



Emplaced Belief

A Multivocal Introduction

Jay Johnston, Marion Gibson, Jamie Hampson and Nicola Whyte

Exploring the conceptual and lived relations between the academic fields of religion and heritage, this volume takes a wholistic approach to considering emplacement – understood as the broad interrelation of objects, peoples, histories and places – in the analysis of the relations between religion and heritage. To be ‘emplaced’ is to be situated, yet such positioning is the result of multiple conscious and unconscious forces, agencies, discourses and epistemologies. Therefore, the volume’s title, *Emplaced Belief*, refers not only to physical locations of import, but also to the role of cultural practices and religious epistemologies in the establishment of religious heritage: the act of emplacement; that is, the religious, social, political and cultural practices that denote ‘heritage’ and the dynamics that revise, reinforce or remove any such attribution.

Individual chapters will consider the (re)presentation of heritage in a variety of contexts and practices including distinct places (e.g. museums or particular locations); activities (e.g. pilgrimage or performance) and discourses (embodied, spoken, written, historic vernacular, etc.). This is inclusive of relational ontologies that attribute agency to a wide variety of material and immaterial phenomena. Place-making will be investigated through a variety of lenses including decay and decomposition as central processes in the creation of religious landscapes. The intersection of bio-cultural heritage and religious heritage (preservation of sacred species, for example) and tensions that can emerge around competing conservation agendas is also considered.

The volume opens with four chapters that critically engage with the ‘emplaced’ construction of religion and heritage, including the construction

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of disciplinary knowledge and decolonization practices (der Velde and von Stuckrad), embedded art, myth and stewardship (Hampson), historicity (Tollerton), and artefact collection (Nielsen). The following five chapters further develop the thematic of ‘emplacement’ in relation to specific tradition, artefacts or artefact categories and attributes: musical instrument (Sinamai); camouflage (Howell); witchcraft (Sneddon) and ritual deposits (Houlbrook). The final group of four chapters turns to consider issues of access, temporal process and passage more directly in the dynamics of emplacement: pilgrimage (Bader); human remains (Farrow, Foster and Nugent); ‘natural’ sacred sites (Whyte), and wildlife conservation programmes (Johnston).

Overall, the volume elucidates issues of contemporary critical importance, including how the conceptualization of religion as tradition and religion as heritage is established and maintained; how ‘heritage’ is constructed and reconstructed within specific religious contexts and the role of memory and place in these processes. Importantly, this volume holds that what constitutes ‘religion’ and what constitutes ‘heritage’ are not hermetically sealed life realms or knowledge repositories: the construction of both categories (and any attendant intersections) are socioculturally specific and both designations of ‘religion’ and ‘heritage’ remain subject to critical investigation. Indeed, ‘religion’ and ‘heritage’ are taken as critical terms; that is, they are not simple markers of ‘stable’ subjects or fields and the terms themselves should be subject to interrogation. A central aspect of this approach in this volume is the contention that a capacity to engage with plural epistemologies is requisite for the ethical consideration and conservation of religious heritage.

In keeping with this volume’s commitment to multivocality – the legitimate concurrence of multiple voices, views and interpretations – this Introduction is also multivocal. Each member of the editorial team will introduce themes that drove their selection of contributing authors, the salience of these ideas for considering what constitutes religion and heritage and briefly introduce how their selected authors engage, problematize and elaborate upon those themes.

Thematic Introductions

Magical Spirituality and Religion: Intersections with Place and Heritage

Marion Gibson

Once, a volume on religion and heritage would have found little room for the idea of magic. Magic and religion were defined exclusively and ethnocentrically as opposed cultural categories by nineteenth- and early

twentieth-century anthropologists and historians. For many, magic was, supposedly, what uneducated people and/or non-Western societies practised instead of religion. But today the terms are widely agreed to be related, an inclusive continuum of meaning, although very loosely defined. ‘There is no unanimously agreed academic definition of “magic”, nor any shared theory or theoretical language’, note Bernd-Christian Otto and Michael Stausberg, yet ‘for most people “magic” ... seems like a cross-cultural given’. Indeed, there is ‘an overwhelming overlap’ between the reference points of the two terms in both scholarly debate and everyday conversation (Otto and Stausberg 2014: 1–6). Accordingly, this collection includes discussions of magical and magico-religious activities within its remit – not as cross-cultural givens, but as rightly included in a range of terms perceived to be applicable to both one’s own and others’ beliefs and practices across many places, in traditionally religious and non-religious contexts. The inclusion of activities that might be considered magical opens up new areas of place-specific ritual, commemoration and representation for consideration alongside obviously religious activities.

