

Book Reviews

The International Eliade, edited by Bryan Rennie. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007. 318pp., hbk \$70.00, ISBN 9780791470879; pbk \$22.95, ISBN 9780791470886.

In his *Alexandria Quartet*, the novelist Lawrence Durrell observed, “Truth never shows a plane surface.” One might well say the same not only of “religion,” but of one of its pre-eminent twentieth century interpreters, the Romanian-born but internationalist scholar, Mircea Eliade. Indeed, it could be argued that Eliade was not only an erudite and provocative seeker of and guide to the truth of religions; he was himself an enigma for which one might well seek an interpretive key. Bryan Rennie, editor of the current volume, *The International Eliade*, provides a welcome companion to his earlier works, *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion* (1996) and *Changing Religious Worlds: The Meaning and End of Mircea Eliade* (2001) through assembling critical essays by international contributors.

If, as one of the writers, Ulrich Berner, asserts, “Eliade is probably the most controversial figure in the history of religions as an academic discipline,” these essays bear out the truth of her observation. The editor, in making his selections, sought not to produce a *festschrift* but rather a “balanced consideration of Eliade’s significance,” recognizing that Eliade commentary to date has ranged from ill-disguised hagiography to polemical dismissal. The essays that follow deal not with Eliade’s more controversial political past—about which much has been written—but with his understanding of religion and the multiple influences that seem to have shaped that understanding, both of which aspects of his life and work provoke controversy. There is probably good reason for this. Indeed, as Rennie notes in his introduction, “...there is a tension in his work between self-disclosure and the explication of the other. Eliade is himself an object of hermeneutics...” Thus the collection advances Eliade scholarship on both fronts: how to understand religion, as Eliade proposed, and how to understand the interpreter of religion, Eliade himself.

The corpus of commentary on Eliade is large already and many of the themes considered in this collection are ones about which much has already been written. But each writer brings a distinctive voice to the ongoing dialogue. A particularly fine example is Okuyama Michiaki's essay, "Camouflage and Epiphany: The Discovery of the Sacred in Mircea Eliade and Ōe Kenzaburō." By considering the Dialectic of the Sacred and its influence on this contemporary Japanese novelist, the author identifies the tension inherent in Eliade's use of "hierophany," noting that it is a "two-edged sword," useful for "...deciphering the sacred in an apparently profane world (while cutting)...into the unquestioned assumptions of a sacred reality hidden in a profane world." Eliade was both, as the scholar, seeking to discover the miracle of the sacred camouflaged in the ordinary, but, as a writer of fiction, doing just the opposite.

Seen through the set of lenses Eliade's works provide, the world can never be seen as it had been before. While a doctoral student with my colleagues at the University of California, Santa Barbara in the late 1960s, when Eliade would be in residence for several months at a time, I recall my own eye-opening experience of looking afresh at the symbols and practices of not only my inherited tradition but of those others I was studying. And it was but a small step to go from the decipherment of religious phenomena so identified, to those apparently secular forms which, with a fresh hermeneutic, revealed perennial themes. Eliade the professor took especial pleasure in being midwife to such insights on our part. But on such occasions, the "midwife" rarely gave us even a glimpse of his own path of discovery. One cannot but conclude that Eliade himself would certainly welcome the critical debate his works have provoked. For it is only in a sustained dialogue of scholars, such as those here gathered in Rennie's volume, that the role of the interpreter of religion can be better understood, as well as the role of Eliade himself.

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Themes in the History of Japanese Garden Art, by Wybe Kuitert. University of Hawaii Press, 2002. 304 pp., hbk \$50.00, ISBN 9780824823122.

If you are looking for a beautiful picture book of Zen-inspired gardens, this is not for you, as it is a serious appraisal of Japanese Garden Art through

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the ages. It is written by a landscape gardener, Wybe Keuiter. He has revised and updated his 1988 work *Themes, Scenes, and Taste in the History of Japanese Garden Art* with a new, thought-provoking interpretation of the evolution of the Japanese garden. There are illustrations, serving to whet the appetite for the real thing—the gardens themselves, which need to be experienced with all the senses, as well as with an understanding of history, cultural background and art. There are, however, plenty of diagrams and sketches which expand and clarify the journey through history and design.

The cover gives an accurate indication of the subject. From the top, a natural setting of woodland leads down into the complementary formalized space where well-chosen trees have been planted. In the foreground shaped hedges flank paths, which meander down to where carefully placed rocks are reflected in still water. In the centre, a person is shown enjoying the garden. Beneath that scene is a drawing, establishing the link with art. This is crucial. Art, in Japan and Asia generally, is closely linked with a whole philosophy of life, and Japanese gardens are considered works of art. Elements of landscape are arranged as in a painting, but, in contrast with usual works of art, the components are not fixed, but change over time. A wise old gardener is quoted by Kuitert as likening the plants, flowers and trees to quiet actors in a slow theatre as they grow and change with the light and the seasons. These nuances are important to the Japanese, and great attention is paid to where the light falls and how the variations during the year affect the design. This makes the gardens peaceful places, conducive to reflection on life and the passage of time.

In this overview, Kuitert concentrates on three periods in history when Japanese gardens and art were most closely linked. These periods form the structure of the book. Firstly, “Themes,” the Heian period from the tenth to late twelfth century, when the courtly gardens, now long vanished, are known through records, paintings and the invaluable eleventh century manual *Sakuteiki*. During this period the poetic symbolism of plants was important and much attention was paid to seasonal variations. The gardens were used for all kinds of gatherings, especially readings of lyric poetry, which they also inspired.

The second part, “Scenes,” looks at the medieval period, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This is a time of strong Chinese influence when the link with art is particularly evident. The gardens, rather than being created and used by the nobility, usually belonged to Zen Buddhist priests and military men. They would meet in reading rooms, where a screen would open to reveal a small garden, laid out as a scene to be viewed. These gardens were actually

created by garden makers, considered lowly workers, in co-operation with painters, who were influenced by the Chinese landscape art of the highly educated scholar-painters. Rocks, waterfalls and traditional pines, plum trees and bamboo were arranged with classical paintings in mind, and in some cases the colours of the rocks chosen were influenced by the tones of ink used by the painters. The whole garden was composed as a mock landscape or *kasenzui*. The unplanted compositions of sand and rocks may be understood as abstract versions of such paintings, moving the eye through the scene.

A return to simple piety from the earlier elaborate Buddhist ceremony led to gardens being used for meditation with distant views becoming more important. Although the influence was from China and often inspired by Zen temples there, the Chinese did not practice pure Zen but mixed various influences, including Buddhist esotericism and Daoist harmony with nature. According to Muso Kokushi, a Japanese teacher, appreciation of these scenic gardens could be considered a spiritual experience, sustaining the search for truth. Although he studied Zen, he did so with Chinese scholars, and what he taught was not Zen meditation and enlightenment, but problem-solving through the use of reason. According to Kuitert, it is that broad Chinese influence rather than any “spirit of Zen” which sets these Japanese gardens apart. He makes the case for rejecting the “Zen interpretation,” tracing several roots of that interpretation, particularly the influence of Zen scholar D.T. Suzuki on Western thinking.

The third section, “Taste,” beginning in the seventeenth century, introduces the tea ceremony, which gained in importance and formality, tea houses becoming a central feature of the garden layout. The surrounding landscape became integrated into the garden design as part of the whole effect. This early modern period leads on to the present day, when gardens are produced by teams of experts, reflecting the wishes of both commissioner and designer.

Themes in the History of Japanese Garden Art gives a clear overview of the history and culture which produced the exquisitely arranged compositions we enjoy today and the level of our appreciation will be immeasurably enhanced by this book.

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The Virtual Pet Cemetery—Internet World Pavilion. <http://park.org/Guests/Pet/>

Recently Turton and Lewis (2007) reviewed *Animal Graves and Memorials* by Jan Toms in which was contained a gazetteer of animal graves and memorials found throughout the British Isles. Interestingly, that volume did not make reference to “virtual” memorials to animals, which is somewhat surprising given the number of virtual pet cemeteries that can be found on the world-wide-web. This brief review seeks to bring this phenomenon to the attention of the readers of *Implicit Religion*.

The overwhelming majority of virtual pet cemetery sites are based in the USA, although there are some sites based in the UK. The American sites contain a number of different components and offer different ways to engage with the web site. These range from including a memorial to a recently departed pet, to reading and commenting on an existing memorial. As well as written comments, some sites enable participants to put pictures of the lost pet, or of symbolic items, e.g. a virtual candlestick, in a special compartment, and users can also provide pictures of items that reflect their feelings. On one site it is possible to “engrave” a personal inscription on a virtual gravestone.

