

Meanwhile, the American Pagans were frustrated because they wanted even more ancient Paganism. “The [1951] video didn’t give us any clues about *ritual*,” complains Don Frew, one of the NROOGD horse dancers. One might well say that there was indeed ritual in Padstow, but it was more communal than self-consciously religious, and it took place in the pubs and streets rather than in a sacred circle. NROOGD, therefore, inserted the Oss into a typical Wiccan Beltane celebration. In its Berkeley incarnation, the Oss is still paired with a maypole, but gone are the stage-piratical sailor’s whites and gone is the procession through the streets. The Oss stays within a ritual circle in the grassy public park, while participants turn their backs on the surrounding city. The Berkeley Oss is even more of a performer with an audience than are the Padstow Osses.

In the final film, Bishop and Magliocco discuss their debt to the original filmmakers and, together with some of the NROOGD participants, discuss the interplay between participant and observer, in which, as Frew observes, both the Pagans and the academics each get something that they want.

Given the individual films’ short length and the inclusion of a study guide on the disk, *Oss Tales* is ideally suited for classes in religious studies, anthropology, and folklore, not to mention on the tourism industry. Viewers can see and discuss how filmmakers’ and scholars’ perspectives influence how data is selected and presented, as well as noting how the people of Padstow use the Osses in creating and marketing their own civic identity. The NROOGD Pagans, meanwhile, create their own narrative of roots and relationship to the land of California, which has through their rituals – they hope – gained a protector and a tradition. As Magliocco aptly remarks of both Berkeley and Padstow, it is traditional to change and update a tradition.

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Christopher I. Lehrich, *The Occult Mind: Magic in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), xv + 246 pp., \$39.95 (cloth)

Lehrich’s 2005 work, *The Language of Demons and Angels: Cornelius Agrippa’s Occult Philosophy*, which applied structuralist and deconstructionist methods in a groundbreaking reading of Agrippa, also contained a number of passages examining the assumptions and intellectual paradigms informing modern scholarship on esotericism. It was clear in that work that Lehrich had a lot more to say about the job of doing scholarship on magic and doing theory in general – and *The Occult Mind: Magic in Theory in Practice* represents the extraordinary blooming of some of these earlier concerns.

Designed as a “preliminary to an interdisciplinary field as yet improperly constituted (or not at all)” (p. xiii), Lehrich’s work can be seen as a carefully argued manifesto for a particular methodological matrix with which to approach the construction of scholarship on magic, rejecting the utility of traditional binary oppositions between science and the occult, between the *ingénieur* and the *bricoleur*, because, in the end, none of Lehrich’s exemplar magi in this work, John Dee, Giordano Bruno, and Athanasius Kircher, “falls entirely within one or the other camp, and they know this” (p. 116). Most importantly, *The Occult Mind* argues for a severe re-calculation of the relationship

between the scholar of magic and the subjects of that scholarship, so that instead of seeing Dee, Agrippa, and Kircher, for example, through the “epistemological stances” of either historicism or structuralism, we should realize that these thinkers were intimately concerned with the tensions between the two paradigms and were seeking, though perhaps ultimately failing, to create or synthesize alternative methodologies. If we deny, as Lehrich accuses Brian Vickers of doing, that occult thinkers “could understand [our] questions” (p. 115), if we fail to see that the overarching projects that inform the work of these intellectuals are versions (equally as complex, equally as ambiguous, equally as nascent, at times) of our own “doing theory” then we are inevitably restricting ourselves to a form of “Othering” that can only have misunderstanding as its outcome.

The book’s argument starts with an examination of the way in which nostalgia for an *illud tempus* has been central to both Western occult thought (beginning with the *Hermetica*) and much of the scholarship concerned with it (Lehrich focuses on Yates and Eliade here making a convincing and sympathetic case for their recategorization as reactualizers of history rather than historians). In the succeeding chapters Lehrich then examines the tensions between morphological and historical epistemologies in the works of Bruno, Dee, Kircher, and, finally, Derrida. Along the way we range across such diverse terrain as an application of the semiology of music to a reading of the works of Lévi-Strauss and an examination of nativist pressures on the development of Nōh theatre and its attendant theoretical frameworks, as well as a consideration of the history of the Tarot that culminates in a Tarot “reading” of (the same) Lévi-Strauss.

If all this sounds rather too diffuse and unfocused, then I am giving quite the wrong impression. Lehrich is not out to impress us with his erudition; the wide terms of comparison are integrated tightly into the logic of his case and also serve to provide a perfect exemplar of the breadth of learning that the term “interdisciplinary” truly requires of any field that lays claim to such a categorization. The long digression on Nōh theatre, for example, is used to forward a reading of Dee’s *Monas Hieroglyphica* that is nothing short of astounding, so that when Lehrich concludes ch. 3 with a comparison of the monad to the central figure of Nōh drama, the *shite*, we have been given just enough of an introduction to the field to effectively appreciate the meaning and power of the analogy.

The final chapter of *The Occult Mind* is perhaps destined to be the most contentious one. Despite both Lehrich’s repeated directions to the contrary and the clear substance of the argument presented, it is possible that some (perhaps mischievous) readers will be tempted to summarize the book by holding that, for Lehrich, magic is best defined as Derridean *différance*. However, Lehrich’s contention is that *différance* provides us with the most intellectually useful *analogy* to magic. This is a challenging and galvanizing position that calls out for further engagement and examination. Certainly, measured by the strength and originality of analysis displayed by Lehrich here, it is a position that in the hands of its proponent generates significant scholarly results.

Christopher I. Lehrich’s *The Occult Mind* is destined to be a highly significant book for the community of scholars who are concerned primarily or even tangentially with work upon esoteric, occult, or magical discourses. It serves to radically widen the scope and significance of such work and to seriously begin to define the foundations of this still fledgling field.

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