and mutually informing strands of material, rather than a linear argument designed to deliver a particular conclusion or an authoritative overview' (p.13). This implies a deliberate break with canonical social science and indeed humanities paradigms, and leads to postulates that are expectable within the emerging one; however, the authors emphatically locate their onto-epistemological vision within a broad cultural ecology when, for example, they call for 'a new conception of fieldwork that seeks to indigenise knowledge . . . [and that] . . . will nonetheless need to remain firmly grounded in understandings of the particularities of the local world in which it is exercised' (p.219f.). In their 'anti-conclusion', they argue that this 'reimagined' fieldwork is 'the manner by which we turn from absorbing the hard lessons of the past to a more hopeful, more collaborative and active praxis that can first imagine, and then create, a more sustainable future' (p.220). With that postulate, they (inadvertently) take up the challenge posed by this reviewer with his vision of European ethnology as an engaged toposophy (Kockel 2009).

Given the centrality of geopoetics indicated by the book's title, the discussion of the concept in its various permutations is rather brief. As the authors mention Guattari, it may be worth noting that he is credited with having suggested that term during Kenneth White's doctoral examination. It should also be noted that, contrary to the authors' statement that White 'makes no mention of . . . Beuys . . . ' (p. 25), he actually *does*, most notably in his widely circulated 1991 lecture at the Goethe-Institut Glasgow, which draws close links between Beuys and geopoetics that actually resonate strongly with the authors' perspective. Their assertion that White 'promotes . . . an exclusive vision framed in ways that limit its collective potential' restates a criticism, made before, which community activists, most recently Mairi McFadyen (2018), have challenged.

As is inevitable with such relatively short books, there are details the authors could have usefully referred to. For example, audition and auricle (as opposed to observation and spectacle) have been attracting the attention of anthropological practitioners for some time, and this can be traced at least to Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, whose 'ethnographic perambulations' in the 1800s anticipated the authors' emphasis on 'seeing, listening, acting'; the idea of compound or ensemble selves closely resembles the aesthetic anthropology of Ina-Maria Greverus;

and ‘slow residency’ is reminiscent of Henry Glassie’s fieldwork in Ulster and elsewhere. Noting such gaps is not, therefore, a criticism but rather meant as encouragement to further explore this field. The book is brimming with provocative ideas and insights that give the reader – even one well-versed in the matters discussed – valuable food for thought.

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Samantha Walton (2020), *The Living World: Nan Shepherd and Environmental Thought* (London: Bloomsbury Academic) ISBN 1350153389 and 978-1-3501-5322-6, 210 pp. £90.00

This important book explores the writing of Anna ‘Nan’ Shepherd (1893 – 1981), a Scottish Modernist writer who is known particularly for her seminal mountain memoir entitled *The Living Mountain* (1977). That slim volume is based on Nan’s experience of hill walking in the Scottish Cairngorms. Shepherd also wrote three novels. *The Quarry Wood* (1928) has often been compared to *Sunset Song* (1932) by fellow Scot Lewis Grassie Gibbon. *The Weatherhouse* (1930) concerns everyday lives in a small Scottish community. The novel has a particular focus on the complex interaction among women – mothers and daughters, wives, widows and spinsters in the community. *A Pass in the Grampians* was published in 1933 and focuses on Jenny Kilgour, a young girl who needs to choose between rural life on her grandfather’s remote farm and the companionship of Bella Cassie who meets with strong disapproval from the community.

Walton’s book is entitled *The Living World* partly in homage to Shepherd’s celebrated masterpiece. More significantly, it is designed to emphasise the significance of ‘living-ness’ as a fundamental aspect of Shepherd’s holistic understanding of nature (human and non-human).

At the outset, Walton makes clear that her volume is not a biography of Shepherd, the nature-writer. Instead, it engages with Shepherd's writing from an ecological perspective and situates Shepherd's works in a broad cultural context. Walton explores three fundamental research questions: How can Shepherd's writing be understood from the perspective of environmental humanities? To what extent does Shepherd's work resonate with contemporary environmental ethics? And: What relevance does Shepherd's work have for the reconceptualisation of the role of humanity in the Anthropocene?