Religious and magical interactions with place can come in many forms. Some of these explicitly invoke an otherworld or a divine being or otherwise attempt to transcend materiality. These interactions might involve placing an offering to a deity, making a conventional religious gesture or depositing an item ritualistically, going on a pilgrimage organized by a named religious movement or privately visiting a place of prayer. Other interactions with place are almost without content that might conventionally be labelled ‘magical’ or ‘religious’, but nevertheless involve the not-wholly explicable desire to undertake a symbolic activity in a particular location – perhaps to remember there an event or group of people and/or experience emotions related to the site’s natural or cultural features. Such an experience might be regarded by some or all participants as entirely secular, a matter of personal feeling, historical commemoration or political statement, not within the purview of any particular religious or spiritual group, but nevertheless it is often infused with or in dialogue with magic and/or religion. If an activity serves no or little practical purpose that can be easily demonstrated – instead, being intended to mark a memory or conjure a mood – then what other categories of activity might it involve? These could be magical, religious or something of both. They might involve political theory, action or personal feeling, prayerfulness or mindfulness, symbolism or ritual, or all of these. In the experiences and places described in the chapters of this book, all these categories of place-related experience and activity blend uneasily in this way, but they do blend.

This blending can be a matter of debate or outright controversy. Some people, for instance, will be offended by or resistant to one or more of these labels for their activity (‘magic’, ‘religious’, ‘spiritual’, ‘political’, etc.), while

others will happily accept them as part of Otto and Stausberg's 'overwhelming overlap'. How to describe such an experience is entirely up to the individual, but the book brings together examples of different interpretations into a conversation. Differing perspectives can also bring agreement and synthesis, as well as disagreement, and are an ideal site for interdisciplinary collaboration. Writers on and thinkers clustered around the intersection of magic, religion and place-based heritage range across a wide spectrum of academic disciplines and go well beyond academia into such areas as theology and mysticism, politics, popular culture, heritage and tourism management and the creative arts.

The chapters of this book accordingly reference practitioners of spiritualities as diverse as Wicca and Judaism, oral sources from political interviews to TikTok videos, written records from planning documents to the scripts of feature films. Geographically, too, coverage is broad. Ceri Houlbrook's chapter notes that over 400 love-lock sites have been recorded across all continents except Antarctica, and her discussion moves effortlessly from South Korea to Italy to England. David Tollerton focuses on British commemorations of the Holocaust, but also ranges globally across Judaism and Christianity in discussing the significance of such commemorative events and sites in a national context. Andrew Sneddon offers an immersive deep dive into the riven political and religious history of Northern Ireland, in a localized case study of witch-hunt commemoration with wide applicability in areas of contested heritage elsewhere. Each chapter blends terms, starts conversations and explores new ground.

Indigenous Concepts of Place and Space

Jamie Hampson

To many Indigenous groups, heritage, landscape, place and belief are inextricably linked – and these words are rarely recognized as standalone concepts. There is always a relational as well as an absolute component to landscape; there are for instance pathways – and/or airways and seaways – which link places in any given environment, and, moreover, certain places in any given landscape are considered more potent and more significant than others. The term landscape refers of course to the physical world but also to the organization and perception of sociocultural, ideational, cognitive, political and economic elements of human existence (e.g. [Alberti and Bray 2009](#)).