An examination of these sites suggests that they encompass a number of different attitudes from contributors, ranging from grief to humour to irony. Individual responses are invariably personal and informative, and sometimes even offer a poetic response. For example:

You snuck into our home and hearts and took us by surprise;
We couldn't help but love you, since your soul was in your eyes.
You made us fall in love with you—we don't know how or when;
The last time that we lost a pet we both said “Never again.” ...
But then you came along one day and chose us for your own;
How could we say no to you after all the love you'd shown?
We miss you, but we know you're looking down from above,
And, thanks to you, we have open hearts and two new cats to love.

(The Virtual Pet Cemetery)

Responses are also both religious and non-religious, inasmuch as they use, or do not use, religious language and symbolism, or not.

By way of example, this review seeks to outline briefly some of the features of one of the most popular websites, The Virtual Pet Cemetery—Internet World Pavilion, before discussing the benefits of virtual pet cemeteries. On entry to the site the following is displayed:

Welcome to The Virtual Pet Cemetery's Internet World Exposition Pavilion. The Virtual Pet Cemetery is the first on-line pet mortuary. All of us,

at one time or another, have had a pet we loved and lost. This Pavilion is dedicated to all those given a burial to our pet(s) [sic] in the backyard. If you wish to immortalize your beloved pet in the tombs of cyber-space for eternity, now is your chance.

The visitor is next faced with a list of 37 Virtual Pet Cemetery Plots plus links to: How to submit an epitaph; Honors and awards; My Cemetery.Com; and LavaMind. The link to “My Cemetery.Com” is a virtual cemetery for those wishing to create a lasting memorial to a grandparent, mother, father or friend, while “LavaMind” is a series of sites that offer children’s cartoon games and a free educational programme.

An examination of the first 10 sites of Virtual Pet Cemetery Plots found an average of 19 entries per plot, the majority of which featured deceased cats and dogs, but also included is one to Amazonian Water Snails, a fish, a tortoise and a hamster. The comments recorded on these dedications are both factual and emotional, suggesting that the writer is experiencing personal grief and loss. Some of the emotional comments suggest that the deceased companion animal was treated as though it was “human.” For example:

She was then diagnosed with Kidney failure. She passed away at the vet’s office. I will never forget that dog. I cried for 3 days straight and still get choked up when I think of all the fun we had together. We used to do everything together. I am now 14 years old and miss Misty very dearly.

From the perspective of implicit religion, one of the most interesting features within some of the memorials is the use of religious language. For example: “This site is wonderful. I was sitting here crying yet the stories and pictures brought so much comfort. This site truly is the pathway to Rainbow bridge. I’d like to make a dedication to my beloved rottie Samson. He was an angel,” and, “I went [sic] to ask Jeeves about doggy heaven,” and

My tears are falling now, as I type ... I am an animal volunteer/activist in my town. This week a lovely stray puppy she dog, I was taking care [of] died of D.F. She got the virus before we could immunize her. I wrapped her in my pillow case, than [sic] in a pink paper with a ribbon, and asked my friend’s husband to dig, and place her. So tinny [sic], so innocent, so intelligent. May God improve the situation of the strays all over the world. May God bless us all.

Animals are considered not to have a soul or spirit, and justification for this is generally made by reference to the dearth of references to animals in the Bible. The traditional Christian position is that animal life is not as

valuable as human life and this is reflected in the absence of animal graves in Christian graveyards. There is, though, a general belief that animals are a valuable part of God's creation. In contrast, other religions balance this, as is reflected in the Jains and Hinduism (Hare Krishna) who revere all animals. For the Hare Krishna sect the cow takes on an especially religious significance. The Christian church has responded to the importance of animals in the lives of the community by occasionally offering a "pets' service" where parishioners are invited to bring their pets to a special service in the local Anglican parish church. This, though, is not universally practised.

The religious content of the web pages dedicated to animal memorials at The Virtual Pet Cemetery, and on similar sites on the web, coupled with the general rejection of animal graveyards in churchyards by the Christian world, makes the existence of a dedicated web alternative a logical extension of human interest and concern. The religious content and emphasis suggests that some users of the site disagree with the Christian stance on the importance or value of animals. The popularity of these sites seems to be a means of gaining comfort and solace from the years of time and emotional energy that has been invested in their chosen pets and companions. These memorials and dedications to deceased animals attest to the importance attached to these relationships in both life and death.

The value and fascination for many users of the Virtual Pet Cemetery web site, and similar ones, can be summed up as: offering an opportunity to express feelings in a public forum that can be shared with others; attesting the importance of companion animals in people's lives; for a minority, investing a degree of personal religious value in the contribution it may have made to their lives, and by implication to those of significant others; obtaining a significant space in cyber space which can be freely visited at any time; and finally, being able to add additional memorials to subsequent animals that may be obtained to replace past pets and companions.

Reference

Turton, D.W. and C.A. Lewis (2007) Review of *Animal Graves and Memorials*, by Jan Toms, *Implicit Religion* 9: 315–316.

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In A New Light: Spirituality and the Media Arts, by Ron Austin. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 2007. 105pp., pbk. \$12.00, ISBN 9780802807731.

This is a book about the imagination, and the working of the imagination, specifically within the craft of film-making. The author, a longtime exponent of film production as writer/producer in Hollywood of such TV shows as *Charlie's Angel*, *Matlock* and *Mission: Impossible*. He has won many awards for his work, which includes writing and teaching on film-making in several film schools around the world.

His approach to the topic of spirituality is in essence *implicitly* religious, drawing down parallels from the stillness-invoking techniques of the Orthodox *Jesus Prayer*, or the Zen capturing of the present moment—"becoming no-thought." He mentions other techniques, so might gainfully have referred to the Jesuit Père de Caussade's "sacrament of the present moment," for a Western Christian example. He finds these techniques are not the property of religion alone, particularly explicit religion. The best of film-making is "a kind of revelation made possible by an attentive 'seeing in the moment'."

The book is short—the main text only 87 pages, organized into three sections: Part One, Spiritual Foundations, Part Two, A Brief Spiritual Listing of films, and Part Three, Spiritual Frontiers, which addresses the themes of transcendence and modern culture. Thereafter, there are some appendices, including "Some Personal Reflections on Faith." The Spiritual Foundations are laid in the outlines of three principles: Being in the Present Moment, Affirming the Mystery of the Other, and Transforming Conflict; behind this methodology he expands the last into The Mystery of Evil and The Moral Challenge to the "Heavy" (a Hollywood term for a certain kind of character who is a convenient and expendable villain; in a Girardian analysis of the origins of theatre in the context of religious violence, he represents "mimetic desire," that is, the desire of two or more people for something or someone that leads to rivalry. As René Girard says "Once upon a time a temple and an altar on which the victim was sacrificed

were substituted for the original act of collective violence; now there is an amphitheatre and a stage”). The scapegoat mechanism is alive and well in Hollywood and only the “heavies” change from time to time. Apparently the rituals of the ancient world and the enticements of the contemporary media are not so far apart as time might suggest—the key figure being the scapegoat. Scapegoating did not end with Jesus’s death; it carries on, and organized religion, dramatising the death of Jesus as it does in liturgical performance and in credal symbols, nevertheless cannot expiate the need for the scapegoat, and so places others in the frame.

This is a fascinating book—packed with insights for all its brevity. It provides a wonderful analysis of the role of film in the process of transforming conflict at a deep level of human imagination.

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Recognizing Religion in a Secular Society: Essays in pluralism, religion and public policy, edited by Douglas Farrow. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004. 224 pp., hbk. \$85.00/£54.00, ISBN 9780773528123; pbk. \$22.95/£15.50, ISBN 9780773528345.

The authors contributing to this compilation participated in a conference entitled “Pluralism, Religion and Public Policy,” held in Montreal in 2002 and co-sponsored by McGill University’s Faculty of Religious Studies and the Centre for Cultural Renewal in Ottawa. Their contributions are not intended as a comprehensive coverage of the event, but rather as an examination of part of the debate that took place there, and an encouragement to future debate. As such, the essays fit into a fluid structure, both overlapping and diverging, with the core themes of religion, ethics and values, good governance and civil society, and how the boundaries between them are understood and regulated. The panel of authors are themselves drawn from both academic and professional spheres, representing a range of legal, political, philosophical, historical and theological expertise.

The first essay is written by H.R.H Prince El Hassan Bin Talal, moderator of the World Conference on Religion and Peace and Chairman of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies (Jordan). Titled “Religion in the Public Realm,” it provides the sole globally-oriented perspective, via

a brief examination of Islam's contribution to the foundations of modern civil society. Issuing a challenge to the "clash of civilizations" view popularized by Samuel Huntington, the author draws on history and religious writings to demonstrate that Islam is not antithetical to such aspects of modernity as liberalism, pluralism, secularism and democracy (3–11).

