

Temple of Set Reading List

Category 4: Occultism in Contemporary Perspective

Okkultismus in zeitgenössischer Perspektive

as of February 26, 2003

Aside from the Temple of Set itself, what may be said concerning the positive achievements of occult research? Is the field substantive? And what is “the occult”? The following books explore these and other questions in terms of current scientific and cultural knowledge.

4A. *The Occult* by Colin Wilson. NY: Random House, 1971. [Deutschland: *Das Okkulte*. Heyne Taschenbuch-Verlag (01/7282), München, 1986.] (TOS-2) MA: “This book is divided into two principal sections - a history of European and American occultism to the present century, and an extensive commentary concerning occult methodology from an existentialist point of view. Wilson postulates a ‘Faculty X’ of the human mind to explain psychic phenomena. Here the weakness of a non-initiated approach to the subject is glaringly demonstrated, because Wilson’s bibliography includes many sources of questionable quality. Moreover Wilson becomes predictably confused as he tries to explain his ‘Faculty X’ as a **natural** potential of the mind. The history section of the book is nicely done, though it also suffers from Wilson’s reliance upon some biased sources. A more careful and reflective argument for ‘Faculty X’ is presented in Wilson’s *Mysteries: An Investigation into the Occult, the Paranormal, and the Supernatural* (NY: Putnam, 1978), providing that one exercises prudence in crediting some of the case studies.”

4B. *The Morning of the Magicians* (original French title: *The Dawn of Magic*) by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier. NY: Avon Books, 1968. [Deutschland: *Aufbruch ins dritte Jahrtausend*. Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag (Nr. 11711), München, 1979.] (COS-3) (TOS-1) (TRP-1) (LVT-1) AL: “First and best work ever done describing the Satanic influence in the world.” MA: “This is the book that kicked off the occult revival of the 1960s and started the whole van Däniken show on the road. It highlights many phenomena for which non-occultists cannot account [somewhat after the fashion of Charles Fort]. Included is an especially interesting section on German Nazi esoterica, which until recent years was virtually the only account of such material easily available to the public. It is also the only recent book to discuss the original Council of Nine (the Nine Unknown). If there is a defect to the book, it lies in its emphasis of fanciful, rhetorical questions and in the lack of adequate footnotes in some of the most intriguing chapters. This is an excellent book to recommend to a friend who thinks you’re crazy for being interested in the occult. [See also #17B and #22B.]” JL: “MA’s comment on the book says it all.” DW: “This book represents French Romanticism at its height with a little Gurdjieff thrown in. It inspired a huge occult revival in France. It has a twofold *Solve* effect: It makes the reader ‘wake up’ a bit and realize the effect of the suprarational in history. Its enthusiastic reception in English-speaking countries facilitated the translation of related French authors such as de Lafforest (#60) and Charroux. This contributed to the rise of movements in those countries such as ‘New Wave’ science fiction and the Church of Satan. This book is not as unique in the 1990s as in the 1960s, in part because of its own success in encouraging more sophisticated and current imitators and successors. Fun for inspiration, but take with many grains of salt.”

4C. *The Black Arts* by Richard Cavendish. NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1968. [Deutschland: *Schwarze Magie*. G.B. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt, 1969.] (COS-3) (TOS-3) AL: "Good basic primer on the subject." MA: "Still the most lucid introductory book on the subject of 'general occultism'. Chapters on numerology, Cabalism, alchemy, astrology, ritual magic, Black Magic, and Devil worship. Very dispassionate, with esoteric doubletalk kept to a minimum. If you're relatively 'new to occultism' and would like to survey the subject from a non-Temple of Set-particular point of perspective, try this book. Conspicuous defects include an excessive emphasis on the Hebrew Cabala and on similarly superstitious techniques such as astrology, numerology, and alchemy."

4D. *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions* by Mircea Eliade. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976. [Deutschland: *Das Okkulte und die moderne Welt*. O. Müller Verlag, A-Salzburg, 1978.] (TOS-3) MA: "This is a critical analysis of the current appeal of occultism, with case studies taken from the 1960s. Inclusive and generally well-argued, though the cited source material indicates Eliade's unfamiliarity with in-depth documents and doctrines in the murky forest of occultism. He is a distinguished Professor of History of Religions at the University of Chicago and has penned many works of repute in the field." DW: "I think this is Eliade's least interesting book. His others have my universal recommendation."

