

instructor choose the ones s/he would like to use in class? But even then would it be possible, after the great effort such a project would consume, that everyone's preferences could be met? New religions are so diverse and many that in-depth coverage of a large group of them would be a lifetime project, even apart from the continual updating the chapters would need.

Any book with this much information is bound to contain a few errors. The Pagan holiday of Samhain, for instance, is said to fall on the autumnal equinox (2); it actually comes several weeks after that. The Hellenistic period is placed in the first centuries of the Common Era (11), while most scholars consider it to have begun with the death of Alexander the Great (d. 323 BCE) and ended with the Roman ascendancy in the second and first centuries BCE. A characterization of the Spiritualists makes them all seem to have been Free Lovers (61), which is far from correct.

One might also quibble with some of the author's judgments. For example, "cultus" is defined as "in its simplest meaning" referring to beliefs or rituals (8), rather than going deeper into the roots of the term, which are agricultural (a fact that raises the tantalizing possibility that fertility rituals are the very basis of human religiosity). The Radical Faeries are characterized as a "queer pagan group" (165, 174), and while Pagan rituals can be found in some Faerie groups, the movement as a whole is larger, more diverse, than that. It would have been useful to provide the words behind the acronym "WITCH" (170)—Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (and several variants).

And, to conclude, the name of the book itself is slightly odd, as if New Age and Neopagan groups are somehow something other than new religious movements.

But these quibbles are minor indeed. Urban has given us the best book of its kind to come along in several years, and instructors and curious members of the public will find here a feast of carefully considered and accurate information on the groups standing outside the American religious mainstream but never far from our sight.

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*Wicca: History, Belief, and Community in Modern Pagan Witchcraft.* By Ethan Doyle White. Sussex Academic Press, 2015. 272 pages. \$74.95 cloth; \$34.95 paperback; ebook available.

Although popular books that present the contemporary Pagan religion of Wicca from the perspective of a practitioner are easy to find, lengthy and serious introductions to the religion are rare. Rarer still are those that attempt to cover the broad range of beliefs and practices of

Wiccans. Ethan Doyle White's book, *Wicca*, is unique in that it does all of this, as well as cover the young religion's history, demographics and culture. To its credit, this is a scholarly book that is highly readable.

Part one covers Wiccan history. It examines the milieu in which Wicca evolved, from Michelet to Murray, including ceremonial magic and Spiritualism, and the contribution of folk magic. Gerald Gardner's life is explored, as are the influences of other early Wiccan leaders, since the religion moved from England to the United States. This section gives brief but excellent information on the leading players in both countries, as well as on the effects of feminism, gay liberation, and environmentalism on American Wicca. It concludes with the change from exclusively coven membership to the growth of solitary practitioners and "teen Witches."

Part two deals with beliefs and practices, no small feat considering the variety of beliefs typically found even within the same coven. As White writes, "The religion's multivocal attitude to theology has not proved problematic for the movement, which has found a way in which to embrace bitheists, polytheists, monotheists, pantheists, and even atheists within its ranks, allowing it to become one of the most theologically diverse new religious movements in the Western world" (87). This is why Pagan Studies scholars tend to emphasize praxis over belief in their work. White argues that Wicca, "is fundamentally a religion of ritual" (116), and goes on to discuss some common Wiccan rituals.

Part three looks at Wiccans in the world: their demographics, politics, and wider culture. It concludes with a brief review of the academic study of Wicca and development of Pagan Studies.

In order to achieve the breadth of coverage that White does, he has relied primarily on research done by scholars before him, as well as publications by practicing Wiccans. This gives the reader a variety of voices and perspectives. This kind of lengthy literature review provides significant advantages and can cover far more material than the more traditional monograph, and there is some excellent information here. At the same time, there are also problems inherent in such a practice.

For example, White claims that it is difficult for many Wiccan leaders to be able to perform legal marriages (144), and cites as his reference a book that was published in 1994. While that difficulty may still be true in certain states in the U.S., we might expect some change in the intervening 22 years. A more recent citation would lend credibility to his statement. I found myself checking the publication date of his citations on several occasions for similar reasons.

A much more serious problem occurred in his discussion of the Dianic tradition within Wicca, a female-only practice started by Z. Budapest in 1971. White claims that the groups tend to be lesbian, "although [they] have also welcomed heterosexual women who reject romantic and/or sexual interactions with men as a feminist act: some of those women who do continue to have said relations with men have at

times felt unwelcome within such groups” (99). One reference is cited for this information. As I have worked with Dianics for 28 years and have never heard of this, I checked with my sources in several Dianic communities across the United States. They were unanimous in saying that this is “absolutely untrue.” “Any Dianic group with this practice would be an anomaly,” according to Ruth Barrett, who has trained more than two thousand women in the Dianic Craft. My sources felt the statement was not only inaccurate but prejudicial, because of on-going tensions Dianics face concerning gender identity in the United States.

Living in England, White may not be aware of these tensions, and so would not have seen this claim as problematic. That is one of the difficulties in using secondary sources and attempting to cover so much material. Perhaps it is why this is the first book to try to do it in a scholarly way.

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*Nordic Neoshamanisms*. Edited by Siv Ellen Kraft, Trude Fonneland, and James R. Lewis. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 270 pages. \$100.00 cloth; \$95.00 paper; ebook available.

*Nordic Neoshamanisms* is a welcome addition to the study of new religious movements in general and of modern forms of paganism and shamanism in particular. While addressing the geographical area of Northern Europe, underrepresented in the related English-language academic literature, this collection of essays engages with interactions between the past and the present as well as between the local and the global.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part, Background, comprises a chapter by Olav Hammer who discusses the canonical works on shamanism of Mircea Eliade and Michael Harner. Hammer shows that, despite the fact that Eliade is widely perceived as a more serious scholar than Harner, the works of both authors share much in common as they reflect the Western contexts in which they were produced. Since their works have significantly informed the development of neoshamanism, the names of Eliade and Harner reappear multiple times throughout the rest of the volume.

The second part, Late Modern Shamanism in Nordic Countries, offers case studies of particular individuals, communities and institutions. Trude Fonneland contextualizes the rise of neoshamanism in Norway. She shows that although insiders perceive this as a reconstruction of ancient local tradition and reject Harner’s universal model for shamanism, the movement is, in fact, a modern creation that is global in scope and largely based on Harner’s strategies. Merete Demant Jakobsen explores individual dimensions of Danish neoshamanism