Walton's volume is laid out in six chapters. Chapter 1 explores the meaning and centrality of place in Shepherd's *The Living Mountain*. To set this debate in a broader context, Walton draws on theories of 'dwelling'. The second chapter explores the impact of inter- and post-war understandings of ecology on Shepherd's writing. This chapter also references the writings of Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson. In Chapter 3, Walton establishes Shepherd's writing in the canon of proto-environmentalist literature. She also takes the opportunity to situate Shepherd in relation to environmental ethics. Through the concept of 'deep time', Chapter 4 investigates a different way of being, situated in the context of different timescales and ecological longevity. Walton acknowledges the ability of Nan Shepherd to reconcile geologic temporality with her immediate and intimate relationship with the Cairngorms. Chapter 5 examines Shepherd's philosophy of 'life' and 'livingness', as expressed in both the nature memoir and *The Weatherhouse*. The final chapter focuses on Shepherd's 'transformative' experiences of 'self-dissolution' in the mountains that influenced her representations of subjecthood and ecological selfhood.

This is an admirable book in many respects. It contains many clear and extended definitions of concepts that are very helpful for the reader. Examples include a wide-ranging discussion of 'nature-writing' and theosophy in Chapter 1; an exploration of ecology between humanities and science in the second chapter, and a consideration of 'deep-time' in Chapter 4. Moreover, the author is very well-informed about both Scottish, English and international contexts. The book deals broadly with Romanticism at home and in the US. There is a strong discussion of the Scottish Literary Renaissance. While the Anglophone world is thus relatively well-represented, Walton's analysis would have been enhanced by more explicit inclusion of perspectives from other linguistic and philosophical contexts, such as the postulate of a toposophical approach ('place wisdom'; see Kockel 2009) that has led to a working group in the International Society for

Ethnology and Folklore, or the concept of ‘geopoetics’ (White 1998), developed initially in French. Although Walton does discuss that concept, there is little reference to Kenneth White’s extensive work. Shepherd’s writing has been perceptively analysed in terms of White’s geopoetics (McCarthy 2017), and Walton’s book would have benefited from exploring this connection in greater depth.

The book is beautifully written and almost poetic in parts. As an example of this, I would point to page 114, where Walton explores the criticism that Shepherd could be accused of recycling material. Walton says that:

Shepherd’s text can be compared to a rocky beach, where the stony records of different epochs and life forms jostle together. A collective entity and a continuity, these fragments have been rolled together, turned over, broken up and re-encountered afresh. Across distinct works authored over a decade apart and formally re-organised from prose to poetry, Shepherds turns over the same fragments, outlining a shape here or a newly revealed colour and texture there. In the process, the operation of memory and the act of authorship mimic geological processes: details are lost, epochs are uncovered. What remains are the strongest, most striking traces of the past: a mountain landscape, smoothed and cleaved by glaciers, and a memory of a place, which has been shaped by tactile, sensory encounters with the place itself. (Walton 2020: 114)

At a recommended retail price of £90, the volume reflects the expense of producing monographs and the reliance on libraries to purchase hard copies. Given the popularity of Nan Shepherd, whose portrait was added to the Royal Bank of Scotland’s five-pound note in 2016, as well as the broad and growing interest in geopoetics internationally, I would anticipate considerable demand for a paperback edition, which hopefully will appear in the near future. Walton’s book is an impressive, wide-ranging contribution to an emerging field that deserves to be read widely.

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Jone Salomonsen, Michael Houseman, Sarah M. Pike and Graham Hervey (eds.) (2021), *Reassembling Democracy: Ritual as a Cultural Resource* (London: Bloomsbury Academic), 249pp., Open Access, DOI 10.5040/9781350123045, Paperback: £28.99

Freely accessible in a handy open edition format, this edited volume is one of the outcomes of the eponymous research project led by Jone Salomonsen at the University of Oslo between 2013 and 2017. Prompted by the responses Norwegians gave to the terrorist attack perpetrated by Anders Behring Breivik on 22 July 2011 in Oslo and Utøya, it tackles the question of how a cultural resource such as ritual may politically and/or personally empower social actors in a context (democracy) characterised by constant change and crisis. Featuring authors from different fields (anthropology, philosophy, political science and specialists of religion and ritual) working on various case studies, the book offers original and thought-provoking insights on the complex and often elusive relationship of new forms of rituality and the political.