In addition to the New Animists and proponents of the ontological turn in archaeology and anthropology (e.g. [Viveiros de Castro 1998](#); [Bird-David 1999](#); [Harvey 2006](#)), researchers from Yi-Fu Tuan (e.g. [1977](#)) to Tim Ingold

(e.g. 1993, 2000) to Robert Macfarlane (e.g. 2013) have written on the importance of words as manifestations of ideational and verbal concepts (and, on occasion, unhelpful barriers) when considering landscape and emplaced belief.¹ Tuan (1977) famously argued that in many contexts the word space has little meaning, whereas place is laden with meaning and significance; we shall see variations on this theme throughout this volume. In addition, movements – and other actions, whether human or other-than-human – create landscape (see Ingold 1993 for more on ‘task-scapes’ and ‘mind-scapes’).

One way of bringing together some of these theoretical concepts is to consider Indigenous rock paintings and engravings, which are of course a special class of archaeological and anthropological material because they are fixed in place (e.g. Chippindale 2001; Hampson 2016). (Rock paintings and engravings can also be considered to be fixed to a particular place in the landscape; and indeed, they are part of landscape in its broadest sense.) Drawing from archaeological and anthropological perspectives, an analysis of Indigenous rock art sites – as examples of emplaced belief – allows us to consider wide-ranging ideas such as individual and group identity, territoriality and notions of ‘public’ versus ‘private’ access, acoustics (‘soundscapes’) and non-visual perceptions, post-humanism, social geography (‘totems’, for example) and the related concepts of embodiment, spirituality, animism and Indigenous ontologies (e.g. Helskog 1999; Smith and Blundell 2004; McNiven and Russell 2005; Morphy 2009; Brady, Bradley and Kearney 2016; Brady and Taçon 2016; Hampson 2016; Hampson, Challis and Goldhahn 2022). Most importantly, rock paintings and engravings are emic and direct records people made of their own worlds; many writers have demonstrated recently that research on rock art can help decolonize archaeological and anthropological processes and paradigms, especially in postcolonial or ‘settler’ nations (e.g. McNiven 2011; Moro Abadía and González Morales 2020; see also chapters in Hampson, Challis and Goldhahn 2022).

To many Indigenous groups, rock art is of course far more than just a special class of material culture, and indeed more than just a ‘record’: rock paintings and engravings encompass (or manifest) intangible belief systems and are often considered to be living beings and/or powerful things in themselves (e.g. Brady, Bradley and Kearney 2016; Fowles and Alberti 2021). In northern Australia, for instance, Wandjina creator-beings famously painted themselves onto (or, better, into) cave and rockshelter walls – and Aboriginal groups today repaint them in order to preserve the life-giving energy that the Wandjina impart to the land (e.g. Ingold 2000; McNiven and Russell 2005). As Ingold (2000: 121) states, ‘painting as retouching ... is not

just a matter of disclosing an already created world, but of conserving or looking after it'. Spiritual heritage depictions in a specific place in the landscape, therefore, are modes of being. Moreover, there is no reason to suppose that the importance of a particular boulder or cave wall was created by the addition of engravings; it is just as likely that the motifs emphasized the meaning of somewhere that was *already there*, and *already significant*.

In this volume, Hampson's chapter addresses these concepts, and also stewardship and the presentation of Indigenous rock art sites to the public in Kakadu National Park and elsewhere. Who benefits when tourists visit and experience specific – often sacred – places in national parks? Does sensitive presentation of rock paintings and engravings challenge outsiders' perspectives of the art and of the Indigenous people who created it?

Following Tuan (1977) and others, David and Wilson (1999: 163) pointed out that place – in Australia, and indeed elsewhere – is mediated by historically positioned 'systems of meaning', and also that, through praxis (as social practice), 'experience of place participates in the structuring and construction of identity'. Their seminal article examines changes in the way a distinctive mountain – Ngarrabullgan in Queensland – has been incorporated within the broader sociocultural landscape through time and concludes that 'major alterations took place in peoples' relations to their surroundings, and by implication in the construction of landscapes, life experiences and identity', at a specific time in history (David and Wilson 1999: 163).²

