



Pathways in Modern Western Magic

Edited by Nevill Drury

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Conrescent Scholars

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Con crescent Scholars
an imprint of Con crescent LLC
Richmond CA 94805
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ISBN: 978-0-9843729-9-7

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012947222

Cover illustration: Jean Delville, Parsifal, 1890

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Publisher's Preface

Welcome to Concrescent Scholars

Pathways in Modern Western Magic launches a new imprint in the Concrescent family of books. This imprint specializes in peer-reviewed works of scholarship in the fields of Esotericism, Pagan religion and culture, Magic, and the Occult. Concrescent Scholars present their views from within and without the Academy. Here will be heard the Voice of the Academic, and also the Voice of the Practitioner, the native of the sometimes alien, sometimes intimate, spaces of the Esoteric.

Paraphrasing the Buddhologist Stephan Beyer, we are mindful that Scholars of the Esoteric do not deal with Esotericism so much as they deal with Esotericists. Real lives are behind these words and each one has a voice to contribute.

Concrescent Scholars is dedicated to bringing together all who work, learn, and live in the Esoteric that they may flourish materially, intellectually, and spiritually.

And so it begins...

Introduction

Nevill Drury

The academic study of modern Western magic is still a comparatively new phenomenon. While the anthropological study of magic in pre-literate societies has been well established as a discipline for a hundred years or more, rigorous academic interest in the study of modern Western magical beliefs has gathered pace only during the last twenty years or so. *Pathways in Modern Western Magic* has been conceived as a contribution to this steadily expanding body of literature, complementing other academic studies of modern Western magical practices by authors like Tanya Luhrmann (1989), Ronald Hutton (1999), Alex Owen (2004), Susan Greenwood (2005), Nikki Bado-Fralick (2005) and Hugh Urban (2006).¹

One of the key elements that distinguishes *Pathways in Modern Western Magic* from a number of *etic* anthologies on esotericism that have appeared in the last few years is that here *emic* magical accounts — ‘insider perspectives’ — are highly valued because of the insights provided by the practitioners themselves. The terms *emic* and *etic* were first proposed by the anthropological linguist Kenneth Pike and were further developed by the socio-cultural anthropologist Marvin Harris.² Essentially they relate to issues of subjectivity and objectivity in anthropological research. ‘Emic’ derives from the word *phonemic*, a linguistic term that refers to the categories of sounds used by native speakers to understand and create meaningful utterances. ‘Etic’ is from the linguistic

term *phonetic*, referring to the acoustic properties of sounds discernible through linguistic analysis.³ Harris is quite specific in describing their application to the study of cultural anthropology:

*Emic operations have as their hallmark the elevation of the native informant to the status of ultimate judge of the adequacy of the observer's descriptions and analyses. The test of the adequacy of **emic** analyses is their ability to generate statements the native accepts as real, meaningful, or appropriate... **Etic** operations have as their hallmark the elevation of observers to the status of ultimate judges of the categories and concepts used in descriptions and analyses. The test of the adequacy of **etic** accounts is simply their ability to generate scientifically productive theories about the causes of sociocultural differences and similarities.*⁴ [bold in original]

Harris himself was in no doubt as to which was the superior method. According to Harris the value of the *etic* approach was that it allowed the anthropologist to establish 'the social nature of truth' in an objective and scientific fashion, whereas *emic* approaches, in his opinion, were invariably 'relativistic'. As Harris succinctly explains:

*...the participant observer can never find the truth of the lived experience, apart from the consensus about such things found in the community in which the observer participates.*⁵

Harris also makes specific reference to the 'obscurantist' approach adopted by some anthropologists with regard to various forms of contemporary esoteric and religious practice:

*Obscurantism is an important component in the emics of astrology, witchcraft, messianism, hippiedom, fundamentalism, cults of personality, nationalism, ethnocentrism, and a hundred other contemporary modes of thought that exalt knowledge gained by inspiration, revelation, intuition, faith, or incantation as against knowledge obtained in conformity with scientific research principles. Philosophers and social scientists are implicated both as leaders and as followers in the popular success of these celebrations of non-scientific knowledge, and in the strong anti-scientific components they contain.*⁶

Harris's point is well taken, whether one agrees with it or not, but

it is ultimately of little assistance in solving the vexed issue of how to legitimately research the nature of modern Western magic and its quest for transformative states of consciousness. A more sympathetic view than that of Marvin Harris—one which seeks to bridge the apparent gulf between the magical realm and the world of legitimate academic research—is provided by anthropologist Lynne Hume, who argues that a phenomenological [or substantially *emic*] approach is extremely useful in researching magical beliefs and practices:

