

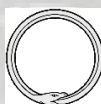
SNASWE1: A Tide of Ghosts: Esotericism and Art beyond Fact and Fiction

University of Copenhagen 24-25 October 2024

City Campus / Hovedbygningen @ Frue Plads
(closest stations are Nørreport, Rådhuspladsen or Kgs. Nytorv)

Keynotes:

- ➔ Professor Annebella Pollen
- ➔ Professor Egil Asprem



<https://ccrs.ku.dk/research/centres-and-projects/ccste/events/a-tide-of-ghosts/>

Organizers: The research project *Twisting the Fabric of Space: On the Art and Politics of the Hidden*

<https://artsandculturalstudies.ku.dk/research/twisting-the-fabric-of-space/>

&

Copenhagen Centre for the Study of Theosophy and Esotericism

<https://ccrs.ku.dk/research/centres-and-projects/ccste/>

Thursday 24 October, 2024

8.30 (Festsalen):

Coffee and welcome by Kasper Opstrup and Tim Rudbøg

Conference sound-track: A Tide of Ghosts by *In finem*

9.00 – 10.00: (3 parallel panels)

Panel I (Fangekælderen) chair: Kasper Opstrup

- ➔ "Escaping the Human Condition: Millenarianism, Counterculture, and Anti-Humanism in the Process Church of the Final Judgment" (**Frederik Gregorius**)
- ➔ "Terminators, Avatars and Changing Image of Man: A Hauntological Analysis of Transhumanism" (**Scott Jeffery**)

Panel II (Festsalen) chair: Tim Rudbøg

- ➔ "Negotiating Spectrality in Henrik Ibsen's *Catiline* (1850)" (**Giuliano D'Amico**)
- ➔ "Fact or Fiction: Attitudes Towards the Spiritual and Occult in 19th Century Fiction" (**Bjarke Stanley Nielsen**)

Panel III (Gobelinsalen) chair: Agus Soewarta

- ➔ "Soviet Ghosts, the Art of the Absurd, and the Esoteric Roots of the Russo-Ukrainian War" (**Mark Sedgwick**)
- ➔ "Worlds of the Necromancer: Magic Lantern Travelogues between the Real and the Imaginary (1880-1929)" (**Eleonora Paklons**)

10.15 – 11.00 (Festsalen): chair: Tim Rudbøg

Keynote: Egil Asprem: "The Conditions of Critique in the Study of Esotericism: Critical Approaches, Postcritique, and the Responsibilities of Scholarship"

11.15 – 12.15: (3 parallel panels)

Panel I (Fangekælderens): *chair: Efram Sera-Shriar*

- ➔ “Occult Realism and Hauntings of the Past in Astrid Ehrencron-Kidde’s *Martin Willén* stories” (**Clara Vestergaard-Thomsen**)
- ➔ “UFOs and Modern Esotericism: A Shifting Relationship” (**Aaron French**)

Panel II (Udvalgsværelse 3): *chair: Tim Rudbøgg*

- ➔ “Fiction and Initiation: Rosicrucianism in Edward Lytton’s *Zanoni*” (**Yongwu Wei**)
- ➔ “Blavatsky’s Fiction Between Exotic Balkanism and Occultism” (**Nemanja Radulović**)

Panel III (Gobelinsalen): *chair: Bjarke Stanley Nielsen*

- ➔ “Art Blurring Boundaries: A Semiotic Perspective on the Expansion of Consciousness Beyond Reality’s Edge” (**Samanta Viziale**)
- ➔ “Cyberdelic://Technofantasy” (**Tancredi Marrone**)

12.15 – 13.00: Lunch

13.00 – 14.00: (3 parallel panels)

Panel I (Fangekælderens): *chair: Kasper Opstrup*

- ➔ “Re-vision and Weird Worlding: Redefining Occulture in Theory and Practice” (**Cavan McLaughlin**)
- ➔ “Traces of (Neo)Lemuria: The World Building of Virtual Continents in Space and Time” (**Bob Cluness**)

Panel II (Udvalgsværelse 3): *chair: Agus Soewarta*

- ➔ “From Video Game Dystopia to Solarpunk Utopia: Occultural Revolution in *Free Guy* (2021)” (**Fryderyk Kwiatkowski**)
- ➔ “Haunting as Agency: The Return of Palestinian Ghosts” (**Sanabel Abdelrahman**)

Panel III (Gobelinsalen): *chair: Manon Hedenborg White*

- “Extraterrestrial Life Beyond Fact and Fiction: Psychological Epistemologies of Mediumship and UFOs Encounters from T. Flournoy to C. G. Jung” (**Nathan Fraikin**)
- “Windows to Eternity: The New UFO Movement and Jacques Vallée” (**Thore Bjørnvig**)

14.00 – 14.30 (Festsalen):

PERFORMANCE:

- “down, black, down, black, down” (**Aepril Schaile**)

14.30 – 15.30: (3 parallel panels)