The two key concepts of ritual and democracy are discussed in the two theoretical chapters of the first part, signed by Ronald Grimes and Agnes Czajka. Emphasising their ‘dynamic, polyvalent, relational and contestable’ (p. 4) use, both authors subscribe to a fluid vision of what ritual should be like and what it should do in democratic settings. Showing that improvisation is an essential component of any ritual activity, R. Grimes suggests that it also should be part of the ritual dynamic of any democratic system, along with self-critical reflexivity. Basing her reflection on Jacques Derrida’s conceptions about European identity in its relationship to hospitality, A. Czajka coins ‘hospitable democracy’ as a resource for working with the potentially self-subverting dynamic that oscillates between the ideal of openness (unconditional hospitality) and the necessary imbalance between host

and guest (conditional hospitality). As she points out, ritual may be one possible way of implementing hospitable democracy in social action, allowing to cope with the perpetual crisis European societies experience in their constant encounters with Others.

Most of the subsequent chapters illustrate precisely this proposition providing examples of the creativity and negotiations that ritualisation implies in democratic contexts. The second part of the book provides a varied set of ethnographically grounded accounts of ritually mediated community-making ranging from Mongolian shamanism (Gregory Delaplace), through Indigenous festivals (Graham Harvey), dances of self-development in France (Michael Houseman), Marian pilgrimage in Portugal (Anna Fedele) to the interreligious Choir of Civilizations in Turkey (Jens Kreinath). This seemingly eclectic collection is unified not only by the concepts of ritual and democracy, but also a shared analytical stance inspired by actor-network theory and a relational approach of ritual.

The broad perspective adopted by authors allows to show how new forms of rituality shape the social fabric inscribing practitioners in dynamic networks of agents composed not only by other individuals, but also by non-human beings, spirits and figures of the past, their own inner selves and that of others, ritual objects, institutions and so on. Chapters focus respectively on ritual form, notions of personhood, performative mechanisms that bring forth a particular kind of sociability founded on distanced intimacy, networks of solidarity between pilgrims, soundscapes and musical performances representing a peaceful cohabitation of different religions. Providing thorough analyses of the particularities of each case, authors explore forms of relationality that may serve as resources for social change and a more inclusive society and, more generally, the potentiality and the necessary limits of ritualised practices in contributing to democratic values.

The third part tackles acts of commemoration and resistance that respond to threats to democracy. Two chapters are dedicated to the memorials that followed the 22 July 2011 attacks in Norway. Jone Salomonsen studies the generative aspects of three reactions to Breivik's ideology and atrocious actions which she qualifies, inspired by Victor Turner, as the 'ritualised creativity of "the weak"' (p. 144) that may be empowering not as explicit manifestations of protest, or purely political acts, but as pre-political tools promoting the ethical norms underlying democracy as well as cultural dialogue and pluralism. Analysing the interreligious funeral and memorial ceremonies of three Muslim youths killed in Utøya, Ida Marie Høeg sheds light

on the ritual role of flowers as mediators in an exceptionally inclusive and uncertain ritual process bringing together participants of different backgrounds. The chapter points out the potential of a ritually framed interreligious dialogue which accommodates cultural differences in a context of increasing diversity.

Marika Moïsseeff compares mourning practices of small-scale societies and those of the contemporary West. This cross-cultural perspective shows that the collective commemorations that respond to terrorist attacks shift away from Western institutionalised funeral practices which tend to give little place to the externalisation of grief. In the face of collective tragedies, the shared representation of loss emblematic of extra-European funerary practices acts as a powerful cultural resource that allows the ritualised reaffirmation of community and of the values challenged by those tragedies. Ken Derry furthers the extra-European opening of the volume with an essay on a particular genre of resistance: he analyses three Indigenous films of different cultures (Inuit, Māori and Aboriginal) as ‘medicines’ intended to heal the individual and collective traumas of colonialism. As examples of an eminently democratic stance, these films also point to the inherent flaws of democracy they may contribute to repair.

The book not only provides a rich and original conceptual apparatus for the understanding of new forms of rituality in democratic settings, but it is also particularly topical for at least two reasons. On the one hand, the issues raised by the authors are of great importance in a time when far-right values and ideologies continue gaining ground in the social and political landscapes of different European countries. On the other hand, the book was published almost exactly ten years after the terrorist massacre that took the life of seventy-seven persons in Norway. One cannot help but consider the action of reading it as an effective way of honouring their memory.

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