To my mind, the most appropriate approach to the study of belief systems is a phenomenological one which aims at moving beyond the constraints of structural functional analysis, and even beyond semiotic symbolic anthropology which treats accounts as texts to be analysed in terms of their meaning. A phenomenological approach aims at an objective descriptive analysis, and a systematic evaluation of the essence of a belief system, endeavouring to perceive the devotee's conception of truth in order to assess what is meaningful to the devotee, without raising questions of its ultimate status in reality... as a phenomenologist one suspends disbelief without accepting the totality of the informants' worlds as one's own.⁷

Another important distinction that should be made at this point is that in the classical anthropological literature 'magic' has long been associated with pre-literate indigenous cultures that were assumed to be essentially 'primitive' and intellectually unsophisticated. Much of the academic literature on magic up until quite recent times has been written by anthropologists and social theorists who have responded to the data on magic in a fundamentally unsympathetic way and from a position of perceived intellectual superiority. Academic responses to magic—and also religion—include the late 19th century *evolutionary* approach, which sought common threads in the development of magical and religious systems (a perspective associated especially with Frazer and Tylor); the *functional* approach, which focused on the relationship of magic and religion to the structure and survival of society (Durkheim, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown), and the *psychosocial* approach, which has been concerned with the relationship between culture and personality and the connection between the society and the individual (Evans-Pritchard, Freud, Spiro, et al.).⁸

All of these perspectives have continued to influence anthropological thought in varying degrees. As recently as the late 1980s Tanya Luhrmann thought it appropriate to study magic in contemporary urban

England whilst also employing Malinowski's Trobriand-islander model of 'magical crisis'.⁹ Drawing on an anthropological paradigm transposed from the study of pre-literate Oceanic cultures, Luhrmann argued that modern Western magic was essentially about seeking control in an uncontrollable world. Needless to say, Luhrmann's data does not support her principal conclusions—one of the contemporary magical groups she studied (Gareth Knight's Western Mysteries group) derives its esoteric practices from Dion Fortune's Fraternity of the Inner Light which in turn had historical associations with the theurgic high magic practised in the Golden Dawn. High magic is not found in pre-literate societies and the magic associated with all of these modern English esoteric organisations is inwardly-directed and 'transformational' rather than 'functional' in every significant respect.

Paradoxically, the misplaced nature of Luhrmann's anthropological approach reinforces the innate value of scholarly *emic* accounts of modern Western magic. Academics who are also magical practitioners and who document their experiences intelligently and systematically help us avoid the distortions that inevitably enter the literature when insider accounts are ignored. Contemporary anthropologists who have explored magical beliefs and practices as 'insider-practitioners' include Jeanne Favret-Saada (1980) who studied witchcraft in the Bocage region of Normandy,¹⁰ Paul Stoller (1987) who became an apprentice to Songhay sorcerers,¹¹ Lynne Hume (1997) who researched Wicca and neo-paganism as a participant with various groups in Australia,¹² Susan Greenwood (2000, 2005) who became a Wiccan priestess in England¹³ and Nikki Bado-Fralick (2005), currently a university professor, who has also been a high priestess in witchcraft covens in Ohio and Iowa.¹⁴ Hume and Bado-Fralick (now Bado) are contributors to the present volume.

Defining magic

Given the diversity of modern esoteric practice, magic itself obviously requires some sort of definition. Aleister Crowley, arguably the most influential occultist in the 20th century, provided several different definitions of magic in his various publications. In *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1929) he writes:

There is a single main definition of the object of all magical Ritual. It is the uniting of the Microcosm with the Macrocosm. The Supreme and Complete Ritual is therefore the Invocation of the Holy Guardian Angel, or, in the language of Mysticism, Union with God.' [capitals in original]¹⁵

In the same volume Crowley echoes the famous Hermetic principle ‘As above, so below’ when he writes: ‘The Microcosm is an exact image of the Macrocosm; the Great Work is the raising of the whole man in perfect balance to the power of Infinity.’¹⁶ Crowley also offered a more direct and pragmatic definition of magic: ‘Magick is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will.’¹⁷ For Crowley, application of the will was a crucial component in magical practice for he also wrote: ‘Every intentional act is a Magical Act,’¹⁸ to which he added a footnote: ‘By “intentional” I mean “willed”.’ From Crowley’s perspective, acts of magical intent could also lead to subjugation of others: ‘Man is capable of being, and using, anything which he perceives, for everything that he perceives is in certain sense a part of his being. He may thus subjugate the whole Universe of which he is conscious to his individual Will.’¹⁹