Important work in North America, too, also highlights the illustrative relationships between spiritual heritage, gendered landscape and emplaced belief. Using ethnography and ethnohistorical methods, David Whitley (e.g. 1998) pointed out that Native Americans consider rock art sites to be portals into the spirit world; moreover, cracks in the rock face allow ritual specialists to move between the natural and supernatural worlds (Whitley 1998: 16).³ Referring to the related belief that ritual specialists kept their ritual paraphernalia inside the supernatural (i.e. within their rock art sites), Gayton (1948: 207; see also Whitley 1998: 16) noted that in the southern Sierra Nevada in California a ritual specialist danced in front of a rock art site and talked 'to the rock, which would open up so he could get his things. Each doctor [shaman] had his own place; his things would be in a basket set in a hole in the rock which he had created by means of his power. The opening thereto was not palpable to others: you could go over that rock a thousand times and not find the place.'

In Missouri, similar concepts apply (e.g. Diaz-Granados and Duncan 2004). In the Late Woodland period (AD 400–1500) rock paintings and engravings are found in caves and rock-shelters, places that are associated with the underworld, origin myths and 'monsters'. Cairns, on the other hand, were built on bluff crests overlooking streams, and usually above cave

sites; they are focal points for religious and social ceremonies, and linked to mortuary rituals. Similarly, the largest rock engraving sites in this region are often found on prominent ridge crests; when viewed from below they appear to ‘thrust into the sky’ – they represent and manifest ritual access to the sky (Diaz-Granados and Duncan 2004).

Sinamai’s chapter on the Zimbabwean *mbira* is a case in point. Originally an instrument used by Shona groups for religious ceremonies, it is now often seen and heard in folk clubs in Europe, North America and beyond. Not only does *mbira* music stem from a specific and powerful Zimbabwean ‘landscape’ (within which the so-called natural and cultural boundaries are often blurred), it has also – and perhaps unwittingly – acted as a proxy ambassador for Zimbabwean culture and heritage overseas.

When we move from one region to another, concepts of emplaced belief are not identical. Recent developments in archaeological and anthropological approaches (e.g. Whitley 2021), however, help us to highlight distinctions while simultaneously demonstrating many underpinning and widespread human capabilities and traits – and such demonstrations argue against pernicious racism and xenophobic nationalism.

History and Heritage: Rethinking Religion and Modernity

Nicola Whyte

In recent years, historians of the Reformation and Enlightenment have questioned the cultural and ideological foundations of their discipline and the condescension of modernity. Over the last twenty years they have brought critical insights to the idea of history as progress. Feminist historians and historians of everyday life were among the first to bring the problem of modernization discourse to the foreground, exposing patriarchal and colonial models of historical change, problematizing conventional periodization and challenging linear constructions of time (Shepard and Walker 2009). Elsewhere, historians of religion have strongly argued for a research agenda that takes enquiries beyond the limiting and incomplete models of Reformation and Enlightenment (Walsham 2008). The results have been inspiring and point to new directions for further historical research that urge us to take seriously the critical purpose of deconstructing teleological and universalizing narratives of modernity, progress and secularization. As noted by Walsham, this is a formidable task, for in Britain and the Anglo-American world, the story of modernity is bound into the very fabric of national identity and the conventions of historical writing (Walsham 2008). In rethinking the outlines of how we theorize the past, the task before us reaches across multiple connected disciplines including heritage,

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archaeology and public history. Rico reminds us of the challenge for heritage studies in resolving its own epistemic bias: ‘that is, the way in which the production of knowledge in the discipline is bound by the contours of the very same hegemonic discourse that it is trying to resist’ (Rico 2021: 30).

This volume explores the rich potential in bringing researchers and writers from across disciplines closer together in part, at least, to scrutinize and rethink timeframes and assumptions that continue to shape the ways the past is translated for the present moment. The by now familiar argument in Western historiography goes that secularized ontologies originating during the Reformation and Enlightenment led to the desacralization and disenchantment of the ‘world’ (Thomas 1971). In more recent years, researchers have shown the inadequacies of assuming linear and generalized narratives of change, resulting in modern, secular life, when in ‘reality’ the story is so intricate, contingent and complex to render such efforts overly simplistic and unhelpful (Schwyzer et al. 2015). Alongside this research, heritage scholars have called for rethinking the foundations of secularization and modernization theory, placing Indigenous Knowledges and alternative non-Western perspectives to the foreground (Byrne 2014; see also Hampson, this volume).