The remainder of the essays reflect Canadian, North American, and Western experience. The second essay, by the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, Chief Justice of Canada, is titled, "Freedom of Religion and the Rule of Law: a Canadian perspective." The protection of religious freedom in early Canadian law is mentioned, and law is also presented as a religious system in its own right, with competing and complementing approaches to the maintenance of freedom both among denominations and religions, and between religious and secular concerns (12–34). In a response to this, Jean Bethke Elshtain, professor of social and political ethics at the University of Chicago, offers a perspective from the United States which emphasizes that issues of religious freedom should be resolved, as far as possible, by public debate rather than litigation (35–40).

The problem of defining both "religion" and "secularism" is at the centre of any interaction between the two spheres of society. William Galston, director of the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy in Washington, and David Novak, professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto, examine this core issue from different angles. Galston's essay, "Religion and the Limits of Liberal Democracy," examines the historical, political and philosophical origins of the ways in which liberal democracy views religion, while Novak discusses how the concept of the social contract is understood and used by religious communities, in "Human Dignity and the Social Contract" (41–50; 51–68). In "Considering Secularism," constitutional lawyer Iain T. Benson reviews the historical origins and present understandings of the term "secularism," and their influence on Canadian law, contrasting atheist, religion-excluding interpretations, with neutral and pro-religion, inclusive applications (83–98).

Ethics, values and human rights provide the theme for the essays in the latter portion of the book. Elshtain makes another appearance with an essay titled "Persons, Politics, and a Catholic Understanding of Human Rights." By comparing the Catholic human rights framework with secular approaches, she interrogates the underlying themes in the human rights debate, including the concept of sacredness, community and individualist orientations, and the tension between equality and uniqueness (69–82). Margaret Somerville, professor of law and founding director of

the McGill Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law, is the author of “Birth, Death, and Technoscience: searching for values at the margins of life.” Revisiting secular and religious approaches to the human rights debate, she examines values, ethics and religion in the issues of euthanasia, cloning and reproductive biotechnology (99–115). H. Tristram Engelhardt Jr, another academic from the bioethics field, explores the issue of moral difference, and how it may complicate the search for common ground between secular and religious ethics, in the essay, “Taking Moral Difference Seriously: Morality after the death of God” (116–139).

Editor Douglas Farrow, a professor in McGill University’s Faculty of Religious Studies, concludes with the essay, “Of Secularity and Civil Religion.” He contrasts the potential threat to religious freedom posed by civil religion, with the impartiality of genuine secularism (140–182). In a postscript to the book, he identifies as a common thread of the essays the degree to which the religious and secular spheres relate autonomously in a society where secularism is not defined as being religion-exclusive. He acknowledges that it is, however, a question for which “the results, like the starting points, have varied” (184).

The variation in results, which is a natural consequence of the complexity of the material supplied and the diversity in background and experience of the authors involved, creates a lack of a sense of resolution to the overall selection. While this may appear to detract somewhat from the quality of the book, the reader should accept it as a thematic collection of individual works rather than a definitive treatise. As such, it succeeds. Another difficulty caused by the multidisciplinary approach is that few will possess the breadth and depth of scholarship to adequately critique each paper. Readers may find themselves hunting amid the offerings for familiar territory, or be forced to augment the book with supplementary material to make the uncharted areas less foreign.

Although some may find that the focus on Canada limits usefulness and interest, this book provides important perspectives on religion in civil society. The role played by religion in the formation of legal and cultural norms; the quasi-religious status and function of law, civil religion and political ideology; the varying understandings of both “religion” and “secularism;” and the gulf between religious and atheist/agnostic worldviews—these are standard themes in the implicit religion body of research, and essential to in-depth research on the place of religion in society. The book is a challenge to policy-makers and academics; it delineates the situation, acknowledges the tensions, but does not give solutions. It clarifies the

debate by clarifying the positions, but continuing and resolving the debate remains a task for others, perhaps in a sequel.

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The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach (3rd edn.), by Bernard Spilka, Ralph W. Hood Jr., Bruce Hunsberger and Richard Gorsuch. New York: Guilford, 2003. 671pp., hbk. \$79.00/£54.00, ISBN 9781572309012.

When I attended my first conference on the scientific study of religion, more than thirty years ago in Chicago, Bernard Spilka was already a leading light. His fellow authors have similarly lengthy pedigrees, and as a group the writers of *Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach* are amongst the most highly respected names in their field.

This is the third edition of a well-known textbook, so that it hardly needs a detailed account of the content. Most aspects of the subject are covered in the seventeen chapters, beginning with two chapters that first set out the parameters that the authors are working to, and second provide a justification of the empirical approach. There follows a chapter introduced for the first time in the new edition, on the rapidly increasing interest in biological interpretations of religion. There are then five chapters on psychology as it bears on religion in different phases of the life cycle, concluding with a chapter on religion and death. Three chapters follow on the experiential dimension (religious experience, mysticism and conversion) and the remaining six chapters deal with the social psychology of religion, religion and morality, prejudice, religion as a means of coping, and mental disorder. In an epilogue that looks towards further growth in the subject, the authors pick out, as particularly important, study of the links between religion and spirituality, and, significantly in a text that emphasizes empiricism, the need for theory. Finally, and appropriately for a text published in New York shortly after the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre, the authors underline the urgent need to study the role of

religion in social and political conflict.

We have become used to fat handbooks from the USA and at 671 closely printed pages Spilka and his colleagues' text fits the stereotype. There is nothing quite comparable in the British publishing world, the nearest equivalent being Beit-Hallahmi's and Argyle's book on *Religious Behaviour*, or the compendia on religious education produced by Leslie Francis and his colleagues. The best of these American publications are of excellent quality, as for example David Wulff's single-handed and splendidly readable *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary*, or Ray Paloutzian and Crystal Park's more recent *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. Comprehensive texts like this are of major importance, used alike by students and fellow professionals as high-level introductions to their field, but they cost money. At £54 the present publication is not the sort of purchase easily possible for the average penurious undergraduate and even doctoral students are likely to struggle with themselves before eventually purchasing a copy. So it is wise to think carefully when selecting such a handbook and judging whether it is good value.

What Spilka and his colleagues have to say about North American psychology of religion is excellent, authoritative, and, in so far as a handbook can be, up to date. The considerable increase in the number of pages in comparison with the first and second editions is a fair indication of the remarkable acceleration of interest in religion on the part of psychologists during the past thirty years. Nevertheless, I find myself critical of certain aspects of the handbook. This has primarily to do with a provincialism that pervades some parts of the text, leading to an ignoring of significant developments outside the North American continent. As an example close to home, readers of *Implicit Religion* will be disappointed to discover that the term "implicit religion" does not even merit a single entry in the index of the book. Nor is there any mention of the founder of the study, Edward Bailey.

Ralph Hood mentions in the acknowledgement section that he has benefited from conversations with Jacob Belzen and Antoine Vergote, yet in a huge bibliography running to almost 100 pages the references to many important European psychologists of religion are either minimal or absent. There is also an absolute ban, it would seem, on any publications in languages other than English. Thus, picking almost at random, there is no mention of Mario Aletti's work or Sabino Aquaviva's extensive studies of religious experience in Italy, nothing from Poland, hence Halina Grzymała-Moszczyńska's work on cross-cultural issues is missing, as is Paweł M. Socha's research on religion and coping. Apart from a few fleet-

ing references to Michael Argyle, there is nothing from the psychology department in Oxford. Hence Michael Jackson, and Gordon Claridge's important investigation of the religion/mental illness boundary is passed over, whilst Fraser Watts' unit in Cambridge is similarly ignored. I was disappointed that my own work with Rebecca Nye on "relational consciousness" and spirituality gets no mention. Jacob Belzen himself is given minimal attention, as is the case with Dirk Hutsebaut, though their influence on the direction taken by European psychology of religion has been considerable. Leslie Francis, with a remarkable 21 mentions in the text and 27 references, and Kalevi Tamminen, Fritz Oser and Helmut Reich, are among the few Europeans that can consider themselves adequately represented.

Finally, returning to the chapter on Biology and Religion, a subject which I happen to know something about, I am sorry to say that the authors give a misleading and ill-informed account of the field. The worst misrepresentation is of the work of the zoologist Alister Hardy, who founded the Religious Experience Research Unit in Oxford in 1969. The writer seems to be unaware of Hardy's Gifford Lectures in Aberdeen University during the sessions of 1963–64 and 1964–65. He therefore makes a woeful *faux pas*, by asserting that Hardy fails to make out a plausible case for "behavioural selection." The allegation is based on a reading of a minor work of Hardy's, *The Biology of God*, published ten years after the Gifford Lectures.

