



**1st International Conference
on Contemporary Esotericism**

Stockholm University
August 27-29 2012

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Welcome

It is our pleasure to welcome you to Stockholm and the 1st International Conference on Contemporary Esotericism. We are pleased to say that we have a very strong academic programme with four keynote lectures and close to fifty papers, as well as an exciting extra programme. In this booklet you will find preliminary information on the programme, abstracts of keynote lectures and papers, list of speakers, and answer to practical questions such as “where is it?” and “how do I get where I need to be?”. We hope you will find this information helpful, and not least that it will give you a nice teaser of what is ahead!

We would also like to remind you that in addition to being the first international academic conference on contemporary esotericism, this event is also the launching party of a book, and the inauguration of an academic network. The collected volume *Contemporary Esotericism* (Equinox Publishing; eds. Asprem & Granholm) will appear in print only at the beginning of 2013; however, we are pleased to announce that a few very special display copies will be available at the conference for a unique sneak preview. Together, the volume and the conference put contemporary esotericism firmly on the academic agenda. In order to maintain the momentum, we have founded an academic network that is officially launched with the conference: the Contemporary Esotericism Research Network (ContERN). This is a thematic network affiliated with the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE), and we would encourage all conference participants to get involved. More information on the network (and the collected volume) can be found at the end of this booklet.

We look forward to spend three exciting and stimulating days with you in Stockholm, and hope that this will only be the beginning of many future projects!

With best wishes,

Egil Asprem & Kennet Granholm (the conference organizers)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW	1
CONFERENCE SCHEDULE	2
KEYNOTES	7
LIST OF ABSTRACTS	14
EXTRA PROGRAMME	50
DINNER, LUNCH, and COFFEE BREAKS	51
MAPS	52
GENERAL INFORMATION	57
CONTEMPORARY ESOTERICISM RESEARCH NETWORK (ContERN)	59

Conference Overview

Monday August 27

9:30-10:00 Welcome

10:00-11:00 Keynote Lecture 1

11:30-13:00 Parallel Sessions 1

13:00-14:30 Lunch

14:30-15:30 Keynote 2

16:00-18:00 Parallel Sessions 2

Tuesday August 28

9:30-10:30 Keynote 3

11:00-12:30 Parallel Sessions 3

12:30-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:00 Keynote 4

15:30-17:30 Parallel Sessions 4

19:00- Conference Dinner

Wednesday August 29

10:00-11:30 Parallel Sessions 5

11:30-13:00 Lunch

13:00-15:00 Roundtable Discussion and Conclusion

15:00- Extra Programme: Walking tour of occult Stockholm, directed by Dr.
Thomas Karlsson

Schedule

Monday August 27

9:30-10:00 Welcome [Hörsal 11]

Egil ASPREM& Kennet GRANHOLM

10:00-11:00 Keynote Lecture 1 [Hörsal 11]

Christopher PARTRIDGE, 'Occulture is Ordinary'

11:30-13:00 Parallel Sessions 1

1.1 *Occultural I: Old Media / New Media* [Room F413]

Chair: WOODMAN

- DUGGAN, 'Chaos and the Zine Scene'
- GREER, "'Bob Was a Futurist and I'm a Luddite'"
- KINGSEPP, 'The Power of the Black Sun'

1.2 *Gender & Queer* [Room F420]

Chair: BRACH

- HEDENBORG-WHITE, 'Towards a Theoretical Framework for the Study of Gender and Contemporary Esotericism'
- ROBERTSON, 'The Self as "Other": Non-Human Ontologies'
- BURROUGHS, 'Meditations on Lesbians Who Meditate on Lesvos'

1.3 *Satanism & the Left Hand Path* [Room F389]

Chair: BOGDAN

- PETERSEN, 'Bracketing Beelzebub'
- FAXNELD, 'Secret Lineages and *De Facto* Satanists'
- SIEG, 'Left, Right, and Sinister'

13:00-14:30 Lunch

14:30-15:30 Keynote 2 [Hörsal 11]

Jay JOHNSTON, 'Productive Trouble: Gender – Esotericism'

16:00-18:00 Parallel Sessions 2

2.1 *Occultural II: Popular (oc)culture* [Room F413]

Chair: PETERSEN

- DUCHEMIN, 'Comics, Cinema, and the Esotericism of Alejandro Jodorowsky'.
- SANTOS SILVA, 'Jorge Ben Jor and Raul Seixas '
- KARLSON-WEIMANN, 'Is Black and Death Metal Esoteric in Itself?'
- WOODMAN, 'The MiBs and the Migo'.

2.2 *EsoPolitics I: The Esoteric Right?* [Room F420]

Chair: KINGSEPP

- SENHOLT, 'Right Wing Heretics'
- HALE, 'The Branding and Marketing of the New Right in Pagan and Esoteric Communities'
- LINDE, 'The Occult Roots of Duginism'
- RAMSTEDT, 'Nationalism and Interest in National Heritage within the Alternative Spiritual Milieu in Finland'

2.3 *Psychology, Health, and Alternative Medicine* [Room F389]

Chair: HARRINGTON

- MAGUS, 'Austin Osman Spare and the Conquest of the Imaginal'
- CROWLEY, 'Embedding the Esoteric in Contemporary Psychotherapy'
- LAUFENBERG, 'The Metaphysics of Licensure'

Tuesday August 28

9:30-10:30 Keynote 3 [Hörsal 11]

Kocku von STUCKRAD, 'Rejected Theory in the Study of Esotericism'

11:00-12:30 Parallel Sessions 3 [Room F413]

3.1 *Rejected Theory, Rejected Method? (I): General*

Chair: OTTO

- HARRINGTON, 'The Effects of Developing the Academic Study of Esotericism'
- BARONI, 'How Italian Scholars Discovered Western Esotericism'
- MARLOW, 'Interviewing Contemporary Mystics'

3.2 *EsoPolitics II: The Esoteric Left?* [Room F420]

Chair: TILTON

- BAKKER, 'The Black Esoteric Milieu'
- GIUDICE, 'Occupy and Occultism'
- RADERMACHER, 'The Environmental Movement, Eco-Spirituality, and Consumer Culture'

3.3 *East / West / North / South? Global Perspectives* [Room F389]

Chair: KWANTES

- PODOLECKA-NIEWDANA, 'South African New Age as a Conglomerate of Western and African Philosophies'
- MONDAL, 'Esotericism in Sufism and its Impacts on the Bauls of Bengal'

12:30-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:00 Keynote 4 [Hörsal 11]

Wouter HANEGRAAFF, 'Entheogenic Esotericism'

15:30-17:30 Parallel Sessions 4

4.1 *Rejected Theory, Rejected Method? (II): Anthropology of Esotericism* [Room F413]

Chair: **CROWLEY**

- HEGNER, 'Hex and the City'
- SUDHÖLTER, 'The Entheogenic Experience of Dutch Santo Daimé Members'
- DUPPILS, 'Neospiritism'

4.2 *Contemporary Milieus* [Room F420]

Chair: **RADERMACHER**

- CHAITOW, 'Neomythology and Mythopoeia: The Esoteric Landscape of Modern Greece'
- TILTON, 'Discord and Desecration at Esoteric Glastonbury'
- LIEBERMAN-AVITAL, "'Healing by Salt'" - Traditional Feminine Magical Practice in a New and Renewing Environment'
- KWANTES, 'Bnei Baruch vs. "Mainstream" Jewish Religiosity'

4.3 *Magics I: Magical Pluralism* [Room F389]

Chair: **BUTLER**

- OTTO, 'Chaos Semantics: "Magical" Meanings in the 20th and 21st Century'
- HARARI, 'A Black Demoness, Angels, and a Curse'
- BOGDAN, 'Kenneth Grant and the Re-Enchantment of the Occult'
- KARLSSON, 'Modern Grimoires and Talismanic Books'

19:00- Conference Dinner

Wednesday August 29

10:00-11:30 Parallel Sessions 5

5.1 *Magics II: Psychologization* [Room F413]

Chair: RAMSTEDT

- BRACH, 'Psychic Disciplines: the Magnetizer as Magician'
- BUTLER, 'Dion Fortune's Group Mind and the Intersection of Occultism and Psychology'
- BAKARLAZ, 'The Concepts of the Self in Chaos Magic'

5.2 *Initiation & Secrecy: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives* [Room F420]

Chair: HALE

- KENNEY, 'Freemasons Today: Thematic Claims of Life Changes Since Becoming a Mason'
- ROSTAD, 'Contemporary Fraternalism in Norway as Moral Elitism'
- FUTERMAN, 'Societies of Silence in an Open Source World'

11:30-13:00 Lunch

13:00-15:00 Roundtable Discussion and Conclusion [Hörsal 11]

Partridge, Johnston, von Stuckrad, and Hanegraaff, are publicly interviewed by Aspren & Granholm, and engaged in a roundtable discussion.

15:00- Extra Programme: Walking Tour of Occult Stockholm, with Thomas Karlsson

Make sure to bring a public transport card for this event!

KEYNOTE LECTURES



Wouter J. Hanegraaff

Entheogenic Esotericism

Contemporary esotericism is replete with references to impressive “mystical” or visionary experiences, which are typically credited with having radically changed people’s lives by bringing them into contact with a “spiritual” dimension of reality. Given the widely acknowledged fact that the contemporary neo-esoteric revival has its historical roots in the 1960s, known for its widespread experimentation with psychoactive substances such as LSD, it is remarkable how rarely specialists in this domain (including the speaker himself, in his 1996 monograph on the New Age) have seen this dimension as relevant at all. In my lecture I will argue that widespread experimentation with psychoactive or “entheogenic” substances is a significant factor in contemporary esotericism and should be given more attention by scholars. With some notable exceptions, such as Terence McKenna, Daniel Pinchbeck, or Alex Grey, esoteric authors and spokes(wo)men have tended to play down or deny this dimension, especially after the beginning of the “war on drugs” around 1970, and on the whole, scholars have been somewhat naïve in taking such emic denials at face value. Especially since “higher knowledge” or “gnosis” is widely seen as an important aspect of Western esotericism, the widespread claim that it may be attained or facilitated by psychoactive substances must be taken seriously in the study of contemporary esotericism.

Biographical information:

Wouter J. Hanegraaff is Professor of History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, President of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE; see www.esswe.org), and a member of the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences. Alongside numerous articles, he is the author of *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*

(Leiden 1996/Albany 1998); *Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447-1500): The Hermetic Writings and Related Documents* (Tempe 2005; with Ruud M. Bouthoorn); *Swedenborg, Oetinger, Kant: Three Perspectives on the Secrets of Heaven* (West Chester 2007); and *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge 2012). He has also (co)edited seven collective volumes, including the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (Leiden 2005) and *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism* (New York 2011; with Jeffrey J. Kripal). His Primer *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed* will be published by Continuum Press in December 2012.



Jay Johnston

Productive Trouble: Gender— Esotericism

The definitions, boundaries and constituents signified by both the terms 'gender' and 'esotericism' are necessarily troubling and dynamic: trouble for conceptual categories, for binary logics, and for dominant discursive practices. Such trouble is both inspiring and — as will be proposed in this presentation —imperative.

This paper will consider the major themes and strategies for thinking about gender and/in the discipline of esotericism, including scholarship that has considered marginalized subjects, gender bias, gender roles, and non-normative sexualities. The consideration of the deeply intersectional discursive relations of 'gender' and 'esotericism' includes examining the sexualisation of esoteric discourses and subjects, the way in which concepts of 'nature' are defined and deployed, and the construction of gendered identities and knowledges.

In outlining the above concerns, an argument will be made for the usefulness of employing 'gender' as a critical category to trouble western esotericism's disciplinary identity and boundaries, core concepts and epistemologies. That is, the serious need to ask tricky questions of the discipline's own complex investment in stable identities and positions.

Biographical information:

Jay Johnston is Senior Lecturer (Religious Studies) at the University of Sydney and Senior Lecturer (School of Art History and Art Education) College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Australia. Publications include *Angels of Desire: Esoteric Bodies, Aesthetics and Ethics* (Equinox 2008) and co-editor with Geoffrey Samuel, *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body* (forthcoming Routledge 2012) and numerous articles and chapters. She is the Primary Chief Investigator for the project: "The Function of Images in Magical Papyri and Artefacts of Ritual Power from Late Antiquity" funded by the Australian

Research Council (2012-2014); and is completing a monograph on concepts of materiality, embodiment and image agency in religious and archaeological discourse and practice. Her other current scholarly obsessions include transpecies subcultures (especially Otherkin); the body in alternative medicine; religious and material relations between Gaelic and Scandinavian cultures; critical theory, methodology and the disciplinary identity of religious studies. She is co-editor of *Australian Religion Studies Review* (re-launching in 2013 as *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*) and founding member of HARN: Human–Animal Research Network (sydney.edu.au/arts/rsearch/harn) and In.site: Contemporary Curatorial and Education Research (insite.unsw.edu.au).



