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Bridges between Worlds: Spirits and Spirit Work in Northern Iceland

Corinne G. Dempsey

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This book explores Icelandic spirit work, known as andleg mal, which features trance and healing practices that span earth and spirit realms, historical eras, scientific and supernatural worldviews, and cross-Atlantic cultures. Based on years of fieldwork conducted in the northern Icelandic town of Akureyri, *Bridges between Worlds* excavates andleg mal's roots in layers of Icelandic history, and examines how this practice steeped in ancient folklore functions in the modern world.

Weaving personal stories and anecdotes with accessibly written accounts of Icelandic religious and cultural traditions, Corinne Dempsey humanizes spirit practices that are usually demonized or romanticized. While andleg mal may appear remote and exotic, those who practice it are not. Icelanders today are among the most highly educated people on the planet, well-connected to global technologies and economies. Andleg mal practitioners are no exception; many of them are members of mainstream society who work day jobs. They often keep their spirit involvement under wraps because, though their spirit encounters are celebrated, they can also be frightening and embarrassing. For those who claim the "gift" of openness to the spirit world, andleg mal offers a means of daily spiritual support, helping to diminish fear and self-doubt and providing benefits to those on both sides of the divide.

While recent years have seen an unprecedented boom in tourist travel to Iceland, Dempsey sheds light on a profoundly important, but thus far poorly understood element of the region's culture. Her aim is not to explain away andleg mál but to build a bridge of comprehensibility through empathy for the participants who are, after all, not so different from the reader.

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