While important work continues apace in heritage studies, there remains work to do in collaborating across disciplines and working more closely and creatively with the historical record. In the context of this volume, there is a case to be made for showing the potential of alternative histories of emplaced beliefs and practices that remain relevant today. Stories and imaginings from the archives and archaeological record often do not fit conventional historical frameworks. They are often fragmentary, complex and at times perplexing; and yet in revealing lived, embodied and emotional experiences, they are invaluable for revealing spiritual (more than economic) connectedness to landscapes and places. Opportunities, as also challenges, arise when new evidence and fresh interpretations challenge conventional histories and timelines (Gaimster and Gilchrist 2003; Coster and Spicer 2005).

In this volume, following their extensive archival and archaeological study of nineteenth-century encounters with human remains and saintly relics in churches and cathedrals in Britain, archaeologists Nugent, Farrow and Foster offer new perspectives on traditional representations of religious faith and burial practices. They provide new evidence on the importance of charnel spaces in religious buildings, where the presence of the ancestral dead stimulated a heightened, affective and emotive response for later (post-Reformation) generations of visitors. They also turn our attention to the discovery of saintly human remains, recovered from crypts and walled recesses, having been placed there for posterity centuries before, being

treated with reverence and respect in later periods. Some contemporary nineteenth-century visitors were sceptical, but others sought spiritual solace and handled the bones as acts of care. The saints therefore were not simply disregarded in the Protestant Reformation, but came to evoke emotive connections almost three centuries on. The evidence for the longevity, assimilation and reinterpretation of the Catholic dead in Anglican and Protestant churches and cathedrals is compelling and draws our attention to the problems of assuming earlier Reformation origins for the secularization of the past as a precursor to modern heritage categories today. Rather, alternative possibilities arise for how we negotiate the sacred/secular binary, that is to better account for material and temporal interactions within and without church spaces. The evidence shows both remarkable patterns of reuse, renewed meaning and stories of diversity and inclusivity in church and cathedral interiors (see also Whyte, this volume).

As the title of this volume suggests, ‘emplacement’ draws attention to the potential of further research into the long-term accumulation of meanings and beliefs that are not bound by historiographical and chronological conventions. Emplacement invites discussion of the spiritual, magical and healing powers of landscapes and places, and for understanding processes of memory, patterns of continuity, adaptation and appropriation over centuries and millennia (see also Hampson, this volume). As a historian of the late medieval and ‘early modern’ era, I have long been interested in the interactions of landscape, memory and custom operating within local societies (e.g. Whyte 2009; 2015). In this work, the material traces of the Reformation past are revealed to retain ritual meanings and social significances over many generations. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the evidence of everyday life does not fit the overarching narrative of Protestant conformity, iconoclasm, destruction and erasure; rather, the archaeological and archival record reveal traces of renewal in religious landscapes.

Our consideration of emplacement in this volume takes us from inside to outside and beyond religious buildings and State-driven institutions, to explore everyday beliefs in the otherworldly agency of ancient landscape features that held remarkable significance across the centuries despite attempts at religious reform. Many readers will recognize the ongoing challenges in current heritage discourse and the ways historical sites and landscapes are categorized according to a set of apparently chronological and historiographical frameworks. In addition, as van der Velde and von Stuckrad argue in this volume, heritage work needs to consider the place and positionally of all actors beyond the human subject. Their concern to decentre the human by looking at ecological agencies further shifts attention away from modernity’s preoccupation with periodization and human-centred categorizations (see van der Velde and von Stuckrad, this volume).

Their work challenges historians to consider the ecological timeframes operating in historic landscapes. In the context of medieval and early modern Britain, visible evidence of decay and decomposition provided evidence of deep time. In contrast to how heritage is often thought of today, the physical relics of the past were not to be purposefully restored, rebuilt, preserved for posterity; rather, their potency was identified in the physical processes of transformative decay. Following van der Velde and von Stuckrad, it is worth further exploring the interaction of human and nonhuman timescales in making and remaking holy sites and landscapes in the past.