Christopher Partridge

Occulture is Ordinary

While Western esotericism has its roots in the Hellenistic world of the first few centuries CE, and while much contemporary esoteric thought can be traced back to the rediscovery of early texts during the Renaissance and, particularly, to the modern occult revival of the nineteenth century, the late modern period since the 1960s has witnessed the emergence of a political and cultural context that has proved particularly conducive to the proliferation of broadly esoteric ideas. No longer can such thought be considered occulted or esoteric, in the sense of being recondite and secretive. While there are, of course, occult traditions and organizations that are styled as such, concerned with the cultivation of a sense of Gnostic privilege, the culture in which they are embedded is no longer hidden or unfamiliar. It is ordinary and everyday.

Biographical information:

Christopher Partridge is Professor of Religious Studies in the Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion at Lancaster University, UK. His research and writing focuses on alternative spiritualities, countercultures, and popular music. He is the author of *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture*, 2 volumes (2004, 2005) and *Dub in Babylon: Understanding the Evolution and Significance of Dub Reggae in Jamaica and Britain from King Tubby to Post-punk* (2010), the editor of several books, including *UFO Religions* (2003) and *Encyclopaedia of New Religions* (2004), and co-editor of *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations* (2009), *The Lure of the Dark Side: Satan and Western Demonology in Popular Culture* (2009), and *Holy Terror: Understanding Religion and Violence in Popular Culture* (2010). He is also co-editor of the series 'Studies in Popular Music' (Equinox) and 'Studies in Religion and Popular Music' (Continuum).



Kocku von Stuckrad

Rejected Theory in the Study of Esotericism

The academic study of what is labeled 'Western esotericism' has by now established itself as a flourishing field of research that contributes to disciplines such as the academic study of religion, history, sociology, and cultural studies. While scholars in the field of 'Western esotericism' usually claim to contribute significantly to these academic disciplines, it is surprising to see that their publications only rarely take notice of methodological and theoretical discussions that have challenged and

transformed these very disciplines. Even leading representatives of the field do not critically engage concepts such as 'knowledge,' 'secrecy,' 'polemics,' 'identity,' 'history,' 'pluralism,' or 'the West,' even though these terms figure prominently in their historical analysis. The result is an unreflective, at times even naïve understanding of what characterizes the study of 'Western esotericism' and how it should be linked to historical, sociological, and cultural research.

The lecture reviews influential recent contributions to the field of 'Western esotericism' and critically addresses their lacking theoretical basis. It is argued that it will be essential to actively engage with theoretical and methodological discussions in the fields of historiography and sociology, if the study of 'Western esotericism' wants to be taken seriously in a wider academic context and if it wants to leave the niche into which it has maneuvered itself.

Biographical information:

Kocku von Stuckrad is professor of religious studies and head of the Department of Comparative and Historical Study of Religion at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. He is particularly interested in method and theory in the study of religion, as well as in the dynamics of

European history of religion from antiquity to the present. Within these fields of research, he has published extensively on esoteric discourses in Western culture, astrology, shamanism, and on topics related to religion, nature, and science. His monographs include *Das Ringen um die Astrologie: Jüdische und christliche Beiträge zum antiken Zeitverständnis* (2000); *Schamanismus und Esoterik: Kultur- und wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* (2003); *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft: Gegenstände und Begriffe* (2003, with Hans G. Kippenberg); *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge* (2005); a *History of Astrology from Earliest Times to the Present* (available in 5 languages); and most recently, *Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Esoteric Discourse and Western Identities* (2010). He edited *The Brill Dictionary of Religion* (2006) and the *Vocabulary for the Study of Religion* (with Robert Segal, Brill, forthcoming 2013). He is co-editor of the *Journal of Religion in Europe* (Brill), the *Religion and Society Series* (De Gruyter), the *Numen Book Series* (Brill), and the *GnosticaSeries* (Equinox). He has served as chair of the Critical Theory and Discourses on Religion Group and is now co-chair of the Religion in Europe Group of the American Academy of Religion. He was the president of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture and is currently the president of the Dutch Association for the Study of Religion.

LIST OF ABSTRACTS

BAKARLAZ, PAWEL. *Graduate Student in Psychology, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland.*

The Concepts of the Self in Chaos Magic

Along with modern psychologization and privatization of worldviews, the focus switched also in esoteric lore. The 20th century magic (especially branches conceived then) is more concerned with psychological structures and processes in the practitioner than with the elaborate cartographies of incorporeal dimensions. One such branch is chaos magic. Even despite instrumental use of theories and beliefs declared in the current, some core assumptions can be reconstructed. At the heart of them stands the concept of self/ves as a true medium of occult research and development through practice.

This paper reviews concepts of self, understood as a center of psychological activity (*ego*, I), found in writings of the founders and most prominent practitioners. From Ray Sherwin's singular Self as "a constant unchanging source", through Peter J. Carroll's multiple selves to Dave Lee's stream of experiences. Ideas of Julian Vayne and the most recent innovation to the theory done by Alan Chapman are also accounted for. As a reference, a contemporary psychological framework in the research on the self is provided.

BAKKER, JUSTINE. *Research Master student, Religious Studies, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.*

The Black Esoteric Milieu: Black Religion and the Study of (Western) Esotericism

Since Antoine Faivre first posed his famous definition of esotericism as "a mode of thought" in 1992, the academic field of Western Esotericism has grown substantially. But, although research has focused primarily on esoteric ideas, currents, movements, and people in the United States and

(Western) Europe, the field has yet to devote substantial research to the esoteric streams existing in the *African* American community. This paper's aim is therefore to discuss several twentieth century black esoteric movements. Introducing the concept of the "black cultic milieu" – the religious and esoteric breeding ground for the black movements – I will discuss their joint sources, and identify some of the key players, ideas, and belief systems.

The argument of this paper is that African American esoteric currents on the one hand adopt many of the esoteric ideas and belief systems that European American esoteric currents employ, but on the other hand, fueled by a distinctive black (religious) experience, transform them in such a way that they become uniquely African American. These recognizable yet utterly distinctive forms of contemporary esotericism deserve attention from scholars in the field of Western Esotericism, which have been primarily interested in "white" ideas, movements, and people. Therefore, arguing for the study of esoteric currents in black religion, this article seeks to broaden the field of Western Esotericism and extent its boundaries.

BARONI, FRANCESCO. *Postdoctoral Fellow, Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici, Naples, Italy.*

Idealism and Magic in 20th Century Italy (1910-1940): How Italian Scholars Discovered Western Esotericism

After World War II, a few Italian scholars such as Garin and de Martino published outstanding pieces of research about Renaissance esotericism and popular magic, giving a valuable contribution to the academic study of Western esotericism, in its embryonic stages at the time.

In order to understand the genesis of such works, it seems essential to situate them within the framework of Italian idealistic culture of the 1910s-1940s, to which both Garin and de Martino belonged.

In this context, the interest for esotericism seems to be due to two main factors. In their fight against positivism, firstly, idealists often cooperated with the avant-garde movements, which were inspired by various forms of occultism. Consequently, they got in touch with all sorts of contemporary esoteric materials (spiritualism, theosophy, etc.) and had to position themselves in relation to them (this is the case, for instance, for Croce).

Secondly, the built-in spiritualism of these authors put them in contact with different esoteric currents of the past, such as gnosis (Omodeo), kabbalah and theosophy (Martinetti), or with philosophers heavily influenced by esoteric currents like Bruno (Gentile).

A survey of these authors, then, can help us understand the rise of an academic approach to esotericism in 20th century Italy, and beyond.

BOGDAN, HENRIK. *Associate Professor, Religious Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.*

Kenneth Grant and the Re-Enchantment of the Occult

Kenneth Grant (1924-2011) is apart from his work in promoting and publishing the works of Aleister Crowley and the artist Austin Osman Spare, known as the creator of a particular current in contemporary occultism usually referred to as the *Typhonian Tradition*. Although his own occult organisations have remained very small in terms of members, the Typhonian Tradition is an important influence on other contemporary occultist currents such as the so-called Left-Hand Path (esp. Michael Aquino and the Temple of Set, and the Swedish organisation Dragon Rouge); neo-Gnostic groups associated with occultists such as Michael Bertiaux and David Beth, and certain strands of modern witchcraft referred to as the Cultus Sabbati promoted by authors such as the late Andrew Chumbley and others. Despite the arguably significant influence of Grant upon contemporary occultism, surprisingly little academic attention has been devoted to him. The Typhonian Tradition is set down in Grant's three so-called Typhonian Trilogies, which commenced with *The Magical Revival* in 1972, and was completed thirty years later with *The Ninth Arch* in 2002. The system that emerges in his trilogies can be described as a bricolage of neo-vedanta, hindu tantra, Western sexual magic, surrealism, UFO-ology, and Lovecraftian gnosis framed in the new religious tradition of Thelema. This paper sets out to discuss Grant's occultist system, with a special focus on its particular form of epistemology, and it will be argued that it represents a re-enchanted form of occultism that to a certain extent is a reaction against the secularised forms of esotericism of the early twentieth century, and that, as such, it mirrors new trends in Western spirituality. Central to Grant's system were the notions of 'revealed knowledge' and 'creative imagination' -- notions that will be analysed in the light of Christopher Partridge's theories

of re-enchantment of the West and Olav Hammer's study of strategies of legitimating esoteric positions in modernity.

BRACH, JEAN-PIERRE. *Professor, History of Esoteric Currents in Early Modern and Contemporary Europe, Ecole pratique Hautes Etudes, Paris, France.*

Psychic Disciplines: the Magnetizer as Magician

The fourth and middle decades of the XIXth century have witnessed, within European societies, a series of political, social and cultural changes which have had a strong impact on the scientific practices, religious beliefs and mystical ideologies of the period.

The discipline of Animal Magnetism was of course no exception to this general situation. Faced - most especially in France - with growing distrust from institutional medical science and a no less compromising - in the eyes of part of the mainstream public - association with left-wing liberalism and socialism, viewed also with suspicion by the established religions, Mesmerism underwent at that time several important inner transformations.

Among the main factors behind these was a strong Spiritualist headwind, which steered some practitioners towards a combination of the hitherto mainly curative Animal Magnetism with American Spiritualism, table-turning, Kardecism (after 1857) and a renewed interest into ancient *testimonia* about magic.

One of the results of this tendency was the appearance of the category (and expression) of "magie magnétique" (1851), which obviously aims at blending Mesmerism - here conceived of as essentially an exploration of the soul's powers - with a "magical" explanation of its theoretical framework and workings.

Foremost among this particular brand of exponents of Animal Magnetism (although he didn't coin the above-mentioned expression) is Baron J. Dupotet de Sennevoye (1796-1881), a pupil of Puységur, Deleuze and Faria, author of a great number of well-known textbooks and one of the first in France to institute public *séances*, before he went on to control the influent *Journal du Magnétisme*.

This paper would like to explore the circumstances and motivations behind his gradual shift from a medical and “naturalistic” approach to an overtly “occult” understanding of Mesmerism as such, as finally expressed in his famous treatise *La Magie dévoilée, ou principes de science occulte* (1852), a book which exerted a considerable influence over other magnetizers with a spiritualist agenda, as well as on later occultists, including the “arch-mage” Eliphas Levi (1810-75).

This would also be an opportunity to examine the uses and meanings, in France at that time, of the words “occult” or “magic”, especially when associated with the theory and practice of Animal Magnetism.

BURROUGHS, BRADY. *Researcher, School of Architecture and Built Environment, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden.*

Meditations on Lesbians who Meditate on Lesvos: On the Role of Spirituality in the Negotiation of Space, Community Building and the Inhabitation of Place

At the end of the beach in the tiny Greek village Skala Eressos, Lesvos, Sappho’s birthplace, stands the main blue-stuccoed building of Zorba the Buddha - the beachfront restaurant/bar where The Skala Women’s Rock Group gather every morning at 10 am for their daily swim and breakfast. This space becomes a place of contingency in the meeting of a complex mixture of people and beliefs - from the local Greeks with strong ties to ancient mythology and the Greek Orthodox Church, to the guests from the nearby Osho Afroz Meditation Center and finally, to the varying New Age spiritualities of the international community of lesbian women that make up the Rock Group.

Through short fictional *meditations* on specific situations encountered within this context, this paper looks at how spiritual practices serve as both a source of empowerment and a means of belonging, as well as how they constitute an affective element in the negotiation of space. Key theoretical references are feminist Bell Hooks’ writing on the importance of spirituality in “how we relate to self and others” and its necessity for building community and Sara Ahmed’s ideas on *orientation* and *inhabitation* in describing how systems of social norms are established. This work points to the importance of

spirituality, a marginalized (even taboo) concept within current architectural discussion, and further explores fictional modes of writing as a critical methodology to examine contemporary sites of study in an ethically responsible way.