Israel Regardie, Crowley’s one-time secretary and editor of *The Golden Dawn* (published 1937-40), defined magic in more psychological terms: ‘As a practical system, Magic is concerned not so much with analysis as with bringing into operation the creative and intuitive parts of man.... Magic may be said to be a technique for realising the deeper levels of the Unconscious.’ [capitals in Regardie’s text]²⁰ However, like Crowley, Regardie also focused on the significance of the magical will:

The magician conceives of someone he calls God, upon whom attend a series of angelic beings, variously called archangels, elementals, demons etc. By simply calling upon this God with a great deal of ado, and commemorating the efforts of previous magicians²¹ and saints who accomplished their wonders or attained to the realization of their desires through the invocation of the several names of that God, the magician too realizes the fulfilment of his will.²²

Regardie also emphasized the nature of the magical imagination:

In practice, the idea is to arrange a play or a ritualistic ceremony wherein is enacted the entire life-cycle of the God or his terrestrial emissary whose spiritual presence one wishes to invoke. The union or identification with the God is accomplished through suggestion, sympathy and the exaltation of consciousness. ...the magician imagines himself in the ceremony to be the deity who has undergone similar experiences. The rituals serve but to suggest and to render more complete the process of identification, so that sight and hearing and intelligence may serve to that end. In the commemoration, or rehearsal of this

history, the magician is uplifted on high, and is whirled into the secret domain of the spirit...²³

For Regardie, the ultimate spiritual destination of the magician was submergence of the individual self within the transcendent Godhead:

All the characteristics of the higher worlds are successively assumed by the Magician, and transcended, until in the end of his magical journey, he is merged into the being of the Lord of every Life. The final goal of his spiritual pilgrimage is that peaceful ecstasy in which the finite personality, thought and self-consciousness, even the high consciousness of the highest Gods, drops utterly away, and the Magician melts to a oneness with the Ain Soph²⁴ wherein no shade of difference enters.²⁵

Other influential occultists—pioneers, as it were, of the modern Western magical perspective—have also proposed their own definitions of magic. For S.L.MacGregor Mathers, co-founder of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1888, magic was ‘the Science of the Control of the Secret Forces of Nature’²⁶ while Mathers’ colleague in the Golden Dawn, Dr Edward Berridge (*Frater Resurgam*) sought also to distinguish the role of the imagination in the practice of magic:

Imagination is a reality. When a man imagines he actually creates a form on the Astral or even on some higher plane; and this form is as real and objective to intelligent beings on that plane, as our earthly surroundings are to us...To practice magic, both the Imagination and the Will must be called into action... the Imagination must precede the Will in order to produce the greatest possible effect.²⁷

Dion Fortune, a former member of the Stella Matutina (a Golden Dawn derivative) and founder of the Fraternity of the Inner Light, noted that: ‘White magic...consists in the application of occult powers to spiritual ends.’²⁸ Fortune also defined magic in much the same way as Aleister Crowley: ‘[Magic is] the art of causing changes in consciousness at will.’²⁹ Dr Michael Aquino, a self-proclaimed ‘black magician’ and principal formulator of the doctrines of The Temple of Set, also defines magic within the context of the application of the magical will:

The theory and practice of non-natural interaction with the subjective universe is defined as Greater Black Magic...Great-

*er Black Magic is the causing of change to occur in the subjective universe in accordance with the Will. This change in the subjective universe will cause a similar and proportionate change in the objective universe.'*³⁰

Influential Goddess worshipper and eco-feminist Starhawk offers another perspective, emphasizing the principle of interconnectedness with the cosmos in her definition of magic:

*The primary principle of magic is connection. The universe is a fluid, ever-changing energy pattern, not a collection of fixed and separate things. What affects one thing affects, in some way, all things. All is interwoven into the continuous fabric of being. Its warp and weft are energy, which is the essence of magic.*³¹

Starhawk focuses on the connection between magic and the physical world:

*Magic is part of nature; it does not controvert natural laws. It is through study and observation of nature, of the visible, physical reality, that we can learn to understand the workings of the underlying reality. Magic teaches us to tap sources of energy that are unlimited, infinite...*³²

Overview of Volume

In the opening chapter, 'Lifting the veil: an emic approach to magical practice', anthropologist Lynne Hume sets the tone for the present volume, arguing that magicians, pagans and shamans have numerous portals, or entry points, to the sacred and mysterious realm referred to by some as the 'otherworld'. For her the key lies in understanding the relationship between altered states of consciousness and the realm of emotions and imagination. Magicians of all persuasions acknowledge the value of using visualisation and trance techniques accompanied by chanting and singing, and sometimes they also employ ritualentheogens (psychedelic sacraments) to enter the hidden, sacred worlds beyond the realm of familiar reality. As several of the contributors to the present volume emphasize in their respective chapters, modern Western magic values the *imaginal*—and many magical rituals are based on conceiving and visualizing forces greater than the individual self. Indeed, this is how the sense of magical transformation generally comes about.