To make the point clear, the lectures were published in two volumes. *The Living Stream* and *The Divine Flame*, shortly after they were given. The first volume is entirely concerned with developing an evolutionary account of the origins of religious experience, including a detailed explanation of "behavioural selection." Amongst his fellow zoologists Hardy was well known for his advocacy of this variant of natural selection, an idea that had already been extensively discussed more than a century ago by Mark Baldwin and Lloyd Morgan. Still more surprising, the error need not have been made. At least one of the authors must have been aware of the Gifford Lectures since they are referred to elsewhere in the handbook, but the absence of proper cross-checking meant that the mistake was overlooked. Such a glaring weakness leads to the suspicion that in other areas, where a reader is not well-informed, there may be similar problems.

So is this book worth the money? If your interest is primarily in North American psychology of religion, the answer is almost certainly "Yes," but readers would be well advised to look elsewhere if their concern is with a knowledgeable grasp of the more global picture.

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Sport and Spirituality: an Introduction, by Jim Parry, Simon Robinson, Nick J. Watson and Mark Nesti. Abingdon: Routledge, 2007. 266pp., pbk \$42.95, ISBN 9780415404839.

This book had an immediate appeal to me. As a Welshman passionate about rugby, so often proclaimed to be the “religion” of Wales; as a teacher of Religious Studies, trying to teach the concept of Spirituality to teenagers; and as a human being, touched by the insecurities of success and failure, of winning and losing. As the “spirit” is allowed to blow freely, so I enjoyed being diverted into reveries, prompted by the text, of my “spiritual” moments of sport.

One that comes to mind and, for me, shows that sport doesn't have to be about “winning at all costs” (a theme tackled in the book), was a chance encounter with that great Welsh rugby player and sports commentator, Cliff Morgan. Some fourteen years ago two of my sons were playing rugby for Weston-super-Mare RFC, at a mini's tournament at London Welsh RFC. Arriving at a rain-soaked ground we were met at the gate by a man selling programmes for the tournament. He was soaked through, rain dripping off his nose, bent over and shivering. He smiled and said a few words of encouragement to each boy that took a programme. Having taken ours, I realized, as I walked past, that it was Cliff Morgan. I returned and thanked him for being there (and asked for his autograph). He was just pleased to be there, supporting the youth, “doing his bit.” He would have been far too modest to say so, but I believe he was there to inspire, not through great deeds, but through humility. A glance at the recent newspaper sports pages reveals that humility and generosity of spirit are often lacking in contemporary sport—lavish soccer star parties and attendant scandals, arguing with the ref, doping, “bungs,” the list is almost endless. Even now the memory of meeting Cliff, and of his radio programme, where he often explored sport at a spiritual level, still arouses a genuine affect.

Sport and Spirituality provides a very useful introduction to understanding the nature of spirituality; the spiritual nature of sport; the threat of a sporting *genre* that prizes winning at all costs; and the challenges facing

professionals within sport, to redeem sport's finest qualities. The authors challenge prevailing orthodoxies and prejudices toward the inclusion of spirituality as a useful concept, leading to practice, within sports psychology. Furthermore, the authors suggest models of practice which go beyond the sporting world. Any organization, wishing to develop a corporate ethos which values individuals as persons, would find this work a valuable resource. There is an inherent challenge here to organized religions which, through their orthodoxies, dogmas and forms of fundamentalism, seem to constrain the spirit. We live in a society which seems to find little enduring satisfaction in the materialistic way of life; yet are the organized religions listening to the needs, and responding to people's spiritual needs? Attendance at church services would suggest not (though attendance at mosques and the new evangelical churches is rising). Maybe part of the problem is, as the book suggests, the often perceived understanding of spirituality as religion-based. The understanding offered by the authors clearly speaks of spirituality on a very human level, a spirituality which works on an interpersonal level:

Spirituality is about the practice and outworking of the spirit and ways in which it is developed, with its different aspects and relationships connected, sustained and understood... this may involve the spirituality of an individual or that which is developed in and through the disciplines and practices of a group or team. It is often a combination of both. Essentially then spirituality is relational and action centred, and about making connections with these different aspects of life.

(Parry *et al*, 2007, 24)

From a teaching perspective the working definitions of spirituality are useful. Spirituality is notoriously difficult to define, especially for teenagers who have no personal understanding of the term. The authors provide a challenging model which centres spirituality on an individual's unselfish "awareness and appreciation for the other. The capacity to respond to the other. This involves putting spirituality into practice. And developing significant life meaning based upon all aspects of awareness and appreciation of and response to the other." This helps develop the teenagers' understanding of spirituality as religion-based into areas which they can understand from their own perspectives, biographies and experiences.

Schools too are charged with providing opportunities for students to develop spiritually. This has long been an area of debate and disagreement, fuelled mostly by the (mistaken) view that spirituality equates to religion, therefore spirituality is the preserve of religious leaders and not of other

practitioners such as the classroom teacher. *Sport and Spirituality* provides evidence that spirit and spirituality are human characteristics which can be developed and enhanced. The holistic view of spirit is contrasted with a dualistic view, spirit as separate from the body, leading to the understanding that spirituality is about the whole person. In a practical classroom/school setting, spirituality can be identified and demonstrated through creating learning environments where students can feel safe enough to contribute within a mutually supportive group. Many teachers already do this, and have experienced that moment where the class seemingly “takes off,” whereby the group or individual seems to come alive and have new life “breathed” into them. In addition the authors suggest that the development of virtues is integral to an understanding and practice of spirituality. Virtues are practised in relation to others and require personal responsibility. By allowing students responsibility within the life of a school, where they are enabled to reflect on their own performance, they may develop a sense of identity and worth.

However there are some difficulties with this work. Having attempted to define spirituality and place it within the realm of human existence and wrest it from the exclusive realm of religion, we then have a section in the book placing sport and the *spirit* of sport back into mainstream religion (Christianity). I wonder whether this will win over those in the field of sport psychology who have denied the concepts of spirit and spirituality as having any worth in their field. The authors appear to want their thesis on spirituality in sport acknowledged, but it is not convincing that this section on sport and religion will help. In addition it is unlikely that evolutionary biologists and psychologists would find the notion of spirit and spirituality as advancing any understanding of the human condition.

The authors can expect criticism, or perhaps a degree of snobbery, from those who will dismiss the text as affording no scientific/empirical credence to the area of sports psychology. However, the book deals critically with the concept of play and its importance to human development. It also seeks to justify the need for a science of sports psychology to take seriously the ongoing research into the importance of spirituality in the development of athletes in all sporting disciplines.

With the Olympic Games in mind, sport again comes into sharp focus. The authors devote a section to the Olympic ideal and the possibilities it holds out for a changed human society. Many see the Olympics as a triumph of commercialism over the ideals of true sporting endeavour. Will the athletes and sports governing bodies live up to those ideals, or will the

issues of “doping” and commercialism dominate the games?

It is interesting to observe the discourse which emerged in the build up to the Beijing games. Headlines claiming, “True believers and heretics will have to share a single city,” clash with the hubris of “honour, passion” (BBC 2.01.08). Undoubtedly the use of religious imagery increases as athletes complete their pilgrimages to the Mecca of sport(!). Despite the cynicism surrounding sport, the authors have done sport and sports science a service by producing this introductory work. There is something, at times indefinable, implicit within humans, which craves for meaning and fulfilment. *Sport and Spirituality* shows that those human qualities can be identified, and be the subject of research and practical use.

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Headhunters: Matchmaking in the Labor Market, by William Finlay and James E. Coverdill. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007. 215pp., \$19.95/£9.95. ISBN 9780801473791.

This sociological survey addressed three central questions concerning headhunters themselves, client employers, and candidates in the American job market. First, how do headhunters persuade employers and job candidates to sell themselves to each other? Second, what do employers gain by using headhunters? Third, what criteria do headhunters use in choosing job candidates? The difference between employment agencies and headhunters is seen as being that the former finds jobs for people, whilst the latter finds people for jobs.

The authors conclude that headhunters improve the chances of candidates in the labour market, and that their progeny receive higher rewards than other recruits. Headhunting was seen to flourish in increasingly “hire and fire” environments, where there are lower levels of commitment between employers and employees. This indicates an impoverishment of human relationships in the name of success, profit and dominance.