BUTLER, ALISON. *Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. Johns, NL, Canada.*

Dion Fortune's Group Mind and the Intersection of Occultism and Psychology

Dion Fortune's formulation of the concept of group mind demonstrates a crucial exchange between esoteric ideas and psychological theories during the first half of the twentieth century. The repercussions of this interaction have helped form contemporary esoteric beliefs and practices. Fortune has played a significant role in shaping modern magical ritual and has been most influential through her synthesis of the occult with the psychological. It is in her theory of group mind that such a synthesis is clearly observed.

Fortune first published her concept of group mind in *The Occult Review* in 1927. This notion was greatly influenced by her experience as a lay analyst at the Medico-Psychological Clinic of London. In particular, her understanding of how a group mind functions is evocative of contemporary psychological research into group dynamics and crowd psychology. Fortune's definition of group mind, however, as "an oversoul, a vast, brooding, artificial elemental, potent for good or evil" is pure occultism and relies heavily upon an older esoteric model, the *egregore*. And it is this very word that Fortune's successors in the *Servants of the Light* go on to use to denote her concept of group mind.

The term *egregore* is found in several occult works including those of Eliphas Lévi. The traditional interpretation is a magical entity created through the process of ritual. The modern usage, post-Fortune, as a collective conscious and subconscious, moves from a magical context to a psychological one. Through Fortune, an esoteric notion is subjected to and transformed by contemporary psychological theory. As a result, the terms *egregore* and group mind are now used interchangeably by many esoteric organisations.

What is quite interesting is that Fortune never used the word *egregore* herself in reference to group mind. Rather, it appears to be a more recent

appellation, perhaps motivated either by a desire to return to older terminology or to interpret older concepts in the light of psychological developments.

In exploring this application of psychological theory to an occult concept, this paper seeks to both explore the interplay of occultism and psychology at a crucial moment in the history of contemporary esotericism and to further establish the lasting legacy of these exchanges.

CHAITOW, SASHA. *PhD Candidate, Centre for the Study of Myth, University of Essex, Essex, UK.*

Neomythology and Mythopoeia: The Esoteric Landscape of Modern Greece

Esotericism in Modern Greece can be identified as a continual process of mythopoeia, where the fragmentary and highly syncretic reception of various elements of esoteric thought has led to a constant production of neomythologies. Since the 1970s, and more intensely since the 1990s, many amateur researchers and practitioners of various traditions have utilized the periodical press, small independent publishing initiatives, and the internet, to produce a kaleidoscope of works generating a self-sustaining and continually evolving dynamic esoteric landscape with a uniquely Greek flavour.

The main influences on Greek esoteric thought stem from a combination of French 19th century occultism, the writings of Aleister Crowley, and a somewhat different cultural mentality which can be explained by the differences in the evolution of Modern Greece. Modern Greek culture was not influenced by the Renaissance or the Enlightenment in the same way as the rest of Western Europe, resulting in a very different reception and reinterpretation of the Western Esoteric currents. Other reasons include a tumultuous historical backdrop, the language barrier and arbitrary selection of translations into Greek, a lack of proper academic training in relevant methodologies, strong Hellenocentrism, and the negative stance of the Orthodox church.

This paper will form a snapshot of the phenomenon of 'esoteric mythopoeia' in Greece today. I will justify my use of this definition, present the key historical and sociocultural reasons for this ongoing phenomenon, identify

the main points of divergence from Western developments, and argue that the dynamics present are comparable to those underpinning the Western European (particularly French and British) development of esoteric currents in the late 19th and early 20th century. Drawing on my perspective as a scholar of esotericism as well as my “in-the-field” acquaintance with many of the main actors in these evolving currents I will also outline some of the key problems I have encountered in attempting to observe and study these phenomena within the Greek context. It is hoped that this presentation will serve to sketch Greece’s place on the map of contemporary European esotericism and to underline the wealth of topics awaiting further research.

CROWLEY, VIVIANNE. *Psychologist and faculty member, Pastoral Counselling, Cherry Hill Seminary, Columbia, SC.*

Embedding the Esoteric in Contemporary Psychotherapy: The Contribution of Marie-Louise von Franz

Jungian analysis meets Faivre’s six fundamental characteristics of esotericism and can be viewed as an initiatory spiritual path as much as a psychotherapeutic tool. Marie-Louise von Franz (1915-1998) was a leading figure in the Zürich school of Jungian analysts and pivotal in the developmental of archetypal psychology as propounded by James Hillman and others. Biographers of Carl Gustav Jung depict her typically as a devotee, one of the many women who trained with Jung and became his ‘disciples’ and propagators of his work. This understates and misunderstands her role.

Acknowledged as one of the most intellectually brilliant of Jung’s pupils, von Franz was Jung’s principal collaborator in his later years and helped him develop his most esoteric thinking, published in volumes 12-14 of his *Collected Works – Psychology and Alchemy, Alchemical Studies and Mysterium Coniunctionis*, and elsewhere. Von Franz was also a prolific writer of books on dreams, myth, fairy tales, alchemy and individuation.

As a practitioner and teacher of Jungian analysis, von Franz was an exponent of the Jungian techniques of dream analysis and active imagination. For von Franz, ‘the borderline between active imagination and magic is very subtle,’ and to be an effective practitioner the trainee analyst must experience the equivalent of a shamanic initiation and a ‘breakthrough to the collective unconscious’. This paper revisits her work as esoteric practice and assesses her influence on Jungian and post-Jungian psychology.

DUCHEMIN, PETER. *PhD Candidate, Interdisciplinary Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. Johns, NL, Canada.*

Comics, Cinema, and the Esotericism of Alejandro Jodorowsky

The 20th century explosion of immersive mediation substantiated the ambitions of renaissance occultists who sought to master the phantasmic capacities of the imagination to shape and direct human experience. Contemporary media can be said to have reinvented the art of memory. The cinema and the comic strip are comparable in a number of ways: they involve a level of immersion in the visual/auditory that acts to supplement textual communication with a tactile, intensive and direct optics; they both alter and frame temporal perception; and they both can be compared to hieroglyphics, in the sense that might be interpreted as arts which traffic in Sr. Francis Bacon's "real character". The career of Alejandro Jodorowsky has spanned both film and comics, and his work is rich in occult symbolism. I will discuss the (1973) film *The Holy Mountain*, and the (1981-89) comic series, *The Incal* (with Jean Giraud, aka; Moebius), from the perspective of comparative symbology, 20th century antinomian occultism, and semiotics. To support this reading, I will draw on Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema I & II*, and Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*.

DUGGAN, COLIN. *PhD researcher, Study of Religions, University College Cork, Ireland.*

Chaos and the Zine Scene

This paper highlights the importance of 'zines' among those individuals operating under the emblem of 'chaos' from the mid 1970s to the 1990s. This includes developments such as Chaos Magick, Discordianism, and Thee Temple of Psychick Youth. An art form in itself, the zine is often used by marginal or underground groups to disseminate knowledge and build social networks. It is most often a self-made and self-published text produced through technologies like the ordinary photocopier and contains various types of content such as open letters, letters to the editor, articles, essays, reviews, short pieces of fiction, poetry, reprints of paintings and drawings,

original artworks, graphs, and specific types of local or target based advertising to support the zine's production. It can be A5, A4, or sometimes A3 in size and is most often typed pages stapled together. This paper will explore the scope and diversity of zines in the 'chaos' milieu and attempt to show their importance as a historical record of the way esoteric discourse overlaps with politics, music, art, and science in this period. Using examples from publications such as *Chaos/Kaos*, *Chaos International* and *The Lamp of Thoth*, this paper will show how identities were formed and attacked, definitions were negotiated, and various esoteric, political, and cultural discourses interacted through the stapled pages of the 'zine'.

DUPPILS, SARA. *PhD Candidate, Comparative Religion, Åbo Akademi University, Åbo, Finland.*

Neospiritism: A Unified Concept of a Contemporary Multifaceted Belief in Spirits

Belief in spirits and the paranormal has become more visible in the western society, and surveys show that about half of the populations in Europe report some form of belief in spirits and the paranormal. Contemporary belief in spirits is here regarded as part of a multifaceted personal worldview, which I have chosen to call *neospiritism*. Expressions of neospiritism are reflected, among other things, in various TV-shows about ghosts and haunting, communities and forums on the internet, ghost hunting, courses, magazines and books focusing on the supernatural and the belief in spirits.

The beliefs incorporated in neospiritism span across a wide spectrum. They range from a strong faith in spirits and other worlds, to an openness to the possibility that spirits may exist. Contemporary belief in spirits is often assumed to be related to the pre-industrial folklore belief in ghosts and specters. However, I do not consider neospiritism to be primarily related to folklore beliefs so much as being a modernized and adapted version of nineteenth century spiritualism. The concept *neospiritism* can be used to unify the contemporary individual belief in spirits, which can also be understood as a more or less normalized western ancestor belief. In my presentation, I will discuss some of the phenomena which seem to characterize this contemporary belief system.

FAXNELD, PER. *PhD Candidate, History of Religions, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden.*

Secret Lineages and *De Facto* Satanists: Anton LaVey's Use of Esoteric Tradition

The paper will investigate how Anton LaVey constructs a Satanic tradition in his texts, and to what use he puts it. It will present an interpretation of this based on LaVey's overall ontology and view of religious and esoteric phenomena. As will be shown, he both utilizes historical predecessors in a way that is common within Western esotericism in general, and breaks with this common usage. LaVey discards most of the old esoteric and Satanic material as ineffectual and outdated, yet paradoxically still emerges as dependent on it. The paper argues that the prime function of tradition for LaVey is not legitimization, as perhaps would be expected. Rather, he seems to deem tradition most useful for bringing about certain psychological effects in a framework where one practises the 'willing suspension of disbelief' in a limited context, playfully creating the right atmosphere for Satanic activities. The mechanics of tradition are thus openly displayed and consciously utilized as mood-creating spectacle for purely instrumental purposes. Hence, LaVey's references to secret lineages should not be considered a counterfeiting of tradition, since he is quite openly playing with the psychological effects of (a more or less fictitious) tradition, and inviting others to take part in this game.

FUTERMAN, JOSEPH L. *Adjunct Faculty Member, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Chicago, IL, USA.*

Societies of Silence in an Open Source World: A Phenomenological Investigation of Secrecy in Contemporary Esoteric Groups

The history of esotericism is filled with secret societies and individual practitioners who had to keep their esoteric pursuits behind a veil of secrecy due to possibly deadly religious persecution. In contemporary society however, changed values around the purpose and meaning of spirituality have seemingly removed these concerns, yet in many contemporary esoteric

traditions secrecy and silence remain the norm. A Phenomenological study was undertaken to explore the lived experience of modern esoteric practitioners living in the United States, with regard to issues of silence, secrecy and the dangers of exposure of magical practice in the contemporary world. In-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted with members of esoteric groups (n=7) and the resultant transcripts were coded using standard phenomenological methodologies and appropriate themes were extracted. Validation of the result is being accomplished through iterative return to the primary informants to examine the themes extracted. The final description of the lived experience of modern esoteric practitioners will provide a baseline description of the behavior thoughts and feelings of this under studied population and their relationship to secrecy.

GIUDICE, CHRISTIAN.*PhD Candidate, Religious Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.*

Occupy and Occultism: The Horus Maat Lodge, Astral Magic and the Emancipation of the 99%.

The concept of an occult brotherhood employing mysterious techniques to harness its inner urge to ameliorate the destiny of humankind recurs throughout the history of Western esotericism.

The thelemic Horus Maat Lodge (est. by Margaret Ingalls [Soror Nema] in Ohio, in 1979) forms one curious modern expression of this notion. For the most part, its members focus on solitary rituals and communicate through an e-list and a website.

The order's collective workings are not executed in the physical realm: on the night of every New Moon, its members astrally project to a Temple based in a crater of the Moon to enact the 'Eleven Star Working' in order to generate a non-violent leaderless consensus model for humanity. Throughout 2012, the Workings will be devoted to creating a shift in global consciousness and enhancing the international 'Occupy' movement. Unusually for an occult order, Horus Maat shares with the Movement a complete rejection of authority and hierarchical structure, epitomized by the mantra/slogan 'We are the 99%'.

In this paper, I will shed light on the Lodge's novel attempt to assist the Occupy Movement, highlighting similarities and differences with previous endeavors to aid socio-political struggles via magical means.