Modern pagan witchcraft—otherwise known as Wicca—openly

explores the imaginal as an ‘alternative reality’. Wicca offers a holistic view of a cosmos alive with creative potential—propelled by the dynamic union of sacred female and male principles. In honoring the Universal Goddess as its principal deity, Wicca is very specifically grounded in the symbolism of fertility and embraces Nature’s seasons as reflective of the eternal cycles of life, death and rebirth. For the most part, the Wiccan spiritual quest is oriented towards ‘this world’. The main emphasis in Wicca is on immanent, rather than transcendent, aspects of deity and the Universal Goddess is personified in the coven by the high priestess. Nevertheless, as Dominique Beth Wilson observes in her chapter, ‘The visual and the numinous: material expressions of the sacred in contemporary paganism,’ it is still possible for devotees of sacred earth traditions to embrace the more abstract notion of the ‘*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*’. Members of the contemporary Australian witchcraft community, Applegrove, make use of ‘numinous’ objects like altars, dress and rituals in order to transcend the profane and everyday world and commune with the sacred and the divine.

This theme is also explored by Nikki Bado in ‘Encountering the *Universal Triple Goddess* in Wicca’. She acknowledges, though, that the ritual process itself is sometimes based on modern constructs far removed from the ancient cultures traditionally associated with myth and primal religion. We have to ask, writes Bado, whether in the Pagan and Goddess communities ‘the Maiden, Mother, and Crone are either self-evident ancient and empowering figures that have been universally revered as primal archetypes since the dawn of time’ or whether they are ‘relatively recent romantic literary constructs rooted in dubious scholarship that are possibly essentialist, covertly sexist, and woefully inadequate in capturing the range of women’s life cycles, roles, and expectations of longevity’. Bado acknowledges that like most religious practitioners, ‘Witches participate in a universe of competing and sometimes conflicting discourses and practices.’ But as a practising Wiccan High Priestess herself she nevertheless values the transformative experiences associated with Goddess spirituality despite their occasional contradictions—and these are experiences that involve both light and darkness. The Goddess, writes Bado, ‘moves throughout the world, free and unfettered by our simplistic categories, embracing and embraced by Moon and Sun. Dancing in a universe of lights and shadows.’

And it proves to be very much a matter of light and shadow. As Marguerite Johnson’s chapter on the Dark Goddess makes clear, there is now a tendency among ‘Gothic’ shadow-magic Wiccans to focus their ritual energies on imagery associated with the dark regions of the psyche in order to obtain an authentic balance between ‘white’ and ‘black’ magic.

Some Wiccan practitioners who practise Nocturnal Magic or Shadow Magic focus primarily on ‘dark’ goddesses like Hecate, Lilith and Kali. As Johnson explains, these ‘Nocturnal’ or ‘Shadow’ Wiccans are dismissive of ‘Fluffy Bunnies’, ‘Playgans’ or ‘White-lighters’ who interpret the Wiccan Rede literally—‘An Ye Harm None, Do What Ye Will’. Nocturnal Wiccans openly embrace what others regard as a more confronting interpretation of the Craft. As one Wiccan practitioner, Digitalis, explains: ‘The aspects of shadow magick range widely. In many ways, those that deal with the *internal* darkness of the self can be considered positive in nature: practices such as magickal work on the emotional plane, mysticism, and types of deep meditation. Other arts, such as divination, astral projection, automatic writing, and dreamwalking, are clearly not negative in nature (and are in fact shared by nearly all Witches). But some shadow magick can be deemed more negative: demonic evocation, Qlippothic [sic] or Goetic work, uncontrolled psychic vampirism, cursing, and some types of necromancy.’

Moving on from Wicca and Goddess spirituality to the resurgent interest in shamanism and ‘native spirituality’, it is fair to describe ‘neo-shamanism’—like modern pagan witchcraft—as a construct or ‘invented tradition’. Following the lead of anthropologist Michael Harner—who established the Foundation for Shamanic Studies and sought to distil common elements of the shamanic process into an accessible approach called ‘core shamanism’³³—various forms of neo-shamanism have now emerged in both the United States and Europe. Andrei A. Znamenski describes the growth of this movement in his chapter ‘Neo-shamanism in the United States’, acknowledging also the key role of Carlos Castaneda and Mircea Eliade in stimulating the revival of interest in Native American spirituality in the 1960s and 1970s counterculture.

