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Trude Fonneland, *Contemporary Shamanisms in Norway: Religion, Entrepreneurship, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 248 pp., $99 (hardcover), $97.99 (ebook).

There has been a growing body of research on neoshamanisms in Scandinavia, particularly over the last decade. The recent edited volume, *Nordic Neoshamanisms* (2015, for a review see *The Pomegranate* 19, no. 1), co-edited by Trude Fonneland, has opened up this research to an English-speaking audience. But her *Contemporary Shamanisms in Norway* is the first monograph to offer extended analysis of the subject in English since Lindquist's landmark work, *Shamanic Performance on the Urban Scene: Neoshamanism in Contemporary Sweden* (1997). Drawing on eleven years of research from 2005–2016, with document analysis, interviews with ten informants and participant-observation at workshops and festivals, *Nordic Neoshamanisms* examines the development, current status and diversity of contemporary shamanisms in Norway. It is a very welcome contribution to the field.

In the introductory chapter, "Contemporary Shamanisms in Norway," Fonneland sidesteps the problems of whether her interlocutors should be termed "neo-shamans" or "shamans,"and which practitioners are "authentic," by approaching them with the terms they use for themselves and recognising tradition as an "ongoing process" (10). She foregrounds the diversity of shamanistic practices in Norway, a variety which challenges presumed distinctions between shamanism and new age thinking, and reconstructionist and eclectic pathways. The boundary between local and global contexts is also blurred by these practitioners, who emphasise their connections with local landscapes and indigenous (Sámi) heritage, and yet also align themselves with a universal "shamanism" and other indigenous people as "one spiritual community" (33–35).

Chapter 2 explores "The Development of Sámi Shamanism" and chapter three 3 examines "The Power of Nature in the High North." Some Norwegian shamans engage with ancient Sámi sacrificial *sieidi* sites as "memory sites" and "connection hubs" (77), and through pilgrimage journeys these places become powerful constituents in individual and community identities. On the one hand, the sites are something the practitioners "make happen" (74), but they are also places where pre-given ancestors, spirits and other powers dwell.

Fonneland challenges previous research on neo-shamans which assumes their sacred sites are "scrubbed clean" for the New Age (77), noting that practitioners must be careful and respectful as the sites are recognised as being able to do harm as well as good. Recognising this re-enchantment of nature as a positive thing for contemporary Norwegian society, she states that for these shamans "Sámi ancestors are seen as heroes, and…their knowledge of nature and the forces of nature is something we in the modern western world have lost and should regain and learn from" (107).

Chapter 4 considers "Gender in Sámi shamanism." In common with other neo-shamans, Fonneland's informants challenge gender inequality and see men and women as equal but with different qualities. Fonneland examines how they assert the authority and power of Sámi women, gender equality and harmony between the sexes in the past, and so create more balanced gender roles for today. Revising a colonial history which has dismissed the Sámi as a whole, their shamanism as superstition, and Sámi women as witches, Norwegian shamans reclaim Sámi women as crucial agents in society, and in so doing invigorate their own identities in the present.

In chapter 5, the importance of the *Isogaisa* festival, the largest neoshamanic festival in Scandinavia (established in 2010), is treated. The festival has courses and workshops, an "alternative fair," ceremonies, networking, and socializing, and can be seen as a "cradle for a Sámi spiritual cultural heritage and locally rooted Sámi identities" (129). The event is funded by the Barents Secretariat, the Norwegian Cultural Council, and the Sámi Parliament, "to establish a bond between Sámi shamans in Norway and indigenous cultural workers from other countries" (129). Bringing Norwegian shamans into dialogue with other indigenous communities, Isogaisa is a setting where "the local and global are merged, where power relationships come into play, where political interests are materialised, where cultural identities are tested, and where new visions take shape"' (146).

Contemporary shamanisms in Norway are particularly distinctive in that recent legislation requires that the state treats the Christian Church and other religions equally. In chapter 6, Fonneland examines "The Shamanistic Association,"which gained official recognition in 2013, with the ability to perform legal religious ceremonies and obtain financial support. The project to gain official recognition demonstrates how religious practices have been adapted to fit government expectations, with a shift in practitioners' thinking about shamanism, from a "technique" to a "religion" (11). While holding

an exclusive position, the organisation avoids tensions over who should practice Sami traditions by integrating both Sami and Norse elements and looking to the roots of Nordic shamanism in a (suitably vague) prehistoric past.

The final chapter explores "Shamanism in Secular Arenas," focussing on the case of Esther Utsi, "a Sámi spiritual entrepreneur in the Norwegian tourist industry," proprietor of the Polmakmoen guest house and "The Seven Coffee Stops" pilgrimage experience. Fonneland highlights how Esther "walks a fine line between a rational and a spiritual worldview," avoiding New Age marketplaces in order to "maintain a seriousness that is required in the tourist industry" (183). This has enabled her to establish "herself as a media darling and local hero," nominated for "Finnmarking of the Year" several times (190). In this narrative, the Sámi have been "'demythisized' as superstitious and 'remythicized' as spiritual," with spirituality as "a resource, not as an emblematic stigma" (194). Fonneland asserts positively that "from being seen as an outside civilization, the landscape of the Sámi [is] presented as a center—with Esther and her spiritual business as the context" (194).

Fonneland is clear from the start that "my goal in this book is not to expose whether shamans' stories about the past are credible or not. I am not concerned with what they use their narratives for, and what this tells us about the shamans themselves, about the present day and the present situation" (97). She champions, quite rightly, the positive contributions her informants have made to Norwegian society. But she does not engage critically with many of the issues raised by her research. Dispensing with one Eliadean metanarrative of shamanism as an archaic technique, some practitioners reinforce another: shamanism as the universal, primordial religion. Their conceptions of nature as singular, harmonious, and separate from culture reinforce a culture-nature dualism. Some of them romanticize Sámi heritage and perceive indigenous people as inherently spiritual. Some claim Sámi ancestry, others inspiration from Sámi sources; discussing them altogether as "Norwegian shamans" overlooks their different claims to knowledge, which are controversial and deserve critical attention. Perhaps their thinking "opens up new and ambiguous ways of being and acting male and female" (106), but more often they tend to essentialize sex and gender, past and present.

These concerns notwithstanding, *Contemporary Shamanisms in Norway* offers an engaging and analytical discussion of the way in which

contemporary shamans in Norway have rehabilitated a problematic past, reclaimed landscape(s), reconfigured gender relations, negotiated state bureaucracy, and acted as successful entrepreneurs in the tourism industry. The book is an important contribution to the study of shamanism, highlighting the nuances of a Scandinavian context in contrast to practices and practitioners elsewhere. It is essential reading for scholars interested in shamanism today, particularly the nexus between indigenous traditions and contemporary practices, and how their interface can become a positive force for change.

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