GREER, CHRISTIAN. *PhD Research Fellow, Center for History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.*

"Bob was a Futurist and I am a Luddite": Intersections of Esoteric Anarchism and Anarchist Esotericism Between Robert Anton Wilson and Peter Lamborn Wilson

Through analyzing the collaborations and public correspondence between Robert Anton Wilson and Hakim Bey (*né* Peter Lamborn Wilson), attention will be drawn to how their participation in esoteric and anarchist discourses produced 'deviant', yet influential trends in both. The analytic distinction between 'anarchist esotericism' and 'esoteric anarchism' will be used to differentiate the authors' divergent ideological commitments.

Although they were close friends and shared the same influences, audiences, and associations - their joint use of the neologism 'guerilla ontology' to self-identify their work indicates this - the two men occupied diametrically opposed positions in regards to modern civilization and, more particularly, technology. Designated in the aforementioned analytic distinction, the implications of this disagreement reveal how Wilson's development of Timothy Leary's speculative transhumanism differs from, yet paradoxically overlaps with, Bey's neoprimitivism. Accordingly, Wilson's commitment to 'Futurism' will be examined against Bey's 'Luddism' so as to identify the most visible uses of anarchist thought in contemporary esotericism.

Throughout the paper there will be a focus on the mediums through which these men communicated their worldview: while both initially worked in the 'zine-scene', Wilson came to embrace the internet, whereas Bey refused it. This divergence will serve as a synecdoche of their relationship and its discontents.

HALE, AMY. *Adjunct Associate Professor, Humanities, University Of Maryland University College, Adelphi, MD, USA.*

The Branding and Marketing of the New Right in Pagan and Esoteric Communities

Traditionalism is a movement which emerged in the early 20th century and which is frequently associated with a group of European esoteric philosophers including René Guénon and Julius Evola. Salient features of this movement include a critique of modernity, and a belief in a return to a “Traditional” society based on spiritual principles which once guided the development and governing of ancient civilizations, and which was handed down through initiatory traditions. The writings of Evola and his desire to return Europe to (an imagined) pre-Christian, caste based social system, were a key inspiration in the formulation of the European New Right in 1968 by French theorist Alain deBenoist. DeBenoist has drawn from strategies and ideologies of both the Right and the Left to promote a vision of European regeneration based on antimodernism and Evolan Traditionalist beliefs about culture and society. The New Right ideal is one of radical regionalism where homogeneous cultural groupings reflect elitist “natural” Indo European social stratification and order. Since the year 2000 the ideas of the European New Right, with the help of the internet, music producers, and small committed publishing firms, have taken a hold among both European and American Pagans, now branding themselves as “Radical Traditionalists.” As economies and politics become more polarized, there has been a more vigorous engagement between “Radical Traditionalists” and extreme green, separatist and identitarian movements in both the US and Europe. In this presentation I will examine the ways in which “Radical Traditionalism” is becoming the branding mechanism of the New Right within Paganism in both the US and Europe, and the ways in which the New Right is being promoted to esoteric practitioners in general. I will explain the ways in which they employ naturalizing and essentialist discourses to assert separatist political agendas and a return to traditional gender roles and the ways in which these discourses are congruent with other themes and values within particularly contemporary Paganism, such as the focus on nature and indigenaity. Finally, I will explore briefly the ways in which the Pagan New Right is politically

converging with more wide spread right-wing movements such as White Separatism and Third Positionists.

HARARI, YUVAL. *Program of Folklore studies, Dept. of Hebrew Literature, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel.*

A Black Demoness, Angels and a Curse: On a Modern Magic Clay Pot from the Sea of Galilee

A curator and researcher at Ben Zvi Institute in Jerusalem asked me about a year ago whether I would be interested in examining "a clay incantation bowl". The bowl was found on the waters of the Sea of Galilee in 1961 and made its way to the collection of presidential gifts bequeathed by Yitzhak Ben Zvi (the second president of the State of Israel) where it was rediscovered. Upon examining the artifact I found out that it was actually a modern flowerpot on which a harmful spell was engraved for the purpose of cursing a certain woman named Freha daughter of Rahma. A Black demoness (*Shehora*) together with a few angels was sent to carry out this mission and "to remove her blood from inside her". This, then, is concrete evidence of harmful magic activity that, in my estimate, dates to a time not too far from that of the object's finding: the end of the 1950s or the early 1960s.

In my lecture I will introduce the magical clay pot from the Sea of Galilee and deal with three of its contexts: (a) The Middle Eastern tradition of the use of magical vessels; (b) Jewish Tradition of harmful magic; (c) The practice of throwing "magic deeds" into the sea.

HARRINGTON, MELISSA. *King's College London.*

A Discussion of the Effects of Developing the Academic Study of Esotericism, with Particular Reference to Pagan Studies.

In recent years the study of esotericism has become increasingly regarded as worthy of serious academic attention, and scholars have been developing academic approaches to understanding the enduring influence, and cultural significance, of occulture in contemporary society. A fundamental challenge

has been to develop methodologies that are appropriate and sufficient to classify, describe, discuss, analyze and contest contemporary lived esotericism. This has led to a wealth of theory and empirical findings that are little discussed outside of academia, and yet has also created its own complex webs of validation, authenticity, and accepted theoretical paradigms that influence the communities that are studied. This paper explores the development of the theory and methodology of the study of esotericism over the last quarter of a century, with particular reference to the development of Pagan Studies within academia. It also discusses the effects that the academic study of esotericism has on practitioners of the western mystery traditions, and the wider Neo Pagan community.

HEDENBORG-WHITE, MANON. *MA student, History of Religions, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden.*

Towards a Theoretical Framework for the Study of Gender and Contemporary Esotericism

There is a major gap in research on how gender is constructed and intersects with sexuality, power relations and initiatory opportunities in contemporary Western esotericism. This is regrettable, as masculinity and femininity are important notions in esotericism, both in the shape of archetypes and as ideals for male and female adepts, and since relationships between masculinity and femininity are linked to power relations and often inequality. To understand the intersections and interactions between identity, power and sexuality in contemporary esotericism it is necessary to apply gender theory to contextualise and explain how gender and sexuality are constructed. Theories of gender can be used to gain a deeper understanding of how concepts such as sexual polarity and gendered deities can both uphold and subvert the gender order. Furthermore, gendered concepts are dynamic. The study of texts does not sufficiently explain how contemporary adepts view gender and sexuality in relation to their spiritual and magical practice. As is evident from contemporary Thelema, Wicca and Chaos Magic (to name but a few examples), concepts of gender change over time. Thus, esotericism must be studied in lived contexts in order to understand how contemporary adepts problematise and reinterpret gender. This presentation will present a preliminary theoretical framework for the study of gender in contemporary Western esotericism.

HEGNER, VICTORIA. *Institut für Kulturanthropologie/Europäische Ethnologie, Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen, Germany*

Hex and the City: Neopagan Witchcraft and the Practice of Tradition in Berlin

The paper focuses on Neopagan witches in Berlin and the role of tradition and the urban context in forming their identity and a new religion. Through thick description, I will show, that in times where we find national cultural identifications, images and boundaries rapidly to crumble, it appears to be the (post)modern city with its (staged) cultural singularity, that shapes practices of new religions deeply. New religiosities in themselves become an expression of the urban.

Hence, when neo-pagan witches enact, reproduce or deconstruct "their tradition" they intensely reflect on the city, they live in. This is especially mirrored in their distinction between "tradition" and "freestyle" within their practice of witchcraft and the way this kind of dualistic concept is played out and gets manifest in the Berlin context.

KARLSSON, THOMAS. *PhD, History of Religions, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden.*

Modern Grimoires and Talismanic Books: The Role of Books as Fetishes and Counter-cultural Valuables in the Digital Age

The words 'occult' and 'esoteric' imply knowledge that is inaccessible or only achievable after initiations. This rhetoric has long existed in esoteric history, but has become increasingly problematic in our information-driven society. With the internet, one can be flooded with information as never before. Initiation rituals from many of the old magical orders are freely accessible, along with books and previously hard-to-find occult texts. From one perspective, this presents students of the occult with important insights into occult traditions and teachings. However, it has divided the occult milieu.

Where some see an opportunity to get access to information, others see a levelling and reduction of the value of the information. According to the last view, the very spirit of esotericism is the mystique, and it should take effort to attain knowledge. In response to the accessibility of internet information, more and more esoteric publishers and occult orders prefer to avoid the internet or use it only minimally. Instead of responding to the accessibility with more accessibility, many have chosen the opposite strategy: producing extremely limited editions of magical texts, often very expensive and with expanded enticements such as signatures, handmade drawings, specially-bound copies and claims that there are secret books within the book in question. Quite often this strategy is combined with the use of internet sites offering free materials. The reaction on the internet often reflects the now-common familiarity with the internet and its possibilities.

This paper will map the contemporary strategy in the occult milieu, where books are made into grimoires and bibliophile fetishes as a way to respond to the perceived reduction of esoteric values in the internet age.

KARLSSON-WEIMANN, CARL. *BA student, History of Religions, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden.*

Is Black and Death Metal Esoteric in Itself?

Black and Death metal music is connected to a satanic imagery. Elements of Western esotericism, of the kind on which Faivre's definition from 1992 would be applicable, are also frequently used as influences. Esotericism is practised either individually or in esoteric societies. This affects the overall sense of seriousness within the scene.

Kocku von Stuckrad makes a distinction between "esotericism" and "the esoteric". "Esotericism" is then the tradition and doctrine, in Black and Death metal dealt with in lyrics and imagery, "the esoteric" is a social construct depending on the claims to higher knowledge and the availability of it. I am interested in how the Black and Death metal scene is esoteric in itself. How do you talk about the religious and magic aspects of the music? How does the discourse about the esoteric work within the scene and how is it communicated to others? Is it possible to regard the Black and Death metal scene as having both an esoteric and an exoteric side? How can this be studied?

In my paper I will investigate how Black and Death metal is a contemporary outlet for esoteric thought and harbourer of esotericism as a cultural and historical heritage.

KENNEY, JAMES SCOTT. *Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Memorial University, St. John's, NL, Canada.*

Freemasons Today: Thematic Claims of Life Changes since Becoming a Mason

Despite increased attention to Freemasonry in popular culture and academia, the former tends to play to pervasive stereotypes for public consumption; the latter to emphasize historical and philological matters. Indeed, to the limited extent a sociological focus exists, it stresses the roles played by the Craft in social history. Largely missing has been study of the *contemporary* meaning of participation for members themselves.

In this paper, I begin addressing this theoretical and empirical neglect. With reference to the symbolic interactionist literature, I draw upon qualitative data from 121 Freemasons in two Canadian provinces to outline typical claims about the life changes, if any, that members feel have resulted from their Masonic activities. After first addressing claims as to whether there have been changes or not, I move on to consider various developments claimed in respondents' lives, most notably those related to: (1) expanded social contacts and (2) the multifaceted experience of a brotherhood. Lastly, I critically outline typical impacts on respondents' character and abilities, specifically their claims relating to: (1) general morality; (2) tolerance; (3) altruism (4) confidence; (5) memory; and (6) inquisitiveness into the esoteric.

KINGSEPP, EVA. *Senior lecturer, dept. of Journalism, Media and Communication (JMK), Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden.*

The Power of the Black Sun: (Oc)cultural Perspectives on SS Esotericism

This paper will deal with different meanings – esoteric, ideological, popular – appointed to the Black Sun symbol, a floor mosaic in Wewelsburg Castle, the spiritual centre of Heinrich Himmler's SS. Despite – or owing to – lack of

documentation concerning its original meaning, the symbol has during the last decades become established as a token of SS esotericism both in popular culture and in the Nazi movement. While there are a plethora of crypto-historical accounts about the Black Sun, not the least on the internet, the academic interest is usually restricted to the ideological and political functions of the Wewelsburg itself. Exceptions are most notably Rüdiger Süner (1999) and Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (2003). However, the Black Sun is seldom put into a perspective in which the meanings of the symbol as a cultural artefact in practical use are being examined.

Based in the tradition of cultural studies, this paper examines the discursive relations between occulture and official memory culture, with the Black Sun as the pivotal point. As the paper will show, there is a continuous battle over meaning, although this is – interestingly enough – only rarely transgressing the boundaries between the different discursive fields.

KWANTES, GEMMA. *PhD Candidate, Religious Studies, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.*

Bnei Baruch vs. “Mainstream” Jewish Religiosity

In his most recent book, Wouter Hanegraaff primarily characterizes Western Esotericism as a waste basket category. What defines the phenomena that land in this category, is their polemically *being constructed* – rather than constructing themselves – as an “other” of mainstream religiosity. What this implies, is that the esoteric movements in their own understanding do maintain a relationship with this mainstream/normative religion. Operating on an international scale and depending in the national context, Bnei Baruch is ignored, criticized or treated with considerable ambivalence by representatives of mainstream Judaism. The organization itself too retains an ambivalent relationship to the various forms of – though primarily Israeli – mainstream Judaism. In this paper I would like to examine this relationship. I will afford special attention to Bnei Baruch's international profiling using the results my primarily e-anthropological research has yielded. Implicitly I use Bnei Baruch as a test-case; to determine whether Hanegraaff's model, inspired on developments within Christian medieval and (early) modern Europe can in principle be transported to a contemporary Jewish context.