Znamenski addresses the important issue of whether neo-shamanism loses its authenticity and usefulness by being abstracted from a specific cultural context. He also notes that some writers claim that traditional shamanism is a form of spiritual individualism and that this characteristic has been responsible in part for neo-shamanism’s appeal, especially in the United States. The issue of whether core shamanism can be successfully reintroduced into various indigenous cultures that have lost their shamanic heritage—native peoples like the Sami, Siberians and Inuits, for example—is also addressed here.

Robert J. Wallis explores similar issues in ‘Neo-shamanisms in Europe’. Wallis rejects universalist interpretations of shamanism and neo-shamanism as unhelpful abstractions, preferring instead to ground shamanisms (and neo-shamanisms) within their specific cultural contexts. Wallis argues against Eliade’s concept of shamanistic world

views based on a tripartite cosmology of upper, middle and lower worlds and maintains that the focus on ‘altered states of consciousness’ as a characteristic of shamanisms has also been greatly overstated. Rather than their experiences producing the ‘world views’ of their communities, he writes, shamans, their experiences and their communities, human and non-human, are situated within ‘wider animic ontologies’. As Wallis explains, animist ontologies approach a world filled with persons, only some of whom are human, and often shamans are crucial in maintaining relations between human-persons and other-than-humans. Animisms are, then, concerned with *relating*—with persons, human and non-human, and ‘animism makes shamans both possible and necessary because their roles are about dealing with the problems of living in a relational world’.

Jenny Blain’s chapter ‘Seidr oracles’ focuses specifically on a form of oracular neo-shamanism based on re-constructed elements derived initially from Nordic mythology. Diana Paxson, founder of the seidr-magic Hrafnar community in San Francisco, reconstructed *Eiríks Saga Rauða* and the Eddic *Voluspá* and began to use them experientially as a form of visionary magic. Paxson had also been influenced by the ‘core shamanism’ techniques of Michael Harner and her approach mirrors some aspects of the neo-shamanic spirit-journey. Paxson’s *seidr* séances involve two main figures—the *völva* or seeress, and a person who serves as both guide and singer, chanting the *völva* and the other group participants into a state of trance. The songs are based on Nordic mythology and guide the participants toward Helheim, where the *völva* communicates with the ancestors. The *völva* enters a deeper state of trance as she goes through the gates of Helheim and then encounters the spirits of the dead. Members of the group are able to put oracular questions to the *völva* relating to more specific, local issues and circumstances. The *völva* typically receives ‘answers’ to these questions in the form of visual images received from the deities and ancestor spirits—and then conveys appropriate responses to the people who asked the questions.

As experiential journeys that venture beyond the gates of Helheim, *seidr* séances clearly employ imagery and techniques that take their practitioners into the dark mythic underworld of the magical psyche. However, as Blain explains, this particular form of visionary magic focuses on healing and divinatory methods that benefit the community members as a whole.

Looking back now to the origins of the 20th century magical revival, it is increasingly clear that the late 19th century Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn—with its systematic approach to practical ceremonial magic and its focus on the quest for personal spiritual transformation—strongly influenced the various forms of esotericism that would emerge in the West in more recent times.

‘Magical practices in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn’, describes the theurgic techniques adopted by members of this late 19th century organisation. Shunning darkness in the pursuit of spiritual light, the Golden Dawn magicians were influenced by the Kabbalistic desire to attain sacred knowledge of the ‘Body of God’. The ultimate aim of their magical rituals was to experience what occult practitioner Israel Regardie has called ‘a spiritual state of consciousness, in which the ego enters into a union with either its own Higher Self or a God’. However as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn began to fragment during the period between 1900 and the end of World War One,³⁴ the practice of ceremonial magic in the West would become increasingly dominated by Aleister Crowley’s doctrine of *Thelema* (Greek: ‘will’). Historically this occurred as Crowley introduced sex magick into his magical order, Argenteum Astrum (The Silver Star, established 1907) and later into the European Ordo Templi Orientis.

Since the 1960s modern Western magical practice has polarized, producing two major streams of occult thought led on the one hand by Crowleyan *Thelema* and its various derivative offshoots and affiliated movements³⁵ and by Wicca and Goddess spirituality on the other (Wicca would not emerge as a major esoteric movement until the repeal in 1951 of the British Witchcraft Act forbidding the practice of witchcraft.)³⁶ Placing this polarization effect in a historical context, ‘The Thelemic magick of Aleister Crowley’ describes the significance of Crowley’s 1904 revelation in Cairo and the emergence of *The Book of the Law*—a key Thelemite text dictated in trance by a metaphysical entity named Aiwass that changed Crowley’s magical orientation completely. Moving away from the Hermetic theurgy of the Golden Dawn, a magical organisation to which he had belonged, Crowley now embraced a new form of sexual magick that, for him, characterised the birth of the New Aeon. Crowley’s interest in sexual magick subsequently brought him into contact with the European Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.)—an organisation that Crowley headed from 1922 onwards, following the resignation of co-founder Theodor Reuss.