Revealing the potential of alternative histories of spiritual connectedness to landscape is a complex and challenging task, but it is a compelling and important one. Faced with environmental and social problems, the disconnectedness many people feel towards place and ‘nature’ and more-than-human others has become a matter of cultural and spiritual anxiety among many living in Britain today.⁴ Taking seriously this reported lack of connectedness, perhaps it is by bridging historical research and public heritage that landscapes might be reimagined beyond their current economic and recreational functions. Making space for alternative histories of landscape, found in the traces left in the historical and archaeological record, reveals remarkable longevity of emplaced beliefs and practices over centuries and even millennia. Moreover, in tracing practices of emplacement over time, we discover, alongside the well-known histories of Reformation and religious conflict, evidence for toleration and connectedness among people of different faiths who gathered together and shared experiences of being in holy places (Walsham 2011; Whyte, this volume). In working together to dissolve conventional disciplinary boundaries and landscape classifications (religious, economic, recreational) we can work towards a better understanding of spiritual and otherworldly attachments that may help generate new imaginaries of the past that connect with many issues and concerns of today.

Agency and Artefact: ‘Natural’ and Cultural Museums

Jay Johnston

In the very first university lecture I attended, an introduction to an art history unit on modernism, the lecturer described city parks as museums for trees. Experiencing the perceptual jolt that the recognition of a changed perspective brings, I was gripped simultaneously by two conceptual frameworks. One, that comprehended the artifice of parkland – places previously considered ‘natural’ – via their analogy with the museum, a contrived space for curated display. The other realization was a palpable sadness for the

trees' loss of wildness, their perceived removal from a 'natural' emplacement. That is, the (uncritical) perception that the trees 'naturally' belonged somewhere else and had been made foreign by their (re)presentation in the city park.

In retrospect (a *long* retrospect) these reactions could not be anything else but those of a green (in both senses of the word) undergraduate replete with untenable assumptions. Nonetheless, this nascent intellectual moment provides a suitable ground from which to introduce this volume's engagement with museology and biocultural heritage. These are not presented herein as two entirely distinct knowledge fields or practices but as forms of emplacement in overt and covert dialogue with one another. At a cursory level, both the construction of museum exhibitions and parkland require the curation of its contents, attention to design, placement and narrative (both textual and sensory). Various degrees of these practices are also extended into nature reserves and national parks. Their construction, including boundaries and fauna and faunal content, requires an 'imagined' visitor and the attendant assumptions about the way in which the locations will be used and experienced. Both the disciplinary areas of museology (Simpson 1996; Morphy 2019) and natural heritage (Poe et al. 2014; van Zanten et al. 2016) have been aware of historical and contemporary legacy caused by the unreflective reproduction of dominant cultural paradigms in these practices. Marie Vejrup Nielsen in her consideration of the presentation of heritage and religion in Danish museums carefully unpicks not only what is presented by a selected group of Danish museums, but what and who is excluded. Her chapter canvases how traditional narratives can be changed and how this will in turn affect how religion is understood. Nielsen's perspective of 'working with religion' highlights that acts of emplacement do not simply display pre-existing narratives or 'beliefs' but are actual agents in creating meaning and communities.

Giselle Bader similarly considers the entanglement of national heritage with discourses about personal experience and belief and specific places via her discussion of thru-hiking in America. Drawing together a transcendental valorization of nature and aspirations for individual self (including spiritual) development, her analysis identifies how a conservation movement has produced a modern-day pilgrimage.

The conceptualization of other-than-human agents (including those of spirit or soul in a religious studies context) has been a marked development in the humanities over the past twenty years. While the irascible undergraduate's empathy for the trees' inability to control their placement in the city parkland would have been heartily ridiculed at the outset of her academic journey, such considerations are now the source of sustained ethical consideration. Consideration of nonhuman agency are, as I have argued elsewhere,