LAUFENBERG, GEORGE. *PhD Candidate, Department of Anthropology, Princeton University.*

The Metaphysics of Licensure: Clinical Boundaries and Sacred Teachings in US College Mental Health Care

One of the underexplored dimensions of contemporary esotericism is the tension between secrecy inherent in the very notion of an esoteric tradition on the one hand and, on the other hand, the means by which those traditions are transmitted and reproduced under late capital. My work engages multiple esoteric practices—forms of Native American religion and metaphysical group-work with ties to Western European Hermetic traditions—as they circulate through the professional and spiritual lives of a network U.S. mental health professionals. Recent scholarship seeks to understand diverse modes of ‘American Metaphysical Religion’ as sharing orientation toward unmediated spiritual experience. I draw on this, as well as notions of ‘demarcation’ (developed within the fields of Science, Technology & Society as well as the Sociology of Scientific knowledge to examine the ways in which practitioners of science police the boundaries of their field) and anthropological investigations of the epistemology of so-called ‘Complimentary and Alternative Medicine/Integrative Medicine’ (CAM/IM) to engage with the ways my interlocutors instantiate, police, and transgress boundaries—between self and other; secret and public; clinic and ceremony—as they create shared sacred experiential ‘space’ in which to teach, learn, share, and protect what they call “wisdom traditions.”

LIEBERMAN-AVITAL, LITAL. *PhD Candidate, Dept. of Hebrew Literature, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva, Israel.*

“Healing by Salt”: Traditional Feminine Magical Practice in a New and Renewing Environment

In present day Israel traditional Jewish magical practices are being performed, adjusted to the circumstances of the new time and place.

My presentation will focus on one such practice called “healing by salts”, performed by Jewish women of North African origins. This practice is related to the belief in the “Evil Eye” that had a central role in North African Jewish culture. The practice is aimed at exposing “Eyes” that brought on

predicaments, removing them from the affected person and healing him. It is characterized by a multiplicity of elements such as chanting of spells and holy names, use of symbolic elements and different substances. A crucial tier in the hierarchy of this practice is the performer – the healer. Therefore, in most cases, the practice is performed by an expert healer. This practice is usually done by older women, at home, mostly for the healing of their children and grandchildren.

"Healing by salt", as other cultural products like literature, music and art, reflects a wide socio-cultural system. It reflects language, values, social structures, social roles and religious beliefs. In Israel, where the practice was imported to by North African immigrants, it continues to exist, though changed and adjusted to the new surroundings. The socio-cultural system reflected in the practice's original form is not identical to the socio-cultural system existing in Israel. The transition to a new environment is clearly evident in the ceremony's components.

In my talk I will introduce the technique and its original Jewish-North African context and then attempt to examine the ways in which this practice encounters the New Age discourse, which has become central in present day Israel.

LINDE, FABIAN. *PhD Candidate, Slavic studies, Stockholm University.*

The Occult Roots of Duginism: Political Esotericism in the Context of Weimar Russia

The paper takes the established analogy between Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia as a starting point for examining the psychosocial grounding of Alexander Dugin's Neo-Eurasianism. It is hardly a coincidence that the esoteric doctrines to which Dugin is drawn, Traditionalism and proto-nazi occultism, were largely produced in a social and psychological environment that in more the one sense resembles the post-Soviet experience of ideological uncertainty, economic turmoil and social transformation. It is argued that an elaboration of the analogy with an examination of popular sentiments prevalent in both contexts, such as the sense of betrayal, romantic nostalgia for a bygone social order, and xenophobia, can facilitate a better understanding of the emotional basis of Dugin's doctrine. The prevalence in Russian society of similar sentiments, on which his doctrine feeds and to

which it appeals, may also help to explain Dugin's progress from being a countercultural dissident to a more established conservative with a prominent position in the academy. Last but not least, the analogy can help to illuminate some aspects of Dugin's political esotericism, such as the notion of occult warfare, 'conspirology,' the metaphysics of geopolitical strife and the ontologization of cultural difference.

MAGUS, SIMON. *Graduate Student, EXESES0, University of Exeter.*

Austin Osman Spare and the Conquest of the Imaginal: Magic, Madness, Phenomenology and the Esoteric

The development of the academic field of Western esotericism has been dominated by a focus on historiography and its associated methodology. This paper employs the psycho-spiritual magical philosophy of the Late Victorian /Edwardian occultist Austin Osman Spare as a springboard to analyse the possibilities of a phenomenological approach to Western esotericism. It reprises the understanding of esotericism as originally formulated under Antoine Faivre's rubric of a 'mode of thought.'

It posits that a comparison of the terminology of esotericism with that of phenomenology may also engender a greater understanding of descriptive psychopathology as applied to mental illness. Thus esotericism has the possibility of providing very real insights into 'madness' as a component of the human condition.

Antoine Faivre's criteria of esotericism have been criticised as providing a 'tick box' approach to what constitutes esoteric literature. However, such a syndromal approach is fundamental to medical diagnosis. If esotericism is considered as a mode of thought, then - from a phenomenological perspective - this approach is entirely appropriate.

This paper will compare and contrast the 'paranoid' and 'magical' mindsets, and examine commonalities and differences.

MARLOW, MICHAEL. *MA, History of Religions, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden.*

Interviewing Contemporary Mystics: Non-ordinary Methods for Non-ordinary Informants.

In my fieldwork on neo-exorcists (contemporary exorcists acting outside organized religious communities) I had to adapt my interviewing methods to catch their alternative ways of perceptions. How do you translate into words the invisible worlds of spiritual beings to be able to perceive what they see? My solution was to borrow methods from psychoanalysis, a discipline that tries to visualize the invisible unconscious.

With quasi-experimental stimuli (e.g. audio recordings of cases of possession) as triggers some of them entered altered states of consciousness during the interviews and intuitive responses to my questions evolved. By asking informants to comment documentary films as non-formulated questions part of my pre-understandings were avoided. New dimensions of the informants appeared that I would not have been able to bring forth with my ordinary question techniques.

I will discuss how mystical perception seems to evolve in several stages, processed between the unconscious and conscious mind. Examples will also elicit how the discursive symbols of mystical phenomena have changed from church paintings and biblical stories to mainstream popular culture, e.g. Hollywood and TV. The contemporary Western mystic is “beamed up” by Scotty, not climbing Jacob’s ladder, to reach heaven.

MONDAL, ALAUDDIN. *Assistant Professor, Dept. of Bengali, Assam University, Silchar, India.*

Esotericism in Sufism and its Impacts on the Bauls of Bengal.

It is interesting to note that before reaching Bengal the Sufis incorporated certain yogic and tantric practices into their repertory of teachings, but this addition did not fundamentally alter the character of existing Sufi practices. Sufism in Bengal manifested itself in two spheres, one in the esoteric discourse, another in the tradition of the mendicant singers. Bauls are the mendicant singers and at the same time are esoteric with metaphoric riddles

and enigmas. Only the *Gurus* or *Murshid* could unravel the hidden meanings of their metaphors. The Sufi Darbeshes also use encoded language to preach their ways of meditation. The religion of Bauls is based on an expression of the body (Deho Sadhana), and an expression of the mind (Mana Sadhana). Some of their rituals are kept hidden from outsiders, as they might be thought to be repulsive or hedonism. Though Bauls comprise a small fraction of the Bengali population, their influence on the culture of Bengal is considerable. The social offerings of esotericism are profoundly exercised through their mystic energies which have been mostly inherited from Sufi Islam.

OTTO, BERNDT-CHRISTIAN. *Postdoctoral researcher, Religious Studies (Religionswissenschaft), University of Erfurt.*

Chaos Semantics: “Magical” Meanings in the 20th and 21st Century

‘Magic’ was a crucial concept for towering figures of Western esotericism such as Marsilio Ficino or Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and has therefore also been an important topic in the Study of Western Esotericism. However, recently important scholars of this field of research have suggested to give up the search for a coherent definition of ‘magic’ as a scholarly category but instead to historicize the very concept (Pasi 2008, Hanegraaff 2012, von Stuckrad 2012) – an approach that was the main agenda of my recently published PhD dissertation (Otto 2011). In line with this approach, this paper intends to address the issues raised by this year’s call for papers (“Contemporary Esotericism”) by reflecting on the conceptual history of ‘magic’ in the 20th and 21st century. As a starting point, it will put forth the hypothesis that the discursive use of the concept of ‘magic’ has changed dramatically over the last century: while the term has been predominantly applied as a marker of alterity, of dangerous, immoral, blasphemous, illicit, or superstitious rites and beliefs throughout most of Western history, it contains today mostly positive connotations which can be used in sports journalism (e.g. *Magic Johnson*), advertisements (e.g. Google’s mobile phone *HTC Magic*), in fantasy literature and its various multimedia realizations and, finally, in many facets of contemporary esotericism and new religious movements. This has resulted in a polyfocal semantic field and the almost random application of the concept in a multiplicity of contexts and meanings. The

paper will reflect on this observation in a two-fold manner: on the one hand it aims at reconstructing important stages of this development in the 20th century by identifying authors and texts which might have contributed to this perplexing shift in the conceptual history of 'magic'. On the other hand it will interpret the concept of 'magic' itself as a "functional tool" (Styers 2004) and ask for the underlying motives and themes of its application in contemporary discourses.

PETERSEN, JESPER AA. *Associate Professor, Department for Teacher Education, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).*

Bracketing Beelzebub: Satanism Studies and/as Boundary Work

The research subject of modern Satanism is intertwined with both cultural narratives of the satanic and self-ascribed satanic discourses articulated by groups and actors in the satanic milieu. As such, the field of Satanism studies is based upon the critical examination of the satanic in a variety of cultural contexts, stretching from the religious to the secular and from identities of alterity to imaginations of the other. Consequently we have to be attentive to expectations and tacit beliefs fed by popular culture and Christian mythology, but also to the struggles for hegemony between satanic actors who construct Satanism in specific ways.

The paper will discuss these issues of bracketing or boundary work from two angles, a methodological and a historical. In the historical mode, the development of the academic representation of Satanism is in focus. Through a series of reinterpretations of semi-cyclical nature, the scholarly understanding of Satanism has evolved in stages of de-demonization, sanitization, and heterogenization, all of which are intertwined with cultural stereotypes and insider claims. Parallel to that, the methodological discussion targets two aspects. First, we have to bracket both faith-based and secular stereotypes of Satanism to see the diversity of the satanic milieu in its own right. This is of course nothing unique. A common methodological exercise in religious studies is to manage inside and outside points of view, frequently advocated through the "emic" and "etic" approaches. Second, following the definitional strategies of Joachim Schmidt and others, we also have to demarcate "religious" Satanism on the one hand and "reactive"

Satanism on the other based on the relative sophistication of world-view and discursive practice. This boundary is helpful when the religious aspect of self-ascribed Satanism is paramount as compared to adolescent identity work or public performance.

Nevertheless, it is more difficult than it seems, as such double-edged boundary work demarcates a scale of significance, where the gory imaginations of the public and hapless tourists in the milieu are on one end and the “mature” religious Satanists are on the other. However, it is exactly those terms which are contested and in flux. In the case of Satanism, the same imagery and practices of transgression and antinomianism are utilized by both reactive and religious Satanists, frequently by appropriating cultural stereotypes. In consequence, we as researchers might reproduce emic boundaries as academic blind spots. Sometimes there is more to stereotypes than we acknowledge as ethnographers.

PODOLECKA-NIEWDANA, AGNIESZKA. *PhD Candidate, University of Warsaw, Poland.*

South African New Age as a Conglomerate of Western and African Philosophies

When we think about Western esotericism we generally focus on Europe and USA. But down there on the map, on the other end of the world, there is an African country which is more European than African in terms of esotericism – Republic of South Africa. Torn by apartheid for many years, now faces an incredible boom of new esoteric movements.

I lived in South Africa for 2,5 years and I participated in New Age life there. It was an excellent opportunity to do a field study. I meditated with New Agers, took part in neo-shamanic workshops and I could see how neopaganism was entering westernised society. I could observe how confused contemporary South Africans are, both ex-colonialists and native Africans. The collapse of apartheid caused the withdrawal from Reformed Dutch Church, which supported regime, and a great need of finding new spirituality that would somehow combine traditional beliefs with Christianity and with 21st century’s need of secularisation. There was also a great need of mutual understanding and learning from each other which resulted in studying traditional religions and incorporating them to western

life. This way New Age has become socially grounded in culturally diverse South Africa.