One of the most interesting magical orders to have emerged in the post-Crowley era is the Dragon Rouge, established in Sweden by Thomas Karlsson in 1989. This order developed independently but shares many points in common with the Typhonian O.T.O. established in Britain by Crowley’s disciple, the late Kenneth Grant. The Dragon Rouge openly aligns itself with the Left-Hand Path, which it refers to as ‘the dark side of magic’. As Karlsson points out in his chapter ‘The Draconian Tradition: Dragon Rouge and the Left-Hand Path’, darkness equates symbolically with unfathomed potential and here the magician seeks to develop the

individual human will in order to enter parallel universes. In the Dragon Rouge the Left-Hand Path is associated with ‘the forbidden, the abnormal, the exclusive and deviant,...[and] celebrates dark and revolutionary deities like Lucifer, Loke, Kali, Hekate, Prometheus, Azazel and the Fallen Angels, to mention just a few.’ The Dragon Rouge is antinomian and breaks cultural, religious and existential taboos—but the central aim is self-deification. As Karlsson observes: ‘The Left Hand Path is associated with the goal to become a God, which means that one becomes existentially mature, expresses free will, takes personal responsibility and gains knowledge and power over existence.’

We turn now to contemporary Satanism, which also identifies itself with the so-called Left-Hand Path. It soon becomes apparent that there are marked differences between the two leading Satanic groups—Anton LaVey’s Church of Satan (established in 1966) and The Temple of Set, headed by Michael Aquino (established in 1975)—although both are characteristically antinomian and share a common quest in embracing the potency of darkness. Under LaVey, the Church of Satan celebrated humanity’s carnal nature and indulgences of the flesh and its founder justified this by asserting that an animalistic image of humanity was supported by natural science and Darwin’s theory of evolution. In ‘Claiming hellish hegemony: Anton LaVey, The Church of Satan and the *Satanic Bible*’ James R. Lewis explores LaVey’s legitimation strategy and dissects the façade created by Anton LaVey as he sought to develop an occult persona far more exotic than was actually warranted. In 1975 LaVey was deserted by a group of senior Church of Satan members who went on to establish the more philosophically based Temple of Set. A former High Priest of this Temple, Don Webb provides us with a lucid ‘insider’ account in his essay ‘Modern black magic: initiation, sorcery and the Temple of Set’.

The following chapters, ‘The Magical Life of Ithell Colquhoun’ and ‘Two chthonic magical artists: Austin Osman Spare and Rosaleen Norton’, explore the visionary art and creativity of three important modern occultists. Focusing especially on the connection between modern Western magic and artistic creativity, Amy Hale shows in ‘The magical life of Ithell Colquhoun’ that in addition to embracing a Hermetic approach to magic the noted British surrealist artist was also fascinated by the symbolic attributions of colour that she first encountered in the Golden Dawn approach to Western ceremonial magic. Spare and Norton had a somewhat darker vision, and have even been accused of being satanic. Spare and Norton both produced magical imagery that was markedly chthonic in nature and both artists utilised techniques of self-hypnosis to produce their visionary imagery. They also explored magical grimoires like the Goetia and were fascinated by the sigils or ‘seals’ associated with

elemental spirit-beings. Both artists were attracted to sex-magic and both were familiar with the magical writings of Aleister Crowley (Spare knew Crowley personally).

Crowley's influence has extended in recent times to include practitioners of Chaos Magick who align themselves with the Left-Hand Path and who use this term emically to describe their magical orientation. Chaos Magick—generally spelt with a 'k' to acknowledge its connection to Thelemic magick—burst onto the British occult scene in the late 1970s with a radical outlook and a reformist agenda. In his chapter, 'Nothing is true, everything is permitted: Chaos magics in Britain' Dave Evans describes the birth of the movement, noting in passing that it presents us with a multitude of interesting and rewarding challenges. 'As a major, influential and fast-moving new development in occultism,' he writes, it 'cannot be ignored and offers an enticing arena for researchers in finding new, improved research strategies which will hopefully evolve in tandem with the developments in the magical practice itself.'