Some employers were found to favour people who “fit in” and are “the right sort of person,” i.e. people who are socially similar. Such a process was deemed “homosocial reproduction.” Headhunters are seen as relying on three factors in evaluating job candidates: “specifications,” “hot buttons,”

and “chemistry.” Age, weight and beauty were also seen as being of definitive importance. The primary headhunting task is to find a “dead ringer” for the hiring manager.

Headhunters were seen as entrepreneurs who risk failure (i.e. earning nothing) every time they made a placement. They were reliant on their ability to manage market relations.

The advantages of using headhunters were seen to be speed, networking, go-between-ing, mutual self-interest, independence from internal interests, and knowledge.

Overall this book very much reflected the dynamics of American culture in general, and corporate culture in particular. In seeking to “advance” people in the market place, the net result oft-times seems to be reducing people to their saleability—and little more. In seeking some sort of ultimate potential in presenting candidates, the outcome seems to be one that diminishes people, in the face of the baser instincts of market forces.

Whilst headhunters may doubtless be able to achieve some successful trawling procedures, one is left wondering at the resultant world where the seemingly ruthless pursuit of such values ends up with extremes of self-destructive competitiveness. Maybe, yet again, it is time to upend the tables in this particular temple?

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Transforming the World: Bringing the New Age into Focus, by Stuart Rose.
Bern: Peter Lang. 368pp., pbk. \$95.95/£41.00, ISBN 9783039103164.

This book constitutes a moderately useful (if expensive) addition to the corpus of writing about “New Age” spirituality, and may well be of interest to anthropologists, scholars of implicit religion, religious professionals, and students undertaking comparative or general religious studies. However, sociologists (and working academics) are likely to find the author’s approach to this subject lacking in focus and theoretical rigour. The volume began life as a PhD thesis and has, apparently, been re-written and updated for general publication, although this is not altogether evident to this reader. As is often the case with doctoral research this is a very detailed study that is, within its lights, empirically robust, if indifferently structured in places and under-theorized throughout. It is built around a fairly

comprehensive overview of the literature, both academic and practitioner-based (with the emphasis on the latter), an ethnographic (participative) element, and a detailed and wide-ranging survey of 908 readers of *Kindred Spirit*, the widest selling New Age publication in the UK. The book is structured in three parts: The Main Features of the New Age, Encountering New Age Dominions of Interest, and Critical Responses to the New Age. These add up to a fairly comprehensive description of the New Age, and an added attractive feature is the voluminous bibliography related to the field.

The first five chapters seek to delineate the parameters of the field, exploring whether we might take the New Age as a religion, a lifestyle, or a means to realize human and spiritual potential. This is done by examining the various, seemingly disparate, elements that, taken together, constitute the field. Rose highlights three (what he terms) “principal concepts”—the “newness” of the New Age, its reliance on personal experience over collective knowledge, tradition, etc., and its motivating “energy,” that is, what Rose terms “spiritual love,” as its defining features. He asserts that whatever the outward forms of the New Age, whether it be empathy with the environment, the politics of anti-globalization, an emphasis on sustainability, or the unwrapping of human potential or new ways of realizing co-operation and community, these guiding threads are always to be found in what on the face of it looks like a very broad spectrum of unrelated ideas and practices. The New Age operates along a network principle, what Rose terms “a network of networks” (25), and eschews the type of formal institutional structures associated with traditional religious movements. Rose also emphasizes the experiential over the theological or ideological, and in this sense the connections with what we might term “implicit” religion are abundantly clear. Tellingly, the New Age flourishes in secularized societies that put a high premium on individualism and freedom and practitioners are least likely to be found in societies where traditional religions exercise hegemonic reach. Like oil and water, explicit and implicit religiosities are unlikely to exhibit any common ground.

As a descriptive overview of the various and varied networks that combine and re-combine to form the New Age, this section works fairly well, but at times it appears somewhat dated (for example, it is unfortunate that there is no mention of the Kendal Project), and in essence it tends to retread ground that has already been covered by other academics in some detail (notably Heelas and Woodhead). Moreover, it is not always clear whether Rose is approaching the subject from a distanced critical academ-

ic stance or from that of a fellow traveller. That said, from the perspective of any reader that might be new to the field, there is everything necessary for a basic understanding of what the New Age is and is not.

What follows is essentially a report of the survey findings, with some attempt to compare these findings with other surveys carried out in the UK and USA, and a detailed ethnographic description of the author's participation in a five day "Healing Circle" workshop. The survey section is subdivided into three parts: a discussion of spirituality and spiritual empowerment from the perspective of the survey respondents, healing practices, and what is termed "community activity." The term "spirituality" is notoriously slippery and what follows is a useful exercise in determining how this might be viewed in the light of what respondents say about it. Interestingly, one in five respondents had a theistic and "religious" view of spirituality, something not apparent in many other surveys and a finding that may be of some interest to scholars of implicit religion. Nevertheless, Rose emphasises the "mix and match" approach to spirituality, something that he sees as the antithesis of more structured religiosities. There is some confusion here. On the one hand he argues that New Age spirituality "represents the diametrically opposite position to religions, cults and new religious movements" (171), while in almost the same breath many of his respondents cite Christianity, Buddhism and new religious movements very specifically as significant influences on their individual spirituality (172).

Rose is on stronger ground when he correctly identifies the ways in which intuition is superseding custom and tradition, but there is no attempt on his part to link this observation to theoretical discourses surrounding de-traditionalization and post-modernity. The discussions about healing and "community" add nothing to the established literature and again there is no attempt here to link his discussion of New Age practices to contemporary social theory in the way that Heelas has done so fruitfully, or indeed, to engage in any meaningful way with Bruce's trenchant critique of the New Age. This lack of theorization is most evident in the ethnographic study of a healing workshop, which totally lacks context and theory. While this may be the current vogue in anthropology, I fail to see how this detailed "thick" description, with no gloss adds anything to the academic field. Herein lies the rub. Rose is clearly dismissive of sociology and sociologists, and by extension of humanism and social scientific explanation and this becomes more apparent as this section of the book unfolds.

Matters somewhat improve in the final section, devoted to critical responses. While the initial discussion of the "Christian Response" adds

nothing new to the established literature, the following discussion of society and culture fruitfully links into contemporary social theory, albeit idiosyncratically. Rose states at the outset that “there has been little serious criticism of the New Age and probably the main reason for this is that many of its core ideas have appeared to be eminently sensible” (291). While this statement clearly flies in the face of the facts on both counts, there is some attempt by the author to engage with serious social theory, albeit that it is hardly (and despite his claims) “a balanced view of the principal critical responses to the New Age” (291). Understandably, the initial focus is on the work of Paul Heelas, probably the most prolific academic writer in this field. Heelas asks awkward questions about spiritual veracity and the sociological underpinnings of knowledge, interpretation and “experience.” Conversely, Rose has no sociological tools with which to counter Heelas’ arguments, relying instead on his respondents’ descriptions of “meaningful psychic phenomena” to “prove” his point. Heelas’ critique of the consumerist and self-centred nature of much of the New Age also receives short shrift, but not much in the way of cogently argued or persuasive criticism. Ken Wilber’s assertion (echoed more strongly by Bruce), that much of what passes for New Age spirituality is in essence “trivialized spirituality,” is dealt with at relatively inordinate length, although it is not at all clear exactly what Rose is critiquing here. Wisely for his argument, he steers clear of Bruce’s far more comprehensible and damning critique of the trivial (and ephemeral) nature of much “new” spirituality. Lasch’s arguments surrounding de-traditionalization are dismissed on purely ideological grounds (he is too conservative), arguably highlighting the intellectual shortcomings of Rose’s responses at key junctures in this text.

The final chapter is a thoughtful recapitulation of the main themes covered in the book and it is here that Rose is at his most convincing. It is also, ironically, an indication of what might have been, if this book had been written from a more critical and academic perspective. Notions of implicit and post-modern religiosities might have been fruitfully explored, but are regrettably conspicuous by their absence. Nevertheless, this book has some merits, notably the original survey material and the fairly comprehensive overview of the literature. However, in the final instance, the quasi-academic nature of much of the writing, and the privileging of academically dubious arguments garnered from New Age writers over reasoned (and seasoned) academic critiques, jarred with this reader. Despite the claims on the book blurb, this is not a balanced view of the New Age.

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We Are What We Celebrate: Understanding holidays and rituals, edited by Amitai Etzioni and Jared Bloom. New York: New York University Press, 2004. 260pp., pbk. \$20.00, ISBN 9780814722275.