New Age as an official social movement was introduced to South Africa in a moment of social turmoil, especially in black townships. On 11th November 1989 (Armistice Day) and 12th November 1989 (Remembrance Day) the Mere of Cape Town Gordon Oliver took part in an event of placing two aluminium poles on the Table Mountain, one of the symbols of the country, to remind people of the many ways of love and forgiveness. He openly stated that it was a New Age movement (exactly Movement for Peace through Prayer) which proposed to make this “Energy Centre” in the respect for all religions and ideologies. Since that day many new esoteric and spiritual events have taken place there. The mountain once sacred for Africans has become a sacred place for New Agers of all skin colours and backgrounds.

I would like to present this specific combination of new Western esotericism and indigenous African spirituality and strong New Age communities in South Africa. I would also like to show how UFO ideology is combined with African beliefs in the ideology of extra-terrestrial life.

RADERMACHER, DANIEL. *PhD Candidate, Religion, University of Münster, Germany.*

Aspects of Contemporary Esotericism: The Environmental Movement, Eco-Spirituality, and Consumer Culture

Contemporary esotericism is observable in eco-spirituality which provides concepts underpinning parts of the environmental movement and mainstream consumer culture. This paper will draw attention to underlying eco-spiritual concepts as they become manifest in both these discursive arenas looking at specific examples.

The starting point of the paper will be one of the founding manifestos of environmental concern: Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, first published in 1962. Beginning with an ecological end time scenario, this book is widely understood to have triggered the movements of environmental concern of the following decades.

Today, civic interest groups such as those opposing “Stuttgart 21” (a controversial development project in Stuttgart, Germany) willingly incorporate eco-spiritual concepts when arguing for a preservation of nature, especially of trees and green spaces in urban areas. Additionally, if we look at the prospering segment of organic foods and products, we may notice mutual reinforcements of notions like “organic” and “spiritual.” The way is paved for the esoteric to enter contemporary consumer culture in the guise of the eco-spiritual.

The paper also intends to scrutinize the easternization thesis (Campbell) as an explanation of the prospering of eco-spiritual concepts in the environmental movement and consumer culture by hinting at European predecessors of eco-spiritual notions.

RAMSTEDT, TOMMY. *Doctoral student, Department of Comparative Religion, Åbo Akademi University, Åbo, Finland.*

Nationalism and Interest in National Heritage within the Alternative Spiritual Milieu in Finland

Many Western societies have in recent years witnessed a rise of right-wing political parties, anti-immigrant sentiments and increased interest in the own national heritage and “traditional cultural values”. The 2011 Finnish parliamentary elections was the greatest success ever for the populist-nationalist party *The True Finns*. This paper explores the increased visibility of nationalistic tendencies in the alternative spiritual milieu in Finland. Alternative spirituality consists of a wide range of beliefs and practices, such as communication with aliens and angels, sacralization of nature, novel interpretations of eastern philosophies and alternative views of history. This kind of spirituality is also highly subjective and eclectic in its nature. The Finnish esoteric magazine *The Hermetic* regards the mythical pre-history of Finland as highly significant and has also expressed worries about the immigration of people from Muslim countries. In 2011 a book called *The Lost Kingdom of the Ancient Finns* won the prize for the best book of the year in the field of “border-knowledge”, implying a more widespread interest in a mythical past and national heritage within the contemporary Finnish alternative spiritual milieu.

ROBERTSON, VENETIA LAURA DELANO. *Postgraduate student, Department of Studies in Religion, University of Sydney*

The Self as ‘Other’: Non-Human Ontologies in Online Communities

For decades now the internet has functioned as a hub for ‘popular occulture,’ that is, the merging of magic, mysticism and the media. Cyberspace is, therefore, an ideal environment for the development of ‘otherworldly’ or supernatural identities. In this paper, I will introduce and discuss a number of socio-spiritual online communities (such as the Otherkin, Therianthropy, and modern Vampires) that have formed on the basis of these alternative ‘other-than-human’ ontologies. Focusing on the Therianthropy movement, populated by individuals who believe they are humans with animal souls, I will explore how a variety of notions from fantasy literature, popular culture, paganism, shamanism, Eastern religions, and gnostic and esoteric groups have been used by Therianthropes to articulate a sacred self.

Drawn from my own 12 month study of the Therianthropy, Otherkin and Vampire communities, and work in this area from Joseph Laycock (Boston University) and Danielle Kirby (University of Queensland), this paper will also look at some of the ethnographic difficulties inherent in an analysis of unconventional spiritual identities, particularly those that intentionally blur the boundaries of fantasy and fiction, and which are expressed almost exclusively through the ephemeral medium of the internet.

ROSTAD, ASLAK. *Research Fellow, University of Bergen, Norway.*

Contemporary Fraternalism in Norway as Moral Elitism

Based on articles from the membership publications of The Order of Odd Fellows and The Order of Druids this paper will discuss the self-image of esoteric and fraternal organisations in contemporary Norway as it is expressed in their internal discourse. I claim that these organisations primarily regard themselves as guardians of what they believe are true Norwegian moral values, and that their ideology is characterized by three closely related aspects: *a parallel cultural*, *a non-sectarian* and *a moral elitist*. By the *parallel cultural* aspect I mean the fraternities’ habit of describing the Norwegian society as marked by moral decay, loss of traditions, conflicts, materialism and egocentrism, while the order and the lodge is regarded as a

sphere of true values, absolute moral demands, community, tradition, absence of conflict etc. However, it is vital for Norwegian fraternal organisations to emphasise that the values they protect are the true values of the same society they consider to be decaying. This is what I call the *non-sectarian aspect* of their ideology. Membership in a fraternal organisation is consequently not thought to be inconsistent with being a citizen of the Norwegian society, which include participation in traditional and mainstream religiosity. On the contrary, through initiations members of fraternal organizations are thought to receive moral insights which enhance their ability to fulfil their obligations to society and be moral examples to the uninitiated. This is what I call the *moral elitist aspect*.

SANTOS SILVA, FRANCESCO. *Postdoctoral researcher, University of Lisbon, Portugal.*

Jorge Ben Jor and Raul Seixas: Two Brazilian Esotericist pop-musicians in the 1970s

Despite being identified as an overwhelmingly Catholic country, Brazil has always been a country of syncretic religion, which has left its mind open to new religious ideas and to a very particular fluidity of belief. The same is true of esoteric ideas, which have found fertile ground in Brazil, particularly in the second half of the 20th century. In this paper I will be taking two quite famous examples of Brazilian musicians dealing with esoteric themes and, at least in the case of Seixas, personally involved in Esoteric practice. The first of these is Jorge Ben Jor, who is most famous outside of Brazil, as the creator of "Mas que Nada" a song covered by the Black Eyed Peas and also as the composer of the song "Taj Mahal" which was the basis for Rod Stewart's "Do You think I'm Sexy". However, in the early to mid 70s the esoteric slant of his music starts to be noticeable with albums entitled "Tábua de Esmeralda" (Emerald Tablet) where the title song consists of the word of that hermetic text, or songs with the title "Os Alquimistas Estão Chegando" (The Alchemists are Coming). While Jorge Ben was a more of a theoretical hermeticist, Raul Seixas was much more overtly not only an esotericist but particularly a Thelemite, known in Brazil as the "Father of Brazilian Rock" and famous enough to have a parade in his honor every year in downtown São Paulo, joined Marcelo Motta's OTO with his co-songwriter and now major bestselling author Paulo Coelho, taking into hands the mission of

creating a new society which he entitled "Sociedade Alternativa" (Alternative Society) based on the ideals in Crowley's *Liber OZ*, therefore many of his songs are concerned with this subject, to the point of having a fully sung version of *Liber OZ* in Portuguese in one of his albums. What is interesting to explore here, but which there is no space to go into in this abstract, is how these ideas relate to the socio-political situation in Brazil in the 70s, under a military dictatorship, both Seixas' and Jorge Ben's music represent ideals of freedom and escapism under the guise of esoteric themes.

SENHOLT, JACOB C. *PhD Candidate, University of Aarhus, Denmark.*

Right Wing Heretics: Esoteric Discourse and Structure in the Identity Politics of the Pagan European Right

Usually the European Right is associated with the idea of wanting to defend 'European' or 'national' values, including religion, tradition and heritage. Such religious heritage is usually and implicitly thought of as Christian, and it is often this heritage that populist right wing parties refer to when they discursively try to create an opposition to Islam and other 'non-European' religions. However there exists a vibrant undercurrent of right wing identity politics that challenges what is perceived to be a secular-Christian regime of modernity. According to the network of intellectuals labelled the European New Right, with leading ideologues such as Alain de Benoist, and its precursors such as the radical traditionalist and esotericist Julius Evola, Christianity lies at the root of the 'malaise of modernity'. Christianity is accused of, through its ideals of egalitarianism and universalism, to have laid the foundations of modern secular society, in which individual human rights are placed above any idea of nations and national cultural and religious identity. They envision a return to a pre-Christian, Indo-European regime, fusing ideas of paganism, with political visions and ambitions, drawing on thoughts already present in the counter-enlightenment and national-romanticism of the previous centuries.

This paper will explore this undercurrent of thought, highlighting a few examples of how the 'memory of paganism' is used to create a new political vision of European identity politics opposed to modernity, and how this vision contains numerous structural and discursive similarities to the idea of a self-proclaimed 'other' found among contemporary esotericists, making the Right the self-proclaimed 'heretics' of today.

SIEG, GEORGE. *Lecturer, University of New Mexico.*

Left, Right, and Sinister: The Challenge of Terminological Dyslexia

Since the Theosophical construction of the Right-Hand Path/Left-Hand Path dichotomy in the modern occult revival, associated dualisms have become a feature of many modern and contemporary esoteric and occult groups. Originally the designation “Left-Hand Path” appeared to be pejorative in modern occultism; later, it was rehabilitated as an emic self-description, predominantly and initially by the Temple of Set (probably better classified as an esoteric religion than an occult movement). Since then, various esoteric and occult groups have applied the term as a positive emic self-description, while others (predominantly, emically self-described “Right-Hand Path” groups) have continued to use it as a pejorative. However, in milieus such as chaos magic, and other post-modern esoteric movements that either are (or claim to be) non-dualistic, the terms are either *rejected* as having any etic (or even emic) value, or re-appropriated as equally valid *etic* designations of various religions and paths.

These conditions present terminological uncertainty for scholars classifying the relationships between contemporary esoteric and occult groups, whether religious or otherwise – particularly when some self-described Left-Hand Path groups (such as the “sinister” movements) assert that the Left-Hand Path is by definition irreligious. This presentation attempts an etic examination of these concepts in contemporary esotericism.

SUDHÖLTER, JUDITH. *Research MA student, University of Amsterdam.*

The Entheogenic Experience of Dutch Santo Daime Members: Construction and Deconstruction of Esoteric Belief Systems in Lived Religion

An often neglected dimension in the study of contemporary esotericism is the use of entheogens; psychoactive substances which are supposed to provoke an experience of the divine within. I investigated how Dutch members of the Santo Daime church – which originated in the 1930s in Brazil - experience the influence of their sacrament ‘Daime’, a psychoactive brew also known as ayahuasca.

I will show how the anthropological method of participant observation and ethnographic interview techniques contribute to our understanding of the ways in which (esoteric) belief systems function in lived religion. Not only will I clarify from which major religious narratives (i.e. particular strains of New Age, esotericism, (neo)shamanism, and Catholicism) Santo Daime members draw, but mainly how ritual and bodily sensations contribute to the formulation, maintenance and re-interpretation of these religious doctrines.

I will argue that preliminary ideas partly structure the way people experience, interpret and relate the influence of Daime. On the other hand I will show how participants' formulations of their experiences reflect a tendency to transcend these same ideas, and belief systems in general. I will argue that the specific dynamics of the entheogenic experience itself is reflected in the participants' continuous alternation between construction and deconstruction of worldviews. Related to this, I will elaborate on different ways by which the multi-layeredness of the entheogenic experience could be approached by scholars.