a mainstay of esoteric and religious worldviews (and academic fields). The ‘new materialists’ of the early 2010s (e.g. [Bennett 2010](#)) provided a conceptual framework for the incorporation of other-than-human agency, and in particular material agency to enter academic discourse in a viable manner. Its adoption and development in a variety of disciplinary fields, including archaeology (e.g. [Pétursdóttir 2012](#)), museum studies ([Muller and Seck Langill 2021](#)) and religious studies ([Keller and Rubenstein 2017](#); [Mosurinjohn 2022](#)), furnishes the ground for Mariska van der Velde and Kocku von Stuckrad’s consideration of the agency of objects held in museum collections. Crucial to their analysis is engagement with postcolonial discourse, the politics of emplacement, replacement removal and representation. Calling for a broader decolonization of heritage discourse, they investigate acknowledging other-than-human agencies within museum spaces, in their account, the presentation of biocentric worldviews.

Velde and Stuckrad’s analysis utilizes concepts developed by Karen [Barad \(2007\)](#) among others, which, in the broadest of brushstrokes ‘trouble’ the maintenance of boundaries between subject–object and nature–culture. This follows Donna Haraway’s term ‘natureculture’ to denote the necessary mutual imbrication of both ([2003](#)). This understanding furnishes the consideration of biocultural heritage within this volume. My own chapter explores the interrelationships between religious and natural heritage discourses in contemporary conservation, and conservation education programmes (including those known as TEK – traditional ecological knowledge). This examination focuses on the way in which the heritage of place, inclusive of vernacular beliefs about animal and plant species is being utilized to advocate for particular conservation practices *and* simultaneously a change in dominant human worldviews; that is, seeking to change how contemporary individuals, via engagement with heritage discourse, understand themselves, their connection to others, including animal–others, and the environment.

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Marion Gibson is Professor of Renaissance and Magical Literatures at the University of Exeter, UK. She is the author of *Witchcraft: A History in 13*

Trials (Simon and Schuster, 2023), *The Witches of St Osyth* (Cambridge University Press, 2022) and other works on the history of witch trials and magical beliefs.

Jamie Hampson is an Associate Professor of Rock Art and Indigenous Heritage at the University of Exeter. He has degrees in archaeology, heritage and history from Cambridge and Oxford. Prior to Exeter, Jamie worked at the University of Western Australia; he was also a Marie Curie Global Fellow at Stanford. His recent books include *Visual Culture, Heritage and Identity: Using Rock Art to Reconnect Past and Present*; and *Powerful Pictures: Rock Art Research Histories Around the World*. His most recent article is a contribution to the *Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Archaeology*.

Nicola Whyte is Associate Professor of Landscape and History at the University of Exeter, where she is co-Director of the Centre for Environmental Arts and Humanities. She has published widely on environmental and social entanglements in the early modern and postmedieval periods. She is particularly interested in transdisciplinary approaches, crossing boundaries and working with archival fragments to bring into view alternative pasts that help re-envision the present and future at a time of climate and ecological crisis.

NOTES

1. As well as moving *over* or *across* a landscape, for instance, we also move *in* the landscape.
2. The specific time in history in this case is around the fourteenth century AD. The article therefore had and has important implications for the way we project ethnographic details and ideas about the meanings and motivations behind the creation of rock art – attuned in this example to Aboriginal Dreaming-based ontological views of the world – into the more distant past. For more on the use of ethnography in the social sciences, see chapters in [Hampson, Challis and Goldhahn 2022](#).
3. Many Indigenous groups of course reject putative binary divisions such as natural: supernatural, sacred:mundane, etc. As [Porr \(2019: 160\)](#) makes clear, if we reject the unhelpful division between ‘thought’ (on the one hand) and ‘nature or reality’ (on the other), we can more usefully conceptualize the relationships between humans, images, artefacts and other actors, all of whom participate in processes of world-building, identity-maintenance and identity-negotiation.
4. For example: National Trust ‘Noticing Nature Report’. Retrieved 21 February 2025 from <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/our-cause/nature-climate/nature-conservation/everyone-needs-nature#>; Patrick Markham, ‘Britain Ranks Bottom in Europe for Nature Connectedness’, *The Guardian*, 23 June 2022; Rob Wildwood, ‘Where the Magic Happens: 10 of Britain’s Most Mystical Sites’, *The Guardian*, April 2022.

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