This fascinating book by Amitai Etzioni, a professor at George Washington University, and Jared Bloom, a research assistant at the same university, would be useful for those wishing to learn about American customs. The articles are divided into the family, communal and national level, with an introduction which is perhaps the most useful part of the work. It can both stand on its own and also provide a guide to the articles. It indicates the thinking that lies behind the selection of articles and is also the part of the book that contains the most theoretical underpinning.

There is a lot of detail about Martin Luther King Day and the Kwanzaa Day celebrations [Africa American holiday]. It is in the description and analysis of some of the familiar family festivals such as Christmas and Easter, that the explicit and the implicit dimensions are drawn together. While the requests to Santa Claus are personal and enable the gift to be child centred, the Easter bunny is anonymous and the gifts tend to be the same. One is directed to ask whether there are implicit undertones in the gifts that reflect the nature of the distinct festivals.

In some of the accounts one is aware of the pain that can be experienced at festival time. For example, space is given to the way separated partners approach the "family" celebration when children of more than one partnership are involved.

Suggestions are made about the way that some celebrations unite society, while others can allow for the usual order of things to be suspended, such as Mardi gras. It was interesting to consider that such reversals of the usual order are often quickly followed by a time of penance, such as Ash Wednesday. The book draws attention to such rhythms in the way we celebrate. It is rhythms such as these that draw point to the implicit ebb and flow that is present in the way we construct the calendar, even if we are not immediately aware of it. By analysing the family Christmas and Thanksgiving it allows one to appreciate how one feels about these celebrations. It is important to remember that for some people celebrations are times to

stay away and that is OK too.

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Actors, Pilgrims, Kings and Gods: The Ramlila at Ramnagar, by Anuradha Kapur. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2006. 250pp., pbk. £16.99/\$29.95, ISBN 9781905422203; hbk. £55.00/\$99.95, ISBN 9781905422197.

Actors, Pilgrims, Kings and Gods has, as its focus, the tradition of the Ramlila at Ramnagar, Varanasi. Based on the religious text, the Ramacharitamansa by Tulsidas, Anuradha Kapur discusses how to conceive of this annual month-long festival which is the enactment of the Ramayana story, in contemporary India. Her guiding idea is that it is possible to contemporize the Ramlila in performance whilst retaining the sanctity of the ancient text, thereby demonstrating that performance and worship are mutually enforcing. Kapur presents an informative analysis that roots the Ramlila in its historical tradition, presents the narrative of the story by discussing the significance of various rituals, and also emphasizes the less prescriptive and more dynamic nature of the enactment of the Ramlila as performance. This dual approach, generated by examining the historical text on the one hand, and the more malleable aspects of the live nature of performance (what I describe as the ebb and flow), is what is distinctive about the book and characterizes the essence of the Ramlila.

There are four main parts of the book—the introduction, a schedule of the performance, which precedes the description of the Ramlila, and a section headed, “Aspects of Performance,” which provides details of the practicalities of resources and management. The final part is a brief glossary, which gives additional background information on mythological characters. In addition there is a map of locations, which along with the schedule gives a sense of the journey which begins with the birth of Ravana and ends with the reign of Rama (Ramarajya).

The introduction begins with a discussion about hermeneutics: how should the Ramlila be interpreted? Kapur focuses on the key themes of classification, authenticity and the contemporary. She resists the tendency to homogenize the text, which she suggests would reduce its rich texture, and recommends a pluralistic approach to reading. “Instead of a single authentic voice, there are several” (2). Also, it is stated that “While the basis

of all Ramlila performances in North India is the Ramacharitamanasa, each performance in each region makes its own text" (9), which articulates the undesirability of a monolithic approach to the text. There is also an implication of the spectators in the performance, where meaning is created through the interaction between the actors and the spectators. This results in a blurring of boundaries between the actor and the real person, which is acute in the case of the Maharaja, for example, who is at once actor and king, and leads to what Kapur describes as 'the fictive spectators' (23). The performance of the Ramlila consists of a series of events held at different locations, with the spectators also moving in accordance with the shift in location. Participation, therefore, can be viewed from the perspective of pilgrimage. The Ramacharitamanasa underpins the performance and many read the text alongside the performance. However, there are extended periods where the performance consists of a dialogue between the characters of the drama and the spectators-cum-participants.

In contrast to the introduction, where the author assumes a position of authority and discusses the technical and other aspects from a position of superior knowledge, in the second section the author becomes a face in the crowd who retells her personalized journey following the Ramlila. This less formal approach is documented in the form of diary entries, which list the date and location at the beginning of each entry. In the entries the author comments on a manner of different subjects, from details about the narrative to the effects of the weather and her position in the crowd. Although this is a retroactive approach, by giving an account of how things appear in the here-and-now the reader feels involved in the action, and information is relayed in a fresh and dynamic way. The addition of simple diagrams every five pages or so helps to build up an integrated picture of the scene. The innovations of the diary format enable Kapur to give first-hand accounts of her journey in an informal but informative and non-patronizing way. The reader does not get the impression that Kapur is retrospectively documenting her findings but that, through the invitation to read her entries, we are plunged into the microcosmic world of gods, and subsequently feel as if we are experiencing the story of Lord Rama for the first time.

In her entries Kapur is unassuming and observant. She does not only comment on the actions of the spectacle but also on the feelings of the crowd—when they are tired, hungry, disappointed, and how this range of sensations contributes to the performance. The success of the performance is not dependent on the actors and others in the production team (such as

Atma or the Vyasas), but on the level of interaction and receptivity between the actors and the crowd-as-actors. Kapur also comments on accidental moments, which may seem to operate as a diversion from the plot of Rama but which also convey the spontaneity of the performance. In addition, she is brutally honest about the hardships of the undertaking of such a mammoth event and confesses when she is not necessarily in the best viewing position. She also describes how her conspicuous presence (she carried a camera to record the events, and took notes throughout) simultaneously made her stand out and win favour with people (who wanted their photograph taken, for instance). These contrasting viewing positions do not detract from a central viewing point, because there isn't one. That is the most significant aspect of the "lila"—where all viewing positions carry equal weight, since they all contribute to the scene. And as the entries progress the author gains a sense of familiarity (albeit without complacency) and shares a variety of different sentiments with the reader, including the growing camaraderie between herself and regulars in the crowd.

Kapur is not averse to expressing the more practical aspects of the performance, such as the various mishaps that occur due to equipment failing or the effects of climatic changes, and this information is woven into the entries. This creates the impression that the experience of the Ramlila is not restricted to the formalized interpretation of the Ramacharitamansa but embraces the all-encompassing hub of activities that occur in the interaction between actors and crowd. The Ramlila is as much about the behind-the-scenes action as it is about the narrative of the characters. If on the pilgrimage spectators stop for tea, for example, then this does not indicate an interruption of the performance but "is an integral part of the ambience" (32). The inclusion of the section entitled "Aspects of Performance" emphasizes this. Here, we learn about the socio-economic factors of "staging" the Ramlila annually, and about the allocation of roles within the local population, as well as the importance of the budget set aside for provision. These details are not ancillary to the performance, and provide a greater sense of context. In the world of the Ramlila, "the worlds of devotion, worship, business and theatre interpenetrate" (25), and we learn as much about the culture and community of the people of Ramnagar as we do about the religious aspects of the Ramlila.

In her diverse approach to the subject, Kapur conveys the significance of an ancient text and its application in the Ramlila. The reader gains a sense of the transformative powers of the Ramlila in "the month of extraordinary happenings" (220) where spectators co-exist with the divine, and

which transforms not only the topography of Ramnagar but also the sense of community of the people. The journey of the Ramlila is conceived of on three levels: the physical, which corresponds with the challenges of adhering to the demanding schedule of different locations; the metaphorical, which refers to the narrative and unpacks the symbolic representation of characters and events; and the spiritual, which involves a separation of the extraordinary effects of the sacred from the profane sensibility of everyday life. In her representation Kapur delineates the multifarious understanding of the Ramlila and, although the story has been told countless times, in her novel approach—in the diary entries—Kapur manages to create suspense and the sensation that we are experiencing something as if for the first time.

With regard to readership, I would recommend *Actors, Pilgrims, Kings and Gods* to anyone who is interested in the integration between religion and culture in Indian society. This is less a scholarly approach to the subject, than one that engages in contemporary discourses of performance practice with respect to living traditions.

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Sacred to Profane: Writings on worship and performance, edited by Anjum Katyal. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2006. 284pp., pbk. £17.99/\$29.95, ISBN 9781905422166; hbk. £60/\$105.00, ISBN 9781905422159.