4E. *Encyclopedia of the Unexplained* by Richard Cavendish (Ed.). NY: McGraw-Hill, 1974. (TOS-3) MA: "This is a very readable encyclopædia which emphasizes 20th-century occultism rather than the more historical material treated by #3I. Contributing editors and authors include such recognized authorities as Professor J.B. Rhine and Ellic Howe (#10F, #14W). Rhine's introductory essay 'How to Cope with a Mystery' is excellent. 304 pages, profusely illustrated."

4F. *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* by Leslie A. Shepard (Ed.). NY: Avon Books #48835, 1980 (two volumes). (TOS-3) MA: "Basis for this large paperback set is #3I and its Fodor companion, which Shepard has updated with more recent material. A pretty good effort and worth the \$20 pricetag."

4G. *A Fascinating History of Witchcraft, Magic, & Occultism* by W.B. Crow. North Hollywood: Wilshire Book Co., 1970. (COS-3) AL: "Has much new material of interest to Satanic scholars."

4H. *The Occult Sourcebook* by Nevill Drury and Gregory Tillett. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978. (TOS-3) MA: "A single-volume survey of contemporary occultism [as of the mid-1970s] by Drury (one of Australia's most intellectual occult students) and Tillett (an anthropologist specializing in contemporary occultism). Stronger on British and Australian movements than on American ones. 45 chapters on various topics, each containing organizational and personal references and suggested books for further study. Sample chapter titles: Traditional Witchcraft, Modern Satanism, Shamanistic Magic, Eastern Mysticism, I Ching, Ritual Consciousness, ESP, The Tattvas, etc. At the end of the book is a 'Who's Who in the Occult' section. An updated edition is expected in the near future. [See also #4L.]"

4I. *Haunted Houses* by Richard Winer and Nancy Osborn. NY: Bantam #23755, 1979.

4J. *More Haunted Houses* by Richard Winer and Nancy Osborn Ishmael. NY: Bantam #24008, 1981.

(TOS-3) MA: "Two entertaining paperbacks containing a vast assortment of haunted houses, graveyards, battlefields, ships, railroads, theaters, prisons, hotels, entire cities, and even an elevator for good measure. Both books are indexed and include bibliographical lists of books and periodicals for avid spook-hunters [and spooks]. #4J contains a June XV interview with Anton LaVey concerning Jayne Mansfield and her 'Pink Palace'."

4K. *The Haight-Ashbury: A History* by Charles Perry. NY: Random House (Vintage Books #394-74144-7), 1984. (TOS-3) MA: "There are many different kinds of 'occultism', including some that don't think of themselves, and aren't usually described by others in that context. The 'Hippie experience' was one such. At the time (ca. 1966-69) it was fragmentary, unprogrammed, and generally difficult for either insiders or outsiders to understand. It was far more than simply a drug-orgy, and - though Anton LaVey would probably be loath to admit it - its values were very much those of the Age of Satan and its Word (Indulgence). Finally there is a book which pulls it all together into a coherent (as much as possible) whole, showing how so many trends of the post-World War II era lead slowly but inevitably into this particular 'critical mass', and how so many of the values in the subsequent decades have been charted along certain courses because of that same 'critical mass'. Included is an account of the 9/21/67 'Satanic mass' conducted by Ken Anger at the Straight Theatre, including the showing of the original version of *Lucifer Rising*, reportedly pilfered that evening by Bobby Beausoliel. See also Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1968), which focuses in on the LBM influence of Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters. See also #19X."

4L. *The Occult Experience* by Nevill Drury. Garden City Park, New York: Avery Publishing Group, 1990 (ISBN 0-89529-414-1). (TOS-3) MA: "This is the book version of the made-for-television film of the same name (#F4A). Drury (author of #4H) was technical consultant to the film, which includes episodes on a variety of occult and quasi-occult groups in Australia, Britain, and the United States. Interviewed/discussed are: [USA]: Selena Fox, Z Budapest, Starhawk, Dr. Gordon Melton (Institute for the Study of American Religion), Dr. Michael & Lilith Aquino, Michael Bertiaux, Dr. Michael Harner (today a shaman but an ex-6114-ite - see #6M), Dr. Charles Tart, Dr. Joan Halifax; [UK]: Fellowship of Isis, Janet & Stewart Ferrar, Alex Saunders; [Australia]: Temple of the Mother, Coven of Lothlorien; [Switzerland]: H.R. Giger. The Temple of Set's discussion accounts for 16 of the book's 150 pages. Also included are names & addresses for all groups/individuals discussed [TOS address outdated], as well as a bibliography. An eight-page black/white photo section is included. Note: This book was also published by Robert Hale Ltd in London, England in 1987, and by Fontana Publishers in Sydney, Australia in 1985. The Australian edition has the photo-section in color."