TILTON, HERWARD. *Lecturer, Exeter Centre for the Study of Esotericism University of Exeter.*

Discord and Desecration at Esoteric Glastonbury: The Long Shadows of the English Reformation

The destruction in 2010-2011 of the winter-flowering thorn upon Wearyall Hill evokes a long history of conflict and iconoclasm at Glastonbury, an eminent English site of religious pilgrimage and the focal point for a variety of neo-pagan, New Age and heterodox Christian groups. Whilst the perpetrators of this latest act of desecration are unknown, historically the persistence of the medieval cult of relics at Glastonbury has been met with a marked ambivalence from Christian quarters. Centred upon the legends of the Holy Grail, the Holy Chalice and the Glastonbury Thorn, this cult has coincided with the history of Western esotericism proper since at least the mid-seventeenth century. At that time folk tradition associated a relic holding the blood of Christ with Dee and Kelley's elixir, which according to an account related by Ashmole was unearthed in the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey. During the eighteenth century pilgrims were still removing fragments of masonry from the alleged former site of this apparently

legendary relic, and the nearby waters of the Chalice Well achieved brief renown for their healing powers; it was in this period, too, that antiquarians first identified Glastonbury as an ancient centre of Druidism, the British *prisca theologia*, a notion that merged with Reformation discourse asserting the primacy of a primitive British Church. The full flowering of esoteric Glastonbury took place in the early twentieth century with the return to prominence of the Chalice Well and the work of “Avalonians” such as Frederick Bligh Bond and Dion Fortune, the most immediate precursors to the “alternative spirituality” of today’s Glastonbury. My purpose in this talk will be to cast light upon the historical relationship of esotericism at Glastonbury to the English confessional landscape, and in particular to that dialectic of desacralization and resacralization associated with competing strains of Christian thought both within and beyond the Anglican Church in the course of the so-called Long Reformation.

WOODMAN, JUSTIN. *Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, Goldsmiths College, University of London.*

The MiBs and the Migo: Lovecraftian Paranormalism, Esoteric Ufology, and Ultraterrestrial Demonologies

This paper explores the role played by the work of ‘pulp’ science-fiction/horror writer H.P. Lovecraft in the shaping of ‘esoteric’ ufology.

Speculating upon the influence of such tales as Lovecraft’s ‘The Whisperer in Darkness’ upon modern ufological mythologies (particularly in the writings of Alfred Bender and Gray Barker, whose work gave rise to the mythology of ‘the Men in Black’ and to later quasi-occult or esoteric interpretations of ufology), the paper examines aspects of contemporary ufology as participating in a broader field of the ‘Lovecraftian Paranormal’ to demonstrate the profound influence of ‘pulp’ science fiction on a range of contemporary esoteric and paranormal beliefs.

In turn, the paper seeks to demonstrate the salience of Lovecraft’s work as a secular mythology fusing science and the supernatural in ways congruent with a wider set of cultural transformations in the fields of religion, the paranormal and esotericism. In particular, the paper examines Lovecraft’s influence upon popular culture and occulture by analysing ways in which contemporary ufological discourse is undergoing a key conceptual shift:

from an understanding UFOs as a material, extraterrestrial phenomenon toward an esoteric interpretation of UFOs as a 'post-secular' demonology involving interdimensional and 'ultraterrestrial' entities.

EXTRA PROGRAMME

Walking Tour of Occult Stockholm, with Dr. Thomas Karlsson

After the roundtable discussion and the official end of the conference there will be opportunity to partake in a walking tour highlighting the recent occult history of Stockholm from the 1980s to the present day. The tour will be directed by Dr. Thomas Karlsson, the foremost expert on the subject.

Those participating in the tour will meet up by the registration table and head out to the University metro station after the roundtable discussion and conclusion at 15:00.

No pre-registration for the occult walk is required. However, for the last part of the walk we will head for the Temple of the magic order Dragon Rouge, and as the space is limited we ask you to let us know if you wish to partake of this last step of the walk. First come, first served.

NOTE!

Bring you public transport travel card or ticket, as we will be using metro and/or buses.

LUNCHESES

Lunch will be served at the student restaurant *Lantis*, located on the campus area (see map). Vegetarian options are available.

There are also a number of other lunch venues on the Stockholm University campus for those who wish to explore other opportunities.

Lunches are not included in the conference fee, and have to be paid individually at the lunch-restaurant. Price for lunch at *Lantis*: 79 SEK. Bring cash in Swedish crowns.

COFFE BREAKS

Coffee, tea, and snacks will be served by the registration table in the F-house during the breaks, and are included in the conference fee.

CONFERENCE DINNER

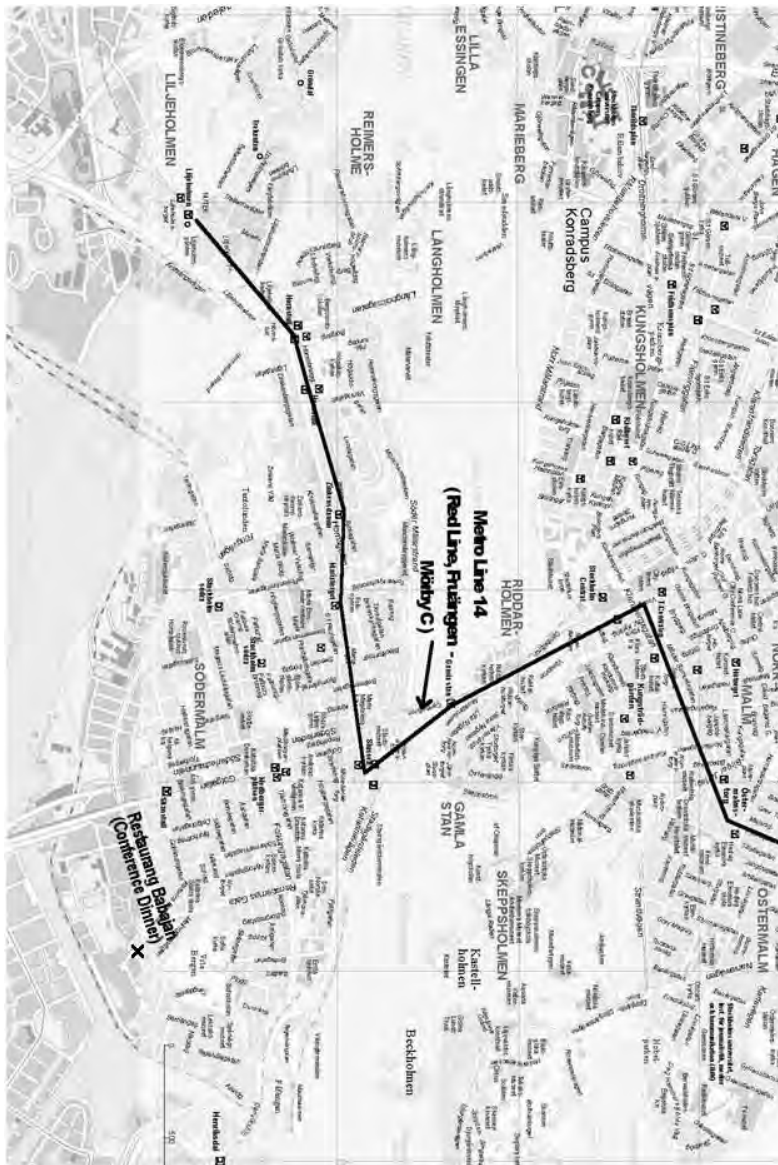
The conference dinner, consisting of a vegetarian meze-buffet, will be held at *Restaurang Babajan* on Tuesday August 28, from 19:00 onwards. The dinner is estimated to cost around 250 SEK (more detailed information will be available later). Drinks are extra.

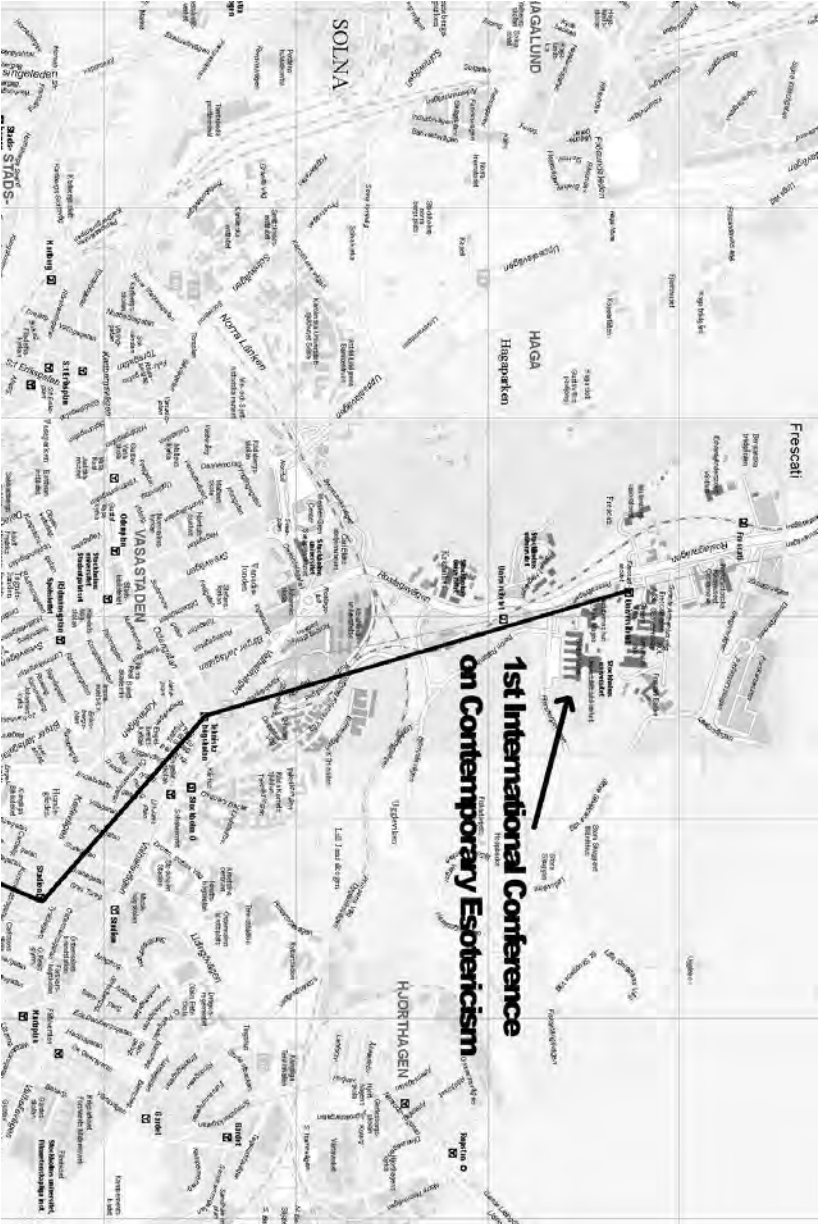
Preregistration **before August 14** is required. However, depending on the number of preregistered dinner guests, there might be a limited number of places available for late registrants.

To get to the restaurant, take the metro to *Skanstull* (Green metro line, towards *Hagsätra*, *Farsta Strand*, or *Skarpnäck*), get off at the exit marked *Ringvägen*, and walk 800 meters to the restaurant (see map). Alternatively you can take bus no. 76 from *Slussen* and get off at the stop *Ljusterögatan*, right across the restaurant (see map). Timetable for Bus no. 76: <http://sl.se/ficktid/vinter/v76.pdf>