Sacred to Profane: Writings on Worship and Performance is a collection of five essays by authors from a variety of different fields, which range from cultural studies to ethnomusicology to theatre direction. The focus is the complex and varied interrelationships that exist between “worship” and “performance,” and the “sacred” and the “profane.” The proximity of these terms is stated in the introduction: “there can be no writing on *performance* which does not have some bearing on worship and there can be no discourse on the *sacred* which is not already profane” (21). These essays explore a range of different ethnic traditions across the Indian subcontinent, from West Bengal to the state of Uttar Pradesh in north India to Tamilnadu in the south, and a range of religious traditions from the epic traditions of Hinduism to Sufism in Islam. These traditions have in common the vibrant and magical capacity of the sacred, which is able to

transform the profanity of everyday life and contributes to the heritage of individual subcultures. Although the importance of scripture and text is discussed (indeed, the introduction opens with an examination of *The Arthashastra*—the ancient treatise on statecraft), it becomes clear over the course of reading that the emphasis is on the *praxis* of religious traditions, which adapt and modify over time, and on occasion surpasses the representations in traditional scripture. This is evidenced in chapter five, where a story which is traced to the *Bhagavadgita* resonates in contemporary culture outside the tradition, in what Bruin describes as falling outside the conscious scope of the folk epic tradition (201).

The introductory chapter (“The Laughing Performer”, by cultural studies scholar, Sibaji Bandyopadhyay) lays down the main theoretical themes, which recur throughout the course of the book. These include the transgressions of the *kusilava* (the entertainer), who ironically disrupts the threshold of sanctity and yet is regarded as the bringer of the sacred. In subsequent chapters we see the work of the *kusilava* in various guises. Bandyopadhyay emphasizes the importance of textuality in conjunction with the Baktinian notion of the carnivalesque. The dialogic dimension of the text is extended to the role of the reader, who is not given a passive role but is implicated in the experiences of the interconnectedness between worship and performance. We witness how worship is articulated through performance, or conversely, how theatrical performance gives rise to religious feelings, and experience the precarious boundaries that exist between the sacred and the profane.

Towards the end of the introduction Bandyopadhyay writes, “we leave the rest to the reader” (21), with the expectation that the reader will be able to “identify the countless *aporia*-like black holes that ‘scar’ the mindscape of enlightened India” (22). In other words, the performances are not simply valued for their aesthetic dimensions but are employed as social texts, which reveal important factors about the often contradictory relationship that exists between the socio-economic factors and spirituality.

On our first journey, we encounter Bamakshyapa, the late-nineteenth century Bengali mystic of Tarapeeth in Birbhum, West Bengal. In his role as healer Sumanta Banerjee explores the tensions between rural beliefs about spirituality and healing on the one hand, and the advances of science and modern medicine. At the time, many still believed that diseases were regarded as foreign elements that had invaded the body (58). The pilgrims of Tarapeeth sought the presence of Bamakshyapa, who embodied this dichotomy between ancient beliefs and modernity. He was an intermediary between spirits and human beings, “between the mundane requirements of

the individual and the higher spiritual concerns" (82). We learn about his unconventional ways and sometimes alarming behaviour, such as when he hurls direct insults at the revered deities. Bamakshyapa can be perceived as occupying the role of *kusilaya*, which grants a special pardon to his oddities because of his shamanistic gifts and mystical qualities. In other words, if it weren't for his powers, he would be regarded as an outcast.

In the next tableau, Richard Schechner discusses the Ramlila, which is the enactment of the story of Ram in the form of a thirty-one day cycle play, which is performed annually across North India. Schechner localizes his study to the Ramlila in the town of Ramnagar in Varanasi, which is "pre-eminent both from the religious and the theatrical viewpoints." The Ramlila transforms the landscape to such an extent that the mytho-poeticized spaces generated in the narrative become indistinguishable from the geographical spaces. Through the ritual of the Ramlila, which is referred to as a "geophany" (120), the audience experiences the presence of the sacred; hence theatre and religion become mutually supportive. This is substantiated by first-hand perspectives, which the author's co-researcher Linda Hess documented by speaking to those who attended the performance. The account of the Ramlila articulates the inextricable relationship that exists between the imaginary story of Lord Ram and its annual re-telling. In a progressively commercialized India, the story still has pertinence: many of the stagnant patriarchal views regarding the treatment of women and other views expounding the superiority of higher castes are addressed.

Regula Burckhardt Qureshi's chapter on Qawwali and the Sufi tradition articulates a contrast to the relatively spontaneous performance of the Ramlila. Here we have a more specialized study, which focuses on the musicology of Qawwali and its relationship to the spiritual. By listening to the musical songs (*sama*) and repeating the name of God rhythmically (*zirk*), the devotee reaches a state of mystical ecstasy. Although this outcome is comparable to the sense of immersion experienced in the Ramlila, the process is more controlled, or so we are led to believe. The leader of the assembly controls the performance, which is reflected in the structured and formalized seating arrangement. The somewhat confused distinction between the imaginary and the real in the Ramlila is notably absent in this tradition. The assembly operates as a conduit to channel the unruly sacred. The performer modifies his performance in accordance with the spiritual needs of the audience. A more mercenary interpretation implies that the performer has a special interest in motivating those who can afford material offerings, and hence "assesses the

needs of the audience in the light of their spiritual as well as their socio-economic standing” (143).

In the penultimate chapter, Anjum Katyal shows how religious custom and belief are articulated in theatre in the performance of the Sitala saga. Devi Sitala was the goddess of all the poxes and was worshipped in the villages of eastern India. Here we have an account of the performances of one of the more celebrated performers of Sitala, Chapal Bhaduri. In his enactment of Sitala, the male Bhaduri would be involved in a series of rituals, which involved cross-dressing up and donning the props, in an attempt to evoke the power of the goddess. As in the other chapters, two features recur: the invitation to participate, and the material and hence profane needs of the sacred. With regard to the first characteristic, audience participation is encouraged by the lack of separation between the seating of the audience and the staging of the performer. The acting area is open and is often on the same level as the audience. Furthermore, the dialogue is improvised in response to audience reaction. At the heart of the commentary lies a shift of perspective. Bhaduri’s initial motivations to play the goddess did not stem from a spiritual calling or desire to promulgate the worship of the goddess, but simply because he needed employment to survive. Taking on roles was part of his professional training. However, as he immersed himself in the role, he became receptive to the power of the goddess and was outraged when, asking for a glass of water while in full costume, he was handed a glass of liquor. “He could not profane the goddess” (176). Through the ritual of performance Bhaduri comes to experience the presence of the goddess and “the sacred and performance spaces are explicitly sutured together” (179).

The volume culminates in a study about the Kattaikuttu theatre in Tamilnadu, which is conventionally known as the theatre of the lower classes. In this chapter Hanne M. de Bruin raises many interesting points which serve to summarize many of the preceding ideas on the main topics. Drawing from Heesterman’s distinction between ritual and sacral, where the former signals that which is codified and stylized and the latter constitutes that which is chaotic and violent (189), Bruin classifies Kattaikuttu as sacral theatre. Indeed one of the primary themes in the collection is how the ritual of performance mediates between the sacred and the profane. The “performers,” Bamakshyapa and Bhaduri as Sitala, operate as mediators between the everyday and the divine. This is given total expression in the Ramlila, where a whole town is sanctified. And in the Qawwali the sacred is given a channel in the gathering. In this final chapter Kattaikuttu is described as a medium through which sacred power can be evoked and

contained (197) and the ambivalent nature of the sacred (the divine and demonic) is discussed, thus echoing Bandyopadhyay's instantiation of the *kusilaya*. Bruin also addresses the social function of Kattaikkuttu theatre, which provides a platform where local problems can be sorted out and examines the pragmatics of an evolving tradition influenced by the effects of modernity and globalization. This latter point is applicable to the other cultural traditions discussed in the earlier chapters.

Sacred to Profane is a stimulating read, which I recommend for scholars interested in religion and performance studies. It is also a useful companion for those interested in the cultural diversity of India. We are immersed in wonderfully exquisite worlds, and experience a range of different snapshots, which convey the diversity of cultural and religious practices across the length and breadth of India, and even within each state. The authors contextualize the performances adequately by examining issues of caste, creed, and the respective societal attitudes of those involved.

Bandyopadhyay's advocacy of the reader-response framework required for interpretation is appropriate. The real narratives of each tale do not consist in historical scene-setting but in the experiential learning of the complex relationship between the variables of "worship," "performance," "sacred" and "profane." The blurring of the boundaries between what is sanctified and what constitutes transgression only make sense within the context of each story, where we, as readers, witness the performance. Equally, the relationship between "worship" and "performance" is not clear-cut. In some cases it is unclear whether the ritual of worship emulates performance, or whether it is the performativity of performance which evokes worship. The two terms are co-dependent, and the improvisatory aspects of performance encourage religious sentiments. The blurred boundaries between these categories are deliberately irresolvable and constitute the aporia-like black holes, which dismantle the simplistic conflation between Indian culture and spiritual enlightenment.