4M. *The Illuminatus! Trilogy* by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1975 (ISBN: 0-440-53981-1). (TOS-4) MA: “This volume combines the three original paperback novels *The Eye in the Pyramid*, *The Golden Apple*, and *Leviathan* which comprise the *Illuminatus!* trilogy. Alternately referred to as ‘the longest shaggy dog story in literary history’ and ‘a fairy tale for paranoids’, this is a rambling journey through almost every zany occult movement and conspiracy theory in contemporary society. I assume the Temple of Set was spared only because the book was published the same year we were founded. I don’t know what happened to Shea, but Wilson went on to publish some ‘non-fictional’ works in the same vein which, because they lacked the unself-conscious style of *Illuminatus!*, fell right into the category of publications so successfully lampooned by *Illuminatus!*. Truth, however, remains stranger than fiction, and within the pages of *Illuminatus!* you will actually find many gems of, er, occult wisdom. This is perhaps a counterweight to *Morning of the Magicians*: a good book to give to someone who’s **too** obsessed with the occult!”

4N. *The Tarot Handbook: Practical Applications of Ancient Visual Symbols* by Angeles Arrien. Sonoma, California: Arcus Publishing Company, 1987 (ISBN 0-916955-02-8). (TOS-4) R. Menschel IV^o: “An excellent companion to Aleister Crowley’s *Book of Thoth* text and deck (#9L), this book discusses each card’s symbolism and application intelligently from a modern perspective. Much easier to read than Crowley’s text, though lacking in some correspondences, this book also introduces some new applications not mentioned in Crowley’s work.”

4O. *The Gurdjieff Work* by Kathleen Riordan Speeth. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1989 (2nd edition/reprint of 1976 edition). (TOS-2) DW: “This is perhaps the only book on Gurdjieff that tells you what to do rather than relating a history of the movement. If you are really interested in these techniques, you might look for local Gurdjieff/Ouspensky centers; initiation works better when practiced rather than merely read about. But, as always, observe the **graduates** of the school before investing your time, efforts, and funds. The best history of the Gurdjieff movement is James Webb’s *The Harmonious Circle*.”

4P. *Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* by T.M. Luhrmann. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989. (TOS-4) MA: “This is an extremely sophisticated study of the neo-pagan/Wiccan phenomenon by a cultural anthropologist, who went to the extent of joining several covens and participating personally in their ritual activities. Although it is clear that Luhrmann retained an ‘academic detachment’ from the cultures she was investigating, her analysis is remarkable for being empathetic and non-critical; she seeks to understand and to explain, not to condemn or ridicule. Although Wicca is on an entirely different level from that of the Black Arts, Luhrmann’s observations and conclusions are nonetheless most valuable in helping the aspiring Black Magician to see ways in which the Black Art and Science can be used for social/cultural needs common to humans generally. Probably the most insightful study of Wicca yet published.”

4Q. *Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches: The Riddle of Culture* by Marvin Harris. NY: Random House 1974, Vintage Books 1978 (paperback). (TOS-3) Patty Hardy IV°: “This is a functional analysis of food taboos, infanticide, ritualized warfare, messianic cults, and witchcraft crazes. More than an anthropological study of bad craziness, it will alert the Initiate to delusional elements in modern life. Writes Harris: ‘Ignorance, fear, and conflict are the basic elements of everyday consciousness. From these elements, art and politics fashion the collective dreamwork whose function it is to prevent people from understanding what their social life is all about.’ Harris taught anthropology at Columbia University and held the Chair of the Department of Anthropology from 1963 to 1966.”

4R. *Aghora: At the Left Hand of God* (1986) and *Kundalini: Aghora II* (1993) by Robert E. Svoboda. Albuquerque, New Mexico: Brotherhood of Life. (TOS-2) DW: “Readable introductions to the current practices of a branch of the Hindu Left-Hand Path. The Aghorist breaks with the world with beef-eating and seeking that which society deems impure, meets the gods on their own level, and practices those purifying virtues which makes the *psyche* self-aware by not uniting with the laws of the cosmos but escaping them by becoming larger than them. A good cross-read to #3Z. [Write to the Brotherhood of Life, 110 Dartmouth SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106, USA for information on these & other publications.]”

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F4A. *The Occult Experience*. (LVT-2) MA: “This is the videocassette version of #4L.” JL: “This is the famous one we saw at the first Las Vegas Conclave. It is also the one with the ‘If the Devil lives anywhere, it could be in San Francisco’ comment. Michael and Lilith Aquino are interviewed, clips of Anton LaVey from *Satanis* are shown, and from there the film goes downhill. As a study in comparative religion, it is worth adding to one’s personal video library.”