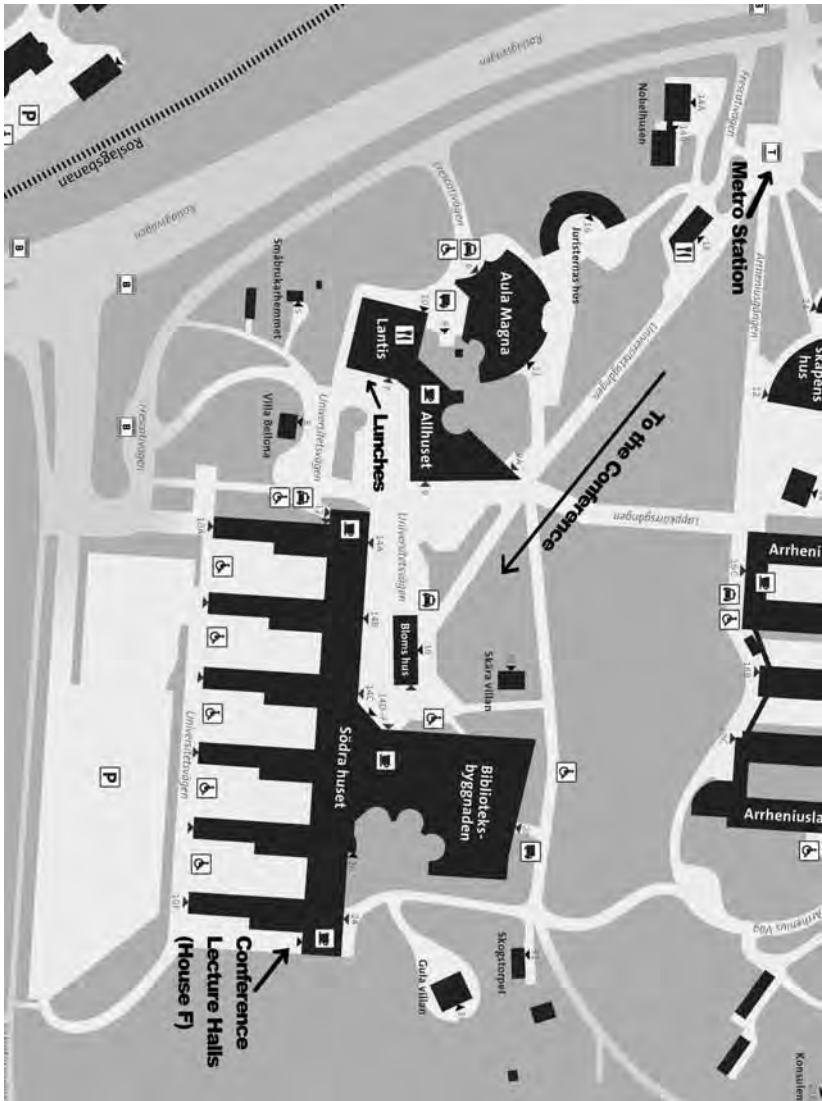
MAPS

Stockholm Inner city; Conference venue and key metro line marked



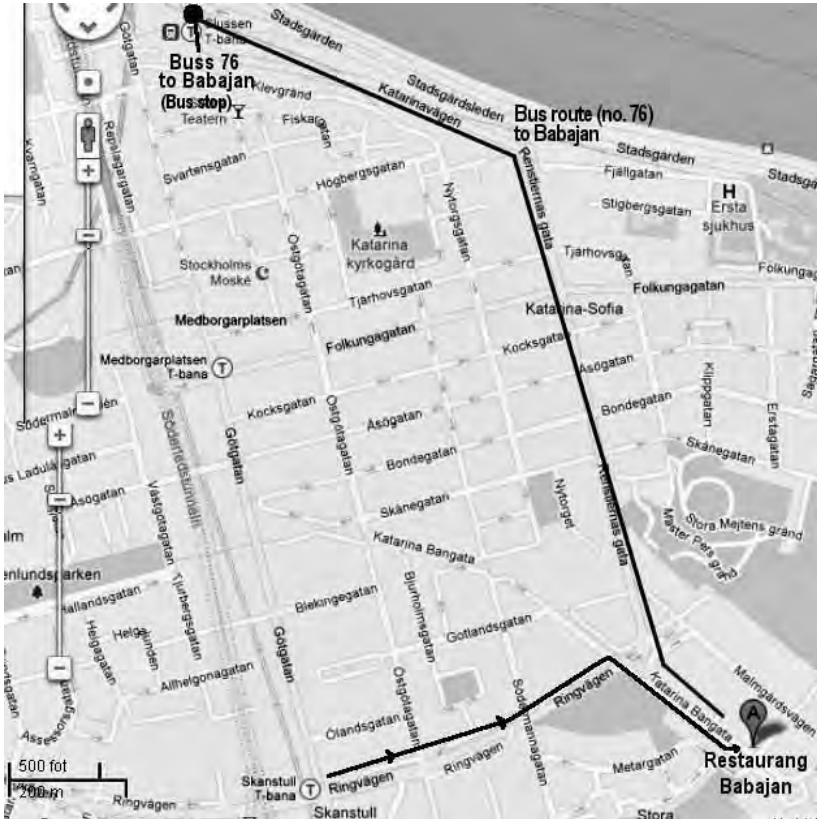


Stockholm University campus; Metro station and Conference venue marked

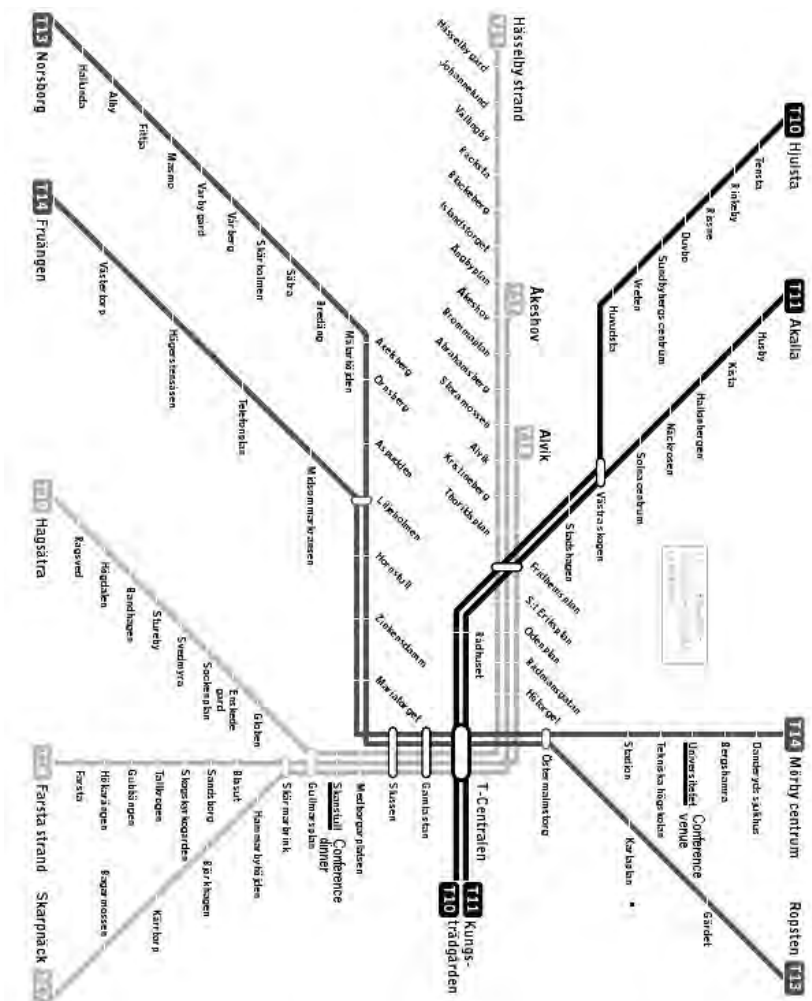


Conference Dinner, Restaurang Babajan

Walking Route from the Skanstull metro station as well as starting point and route for Bus no. 76 marked



Stockholm Metro Map. Stops for Conference venue and Conference dinner marked.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Getting to Stockholm from the Airport

The Stockholm region has several airports, the largest of which is Arlanda Airport. The other airports in the region are the Bromma, Skavsta, and Västerås airports. The *Flygbussarna* coach service operates on all airports. In addition Arlanda Airport has the *Arlanda Express* train service, which is more expensive than the coach but will get you to the city centre in 20 minutes. Taxis operate on all airports, usually with set prices for travel to the city centre.

The airport coach service (timetables and prices):

<http://www.flygbussarna.se/?lang=EN>

The Arlanda Express train service (timetables and prices):

<http://www.arlandaexpress.com/default.aspx?page=3&=>

Public Transportation

The easiest way to get to and from the conference venue is to take the metro, red line no. 14 (towards *Mörby C*), and get off at the stop *Universitetet* (see map for stops on the route, also see the included metro map). For the timetable, see: <http://sl.se/ficktid/vinter/v14.pdf>.

For the metro map, see: <http://sl.se/ficktid/karta%2Fsommar/Tub.pdf>

If your hotel is in the vicinity of *Odenplan* or *Fridhemsplan*, you can also take bus no 40, and get off at the stop *Universitetet*. For the timetable, see: <http://sl.se/ficktid/vinter/v40.pdf>

Please note that in Stockholm it is not possible to buy tickets from bus drivers. Rather than buying single tickets from vending machines, it is a good idea to buy a strip for travel (200 SEK for 16 coupons, good for 8 trips in Zone 1), a 72-hour ticket card (230 SEK for the ticket + 20 SEK for the rechargeable card), or a 7-day ticket card (300 + 20 SEK). These can be bought at most *Pressbyrå* shops/kiosks and other kiosks/shops displaying the Stockholm Public Transportation logo "SL".

A journey planner can be found at:

<http://sl.se/en/Visitor/Plan-your-journey/>



If you travel to the university by taxi, the address is: *Universitetsvägen 10f, Stockholm*. Several taxi companies operate in Stockholm, for example:

- Taxi Stockholm – 0046-(0)8-15 00 00
- Taxi 020 – 0046-(0)8-20 20 20
- Taxi Kurir – 0046-(0)8-30 00 00

Presentations

20 minutes are reserved for the presentations, and 10 minutes for questions and discussions. Please stick to these timeslots. Computers and video projectors are available in all lecture halls. Please stick to Microsoft PowerPoint if using a slideshow, and bring your file on a standard USB-stick.

Lecture Halls

All the conference activities are arranged in the F-house of the Southern Building (*södra huset*) at Stockholm University campus (see map). Posters will be set up to help you find the way. Parallel sessions are held in lecture halls *F389*, *F413*, and *F420*, and keynote lectures and roundtable in *hörsal 11* (large lecture hall 11).

The registration and information table is also located in the F-house.

Contemporary Esotericism Research Network (ContERN)

ContERN is a thematic network of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE), dedicated to facilitating research on contemporary esotericism. Below you will find information on the network's rationale and focus areas, and how to get involved.

What are our goals?

ContERN is an international network for scholars interested and engaged in the study of esotericism in the contemporary world. Our primary goals are to promote scholarship on contemporary esotericism in ways that are congruent with the broader field of Western esotericism, encourage the integration of new theoretical and methodological approaches and perspectives while maintaining a strong emphasis on historical awareness, and actively encourage the development of new theory and method. ContERN works to create possibilities for networking and forums for scholarly discussion in e.g. conferences, conference panels, and scholarly publications, but also by maintaining an online presence. Interdisciplinary cooperation is also central to ContERN's goals, and the network seeks to interact with e.g. sociology and various subdisciplines of religious studies.

What do we study?

ContERN encourages research on topics and areas such as:

- Esotericism in/and popular culture
- Esotericism and contemporary politics (new ideological constellations, grass-root activism, conspiracy culture, etc.)
- Esotericism and new media
- Esotericism and contemporary "alternative"/mainstream spirituality/religion
- Transformation and reception of historical esoteric discourses (astrology, alchemy, magic, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, etc.)
- Globalization/globalization of esotericism
- Methodological and theoretical challenges (especially the import of anthropological, sociological, psychological and related disciplinary perspectives to the study of esotericism)

What do we offer?

ContERN works to create possibilities for networking and forums for scholarly discussion of contemporary esotericism, including by organising conferences, conference panels, initiating and coordinating edited volumes, and maintaining an online presence. Furthermore, the network seeks to promote the study of esotericism outside of the field as such, through interaction with other subdisciplines in religious studies and sociology.

How to get involved?

ContERN is not a formal organisation, and does not require membership in the traditional sense. However, as an affiliate of ESSWE we do expect that those who participate in ContERN events and initiatives become members of that society. Applying for ESSWE membership can be done through the society's website: www.esswe.org.

At present, we are establishing a communication platform in the form of a Google group, which can be found in the Google Groups directory as "Contemporary Esotericism Research Network (ContERN)". To contact the coordinators of the research network, send Email to:

conterncontact@gmail.com.

Following the Stockholm conference, there are plans to build a ContERN website, which will feature a blog and content relevant for the study of contemporary esotericism. This is very much a project in the making, so stay tuned for further developments!

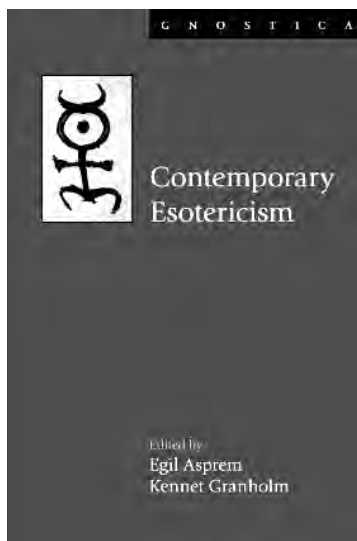
FORTHCOMING VOLUME:

Egil Asprem & Kennet Granholm (eds.), *Contemporary Esotericism*, London: Equinox Publishing.

Book description from publisher:

The study of contemporary esoteric discourse has hitherto been a largely neglected part of the new academic field of Western esotericism. *Contemporary Esotericism* provides a broad overview and assessment of the complex world of Western esoteric thought today. Combining historiographical analysis with theories and methodologies from the social sciences, the volume explores new problems and offers new possibilities for the study of esoterica.

Contemporary Esotericism studies the period since the 1950s but focuses on the last two decades. The wide range of essays are divided into four thematic sections: the intricacies of esoteric appeals to tradition; the role of popular culture, modern communication technologies, and new media in contemporary esotericism; the impact and influence of esotericism on both religious and secular arenas; and the recent 'de-marginalization' of the esoteric in both scholarship and society.



Review:

'This valuable collection will introduce readers to ongoing scholarship on previously understudied modes of esotericism, and fills a conspicuous gap in the literature.'

- Olav Hammer, University of Southern Denmark.