Also of interest in this particular context are magical practices that draw inspiration from fiction and the Internet. In the realm of cyberspace human beings interact with each other in ways limited only by their imagination. In her fascinating chapter, 'The Computer Mediated Religious Life of Ttechnoshamans and Cybershamans' Libuše Martínková shows clearly that some contemporary magical practitioners have integrated cutting-edge computer technologies and traditional shamanic practices in order to give rise to a new form of postmodern religion.

Finally, there are those who have embraced more eclectic esoteric fusions. The influential British occultist Phil Hine, who has been closely associated in the past with the rise of Chaos Magick, provides an insider account of his 'hybridised Tantra practice'. Hine describes the Arrow-Shakti rite—which utilises both external worship (*bahiryaga*) and internal worship (*antaryaga*). Here the practitioner exteriorises the Sense-Shaktis in order to honor them before drawing back the Arrow Goddess (their condensed form) into the 'heart-cave' that equates with the seat of the inner self.

As will become clear to any reader perusing the chapters in this anthology, the major forms of contemporary Western magic are characterised by an ongoing sense of self-exploration and spiritual renewal. *Pathways in Modern Western Magic* will hopefully be seen as a far-ranging and authoritative selection of writings addressing the broad spectrum of modern Western magical beliefs and practices.

—Editor

Endnotes

- 1 Four of these publications focus on modern and contemporary magic in Britain. Tanya Luhrmann's *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1989) explores contemporary Wicca and white magic in England, Ronald Hutton's *The Triumph of the Moon* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999) is considered the definitive historical study of modern pagan witchcraft and explores the birth of Wicca in England and events leading up to it, Susan Greenwood's *The Nature of Magic: An Anthropology of Consciousness* (Berg, Oxford 2005) describes nature magic, witchcraft and neo-shamanism in contemporary Britain, and Alex Owen's *The Place of Enchantment* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2004) is a highly regarded scholarly overview of occult practices in Victorian and Edwardian England. Nikki Bado-Fralick's *Coming to the Edge of the Circle: A Wiccan Initiation Ritual* (Oxford University Press, New York 2005) is of special interest because the American author is both an academic and a high priestess within a Wiccan coven, and Hugh Urban's *Magia Sexualis* (University of California Press, Berkeley, California 2006) looks likely to become a key source-work on sexual magic in the West for many years to come.
- 2 See M. Harris, *Cultural Materialism*, Random House, New York 1979.
- 3 P.E. Sandstrom, 'Anthropological Approaches to Information Systems and Behaviour', *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 30, 3, February/March 2004.
- 4 M. Harris, *Cultural Materialism*, loc cit: 32.
- 5 Ibid: 315.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 L. Hume, *Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne 1997:11.
- 8 R.L. Stein and P.L. Stein, *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic and Witchcraft*, Pearson/Allyn & Bacon, Boston 2005: 21-23.
- 9 T.M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England*, loc cit.
- 10 J. Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1980.
- 11 P. Stoller (and C. Olkes), *In Sorcery's Shadow*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1987.
- 12 L. Hume, *Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne 1997.
- 13 S. Greenwood, *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld*, Berg, Oxford and New York 2000, and *The Nature of Magic: an Anthropology of Consciousness*, Berg, Oxford and New York 2005.
- 14 N. Bado-Fralick, *Coming to the Edge of the Circle: A Wiccan Initiation*

- Ritual*, Oxford University Press, New York 2005.
- 15 A.Crowley, *Magick in Theory and Practice*, Castle Books, New York, n.d:[1929]:11.
- 16 Ibid: 4.
- 17 Ibid:xii.
- 18 Ibid xiii.
- 19 Ibid:xvii. It is interesting that of all the religious pantheons Crowley utilized for his magical activities he regarded the ancient Egyptian as 'the noblest, the most truly magical'. See A.Crowley, *Magick without Tears*, Falcon Press, Phoenix, Arizona 1982: 23. Crowley would surely have known that in ancient Egypt magicians could subdue even the gods themselves, through acts of magical intent. As Wallis Budge has observed (E.A.Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, University Books, New York 1958: ix [1899]): '...the object of Egyptian magic was to endow man with the means of compelling both friendly and hostile powers, nay, at a later time, even God Himself, to do what he wished, whether they were willing or not.' Budge subsequently elaborates on the potency of words of power uttered by the magician: 'By pronouncing certain words or names of power in the proper manner and in the proper tone of voice he could heal the sick, and cast out the evil spirits which caused pain and suffering in those who were diseased, and restore the dead to life, and bestow upon the dead man the power to transform the corruptible into an incorruptible body wherein the soul might live to all eternity. His words enabled human beings to assume diverse forms at will, and to project their souls into animals and other creatures...The powers of nature acknowledged his might, and wind and rain, storm and tempest, river and sea, and disease and death worked evil and ruin upon his foes, and upon the enemies of those who were provided with the knowledge of the words which he had wrested from the gods of heaven, and earth, and the underworld. Inanimate nature likewise obeyed such words of power, and even the world itself came into existence through the utterance of a word by Thoth; by their means the earth could be rent asunder, and the waters forsaking their nature could be piled in a heap, and even the sun's course in the heavens could be stayed by a word. No god, or spirit, or devil, or fiend, could resist words of power.' (1958:xi).
- 20 I. Regardie, *The Middle Pillar*, Aries Press, Chicago: 1945: 19.
- 21 This quotation incorporates the magical concept that the repeated performance of the same rituals - whether by magicians or religious practitioners - has a cumulative effect on the 'inner planes', an effect referred to as the 'egregore' or 'group consciousness'. W.E.Butler, a disciple of Dion Fortune in the Fraternity of the Inner Light, describes the nature of the egregore in *The Magician: His Training and Work* [1959]: 'When