Immersion in the narrative is aided by illustrations, many of which are photographs and enliven the narratives by making them more vivid and colourful. In addition, the inclusion of detailed appendices supports the empirical research and demonstrates the richness of the individual traditions.

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A Theology for Europe: The Churches and the European Institutions, edited by James Barnett. Religion and Discourse, vol. 28. Bern: Peter Lang, 2005. 294pp., pbk. £38.60/\$79.95, ISBN 9783039105052.

This is a valuable volume for those interested in the debates between Christian and political institutions in Europe in recent decades. In this sense the sub-title “The Churches and the European Institutions,” is a more accurate description of the contents than the main title, *A Theology for Europe*. Such theologies—as we know from the theological sections of church reports on the inner cities and the countryside—tend to offer more than they actually deliver. To invert the infamous *Ronseal* TV advertisement, this book does not do what it says on the cover.

But it is part of an inter-disciplinary series on Religion and Discourse which explores “religious language in the major world faiths from various viewpoints.” Its focus is discourse on a number of key issues which form a common agenda between essentially liberal and ecumenical religious bodies (and their key actors), and their equivalents on the political stage.

It offers a wealth of useful information for those interested in this area. It has to be said that this is mostly a self-selecting, well-informed but ageing constituency, whose energy and vision derived from the desire that what happened in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century should not be allowed to happen again. Today’s active Europhiles tend to “do” Europe, not talk about it. For them, “integration” has happened. They study and research its many aspects, conduct business with it and holiday in it, without consciously realizing the magnitude of recent progress. “Going to Europe” today, is no more complex than taking a bus from village to town was in 1939. In this sense the visionaries have seen their hopes come to pass.

The book is divided into a number of sections marking that journey. The first deals with the churches, the post-war ecumenical bodies they founded, and their interaction with a range of European political institutions, most importantly the (often forgotten) Council of Europe. Alongside the details of the religious/political interface, there are uplifting stories, such as the account of the domino effect of the “prayers for peace” in a Leipzig church on events in 1989.

The second section looks at “Discourse, Diversity and Identity,” at the big picture, through the eyes of the Conference of European Churches (CFC), a case study in Hungary, and the implications of *laïceté*.

The next section considers (Religious) Education, (Human) Rights and

Expectations, whilst the book concludes with a look at Ecumenical discourse and its context. The Meissen Agreements etc. get good coverage. There is also a useful glossary of key concepts at the end.

Inevitably there is a degree of repetition. Many of the contributors know one another and in some cases have worked closely together. This is a book for ecumenical Euro-enthusiasts. Little is new, but as a comprehensive handbook it will fill in important gaps.

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Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy: Understanding and Addressing the Sacred. by K. Pargament. New York: The Guilford Press, 2007. 384pp., hbk. \$38.00, ISBN 9781572308442.

“a. How broad and deep are the client’s spiritual pathways?

- i. Does the client integrate the spiritual pathways into his or her life, or does he or she compartmentalize them?”

There are literally hundreds of questions like these in this book, which is what one might expect from a psychologist, perhaps. However there is an important difference between Pargament’s approach and questionnaire-bound techniques which are so familiar. Generally speaking, these questions are not presented directly to clients; they are part of the therapist’s own rigorous self-examination in the course of her or his attempt to investigate an area of experience which is decisive for the quality of human living and dying, yet refuses to be tied down for interrogation. Spirituality is undefinable by definition, the best example of all those human experiences which vanish in being described. As Pargament points out,

The clinician who relies on a structured, invariant set of questions is more likely to interfere with the unfolding of the client’s tale than promote it (224).

He goes on to say that the questions he asks clients about their spirituality are not intended to be presented in the first place as if they themselves were the core of the individual’s problem, but as related matters; important, perhaps, but not crucial. To do anything else may be to activate a range of defence mechanisms against the public exposure of this kind of thing in anything other than explicitly religious contexts.

However, Pargament does believe spirituality to be of the very greatest therapeutic importance:

When people walk into the therapist’s office, they don’t leave their spiritu-

ality behind them in the waiting-room. They bring their spiritual beliefs, practices, experiences, values, relationships and struggles along with them. Implicitly or explicitly, this complex of spiritual factors often enters the process of psychotherapy (4).

By ignoring the psychological processes which endow some of our experience with the quality of the sacred, clinicians turn their backs on a principal organizational force within the development of personality, one which is as fundamental to our awareness as rationality itself is—but is of course much less explicit! So a non-productive approach to understanding people must somehow learn ways of creeping up on the implicit; not so much to discover what it *is*, as to take proper account of what it *does*.

Pargament's "spiritually integrated psychotherapy" is an attempt to do this. The awareness of the sacred, which he aligns with spirituality, operates subliminally, exercising its authority in ways which can be destructive or constructive according to our conscious intention: "A spiritually integrated psychotherapy makes the implicit explicit" (18). Clinicians who work in this way regard the spiritual dimension of their clients' awareness either as a part of the problem itself, or of its solution; but, whichever it is, it "receives explicit attention as a dimension that shapes or is shaped by other aspects of life" (18). Because of the tendency among psychologists to confuse spiritual awareness with actual religious belief, the notion of implicitness tends here to refer to presence rather than intensity of commitment. Therapeutically speaking, spirituality has value wherever and to whatever degree it reveals itself: "I believe that whatever its form, the search for the sacred in life is the most distinctively human of all pursuits" (25).

Throughout the book, and with the help of many case studies and examples, Pargament writes convincingly about the role of spirituality in the lives of individuals, reminding us of the human ability to sanctify all it touches, so that "we have to be careful of drawing too fine a distinction between the sacred and the secular" (91). At the same time, the importance of spirituality to mould lives and direct humane experience resists any kind of psychological reduction. Although quite normal, it can never be confused with normality!

Which is why psychotherapy can never afford to ignore it, and why Pargament and his associates have worked so hard to integrate their psychological understanding around its presence: spirituality and psychological holism are to be seen as different forms of the same reality.

A well-integrated spirituality is defined not by a specific belief, practice, emotion or relationship, but by the degree to which the individual's spir-

itual pathways and destinations work in synchrony with each other... to provide the individual with a powerful guiding vision (136).

This being the case, spirituality, although ineffable and irreducible, still has a definite psychological function to balance its obvious sociological presence in the form of implicit religion: it binds personality together. Suddenly we are in familiar Implicit Religion territory. Pargament quotes an interviewee:

“Some people are Catholics, some are Protestants. Me, I’m an Oldsmobile man.” It seems that people search for sacredness in the way that avowedly religious folk move from congregation to congregation, or indeed from faith to faith: In the search for the sacred, people can turn to everything from baseball and politics to nationalism and racial pride (141).

Pargament himself is somewhat alarmed by a thirst for religious commitment which refuses to acknowledge its real identity. The shadow of biblical pronouncements against idolatry hangs over the impulse to make things sacred. His purpose is to assist those who seek his help to move closer to that to which their innate spirituality directs them, rather than to satisfy the urge for sacredness by exteriorizing it in some or other tangible form. His spiritual psychotherapy is overtly religious:

In comparison to those who described a secular relationship with God, adults with an insecure attachment to God... reported more loneliness, depression and anxiety; poorer physical health; and lower overall life satisfaction (156).

Spiritually integrated psychotherapy reinforces this relationship by being “grounded in the therapist’s appreciation... of the client’s spiritual dimension and its far-reaching potential” (176). Severance of connectedness with spirituality results, says Pargament, in “forms of idolatry in which false gods have rushed in to fill the vacuum left by sacred loss” (181).

Pargament’s God is the explicitly religious one. Sacredness applied elsewhere is a misuse of religious potential. On the other hand—and for me this is the book’s main contribution to psychotherapy—explicit spirituality, using the terminology reserved for actual religious experience, is by means of its implied presence within a client’s understanding. Describing one of his cases (217), Pargament says that during the course of treatment:

Spirituality emerged as an important concern, not by hitting Joe over the head with questions about God, the church or prayer, but by a more implicit effort to reveal a deeper spiritual dimension to his life (217).

From this point of view, spirituality is always implicit: “As much felt and

experienced as it is understood and practiced.” When it is powerfully felt, presenting itself “with scope and depth,” it is able to fulfil fundamental human needs for personal integration and growth. At the same time, however, its origin and destination should be acceptable in terms of explicit religion. At least this is what Pargament seems to be implying.

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