



# **The Return of Ancestral Gods: Modern Ukrainian Paganism as an Alternative Vision for a Nation (Mcgill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion)**

*Mariya Lesiv*

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As Ukraine struggles to find its national identity, modern Ukrainian Pagans offer an alternative vision of the Ukrainian nation. Drawing inspiration from the spiritual life of past millennia, they strive to return to the pre-Christian roots of their ancestors. Since Christianity dominates the spiritual discourse in Ukraine, Pagans are marginalized, and their ideas are perceived as radical. In *The Return of Ancestral Gods*, Mariya Lesiv explores Pagan beliefs and practices in Ukraine and amongst the North American Ukrainian diaspora. Drawing on intensive fieldwork, archival documents, and published sources not available in English, she allows the voices of Pagans to be heard. Paganism in Slavic countries is heavily charged with ethno-nationalist politics, and previous scholarship has mainly focused on this aspect. Lesiv finds it important to consider not only how Paganism is preached but also the way that it is understood on a private level. She shows that many Ukrainians embrace Paganism because of its aesthetic aspects rather than its associated politics and discusses the role that aesthetics may play in the further development of Ukrainian Paganism. Paganism in Eastern Europe remains underrepresented within Pagan studies, and this work helps to fill that gap. Extensive comparative references to various forms of Western Paganism allows English-speaking readers to better understand the world of Ukrainian Pagans.

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