two or three or many people gather together in one place to perform certain actions, to think along certain lines, and to experience emotional influences, there is built up, in connection with that group, what may be termed a composite group-consciousness, wherein the emotional and mental forces of all the members of the group are temporarily united in what is known in occultism as a group-thought-form or “artificial elemental”. This group consciousness seems to have a much greater power than the simple sum of the objective minds in the group would suggest. This is because, not only is the group-thought-form built up by the *conscious* minds of all who help to build it up. Since those subconscious minds reach back on the one hand into the Collective Unconscious and on the other reach upwards into the realms of the superconscious, the group-thought-form is psychically linked with...many aspects of thought and many forms of psychic-mental energy. Thus it is greater than any sum of its parts.’ See W.E.Butler, *The Magician: His Training and Work*, 1959: 57-58.

- 22 I. Regardie, *Ceremonial Magic: A Guide to the Mechanisms of Ritual*, loc.cit: 93.
- 23 Ibid: 93-94.
- 24 The *Ain Soph* is the ‘limitless light’ that extends beyond finite creation as delineated on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life.
- 25 Ibid: 246-47.
- 26 Quoted in D.Valiente, *An ABC of Witchcraft, Past and Present*, revised edition, Hale, London 1984: 231.
- 27 Quoted from Flying Roll No. 5 (Golden Dawn source document), ‘Some Thoughts on the Imagination’ in F. King (ed.) *Astral Projection, Magic and Alchemy*, Spearman, London 1971: 33.
- 28 D.Fortune, *The Mystical Qabalah*, Benn, London 1935: 11.
- 29 Quoted by Fortune’s magical disciple W.E.Butler and ascribed to her. See W.E.Butler, *Magic: Its Ritual Power and Purpose*, Aquarian Press, London 1952: 10.
- 30 M.Aquino, ‘Black Magic in Theory and Practice,’ in M.Aquino (ed.) *The Crystal Tablets of Set, Selected Extracts*, Temple of Set, San Francisco 1983: 18 and 28.
- 31 Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, 20th Anniversary edition, HarperCollins, San Francisco 1999 [1979]:155.
- 32 Ibid: 159.
- 33 See Harner’s key work on experiential shamanism, *The Way of the Shaman*, Harper & Row, New York 1980.
- 34 MacGregor Mathers, the influential co-founder of the Golden Dawn, died in 1918.

- 35 These include the Ordo Templi Orientis in the United States, the Typhonian O.T.O. in Britain, and the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set in the United States. Chaos Magick has also been strongly influenced by Crowley.
- 36 The Witchcraft Act 1735 was repealed in New South Wales by the Imperial Acts Application Act, 1969. See L. Hume, *Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne 1997: 224.

Pathways in Modern Western Magic

Edited by Nevill Drury



This exciting multi-authored volume provides a fascinating overview of the many different pathways that help define esoteric belief and practice in modern Western magic. Included here are chapters on the late 19th century Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the influential Thelemic doctrines of Aleister Crowley, and the different faces of the Universal Goddess in Wicca and the Pagan traditions. Also included are chapters on Neo-shamanism in Europe and the United States—and an account of how these traditions have in turn influenced the rise of techno-shamanism in the West. Additional features of this collection include insider perspectives on Seidr oracles, hybridised Tantra, contemporary black magic, the Scandinavian Dragon Rouge and Chaos magic in Britain—as well as profiles of the magical artists Ithell Colquhoun, Austin Osman Spare and Rosaleen Norton.

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