Panel I (Fangekældereren): *chair: Manon Hedenborg White*

- “Intertwining Art, Esotericism and Fiction – Artist-Seekers as Driving Forces in Occulture” (**Nina Kokkinen**)
- “The Swedish Artist Tyra Kleen – A Constant Seeker” (**Karin Ström Lehandler**)

Panel II (Udvalgsværelse 3): *chair: Tim Rudbøgg*

- “The Video Games Industry as a Producer of Occulture” (**Andrius Hofmann-Lagunavicius**)
- “Battling Demonic Forces with a Joystick: Popular Occulture in Videogames between the 1970s and 1990s” (**Efram Sera-Shriar**)

Panel III (Gobelinsalen): *chair: Kasper Opstrup*

- “After the Ice, the Deluge: Queer Ecologies, Leaky Boundaries, and the Melting Polar Ice Cap” (**Linda Stupart**)
- “The Ghost in the Industrial Loom - A Historical Materialist Approach to Magic, and a Spiritual Approach to Art in the Cultural Industry” (**Vibe Overgaard**)

15.30 – 16.00: PAUSE!

16.00 – 17.00: (3 parallel panels)

Panel I (Fangekælderens): *chair: Kasper Opstrup*

- ➔ “Key to the Mysteries: Kenneth Grant’s *Against the Light* as Roman à Clef, Occult Allegory, and Play” (**Jeff Howard**)
- ➔ “Three Levels of Reified Consciousness: Ideology, Video Games and the Hyperstitional Occult” (**Domas Junelis**)

Panel II (Udvalgsværelse 3): *chair: Tim Rudbøg*

- ➔ “Ectoplasm, Energy and Ephemerality” (**William Redwood**)
- ➔ “Ghosts in Communion with Artist: How to Call Them into Your Work” (**Ruth Bayer & Caroline Wise**)

Panel III (Gobelinsalen): *chair: Bjarke Stanley Nielsen*

- ➔ “Esotericism in Twentieth-Century Danish Art Music” (**Thomas Kirkegaard**)
- ➔ “Surfing the River Styx: Softenings & Inquiries Into Matters of Toxoplasmatic Ectoplasm (and Other Plasmatic Bodies)” (**Niels Lyhne Løkkegaard**)

17.00 – 17.30: (3 parallel films)

- ➔ *FILM I* (Gobelinsalen): “Half Folded Wings” – 23 min film (**Sonja Rendtorff**)
- ➔ *FILM II* (Udvalgsværelse 3): “In Over Your Head” – 20 min film (**Niels Østergaard Munk**)
- ➔ *FILM III*: (Fangekælderens) “Caribbean Mythogonies” – presentation + video, “Ma belle ka di” (**Cristiano Berti**)

19.00: Conference dinner

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Friday 25 October 2024

9.30 (Festsalen):

Coffee

10.15 – 11.00 (Festsalen): *chair: Kasper Opstrup*

Keynote: Annebella Pollen: “Magical Thinking with Magical Things: Living Propaganda and Operative Art in the Kindred of the Kibbo Kift”

11.15 – 12.15: (3 parallel panels)

Panel I (Gobelinsalen): *chair: Manon Hedenborg White*

- ➔ “A Magus in the Closet: Autoethnographic Methods and the Hauntings of Magic” (**Olivia Cejvan**)
- ➔ “Sign, Scission, Seal: Esoteric Cosmogony and Contemporary Theory” (**Inge Birgitte Siegumfeldt**)

Panel II (Udvalgsværelse 3): *chair: Kasper Opstrup*

- ➔ “Seconds Away – A prescient Identity Crisis in John Frankenheimer’s adaptation of David Ely’s classic novel” (**Carl Abrahamsson**)
- ➔ “Everything is True, Nothing is Permitted – Towards a Manual of Mendacity” (**Tom Banger**)

Panel III (Fangekældereren): *chair: Bjarke Stanley Nielsen*

- ➔ “This Is More True Than the Certain” (**Den akefaliske hydra – Four Jacks**)

- “Artistic Creativity, Esotericism, and the ‘Ghost in the Machine’” (**Marja Lahelma**)

12.15 – 13.00: Lunch

13.00 – 14.00: (3 parallel panels)

Panel I (Gobelinsalen) *chair: Mikkel Bolt:*

- “Energy, Surrealism, Dreaming and the Dirt Gang” (**Marc Herbst**)
→ “Anatomical Ghosts” (**Magdalena Germek**)

Panel II (Udvalgsværelse 3): *chair: Kasper Opstrup*

- “Mid-Winter Masquerades” (**Stuart McLean**)
→ “A Ghost in the Moog?: Occult Music Technologies” (**Tim Rudbøg**)

Panel III (Fangekælderen): *chair: Samanta Viziale*

- “Shiism’s Dual Faces in Italy: Bridging Esotericism and Exotericism” (**Minoo Mirshahvalad**)
→ “Occulture and *Eigen-Sinn* in the “Communist Realism” of Carlfriedrich Claus” (**Justyna Balisz-Schmelz**)

14.00 – 15.00: (3 parallel panels)

Panel I (Gobelinsalen): *chair: Samanta Viziale*

- “Comrade Lilith: Infernal Collaborations between the Subaltern and the Monster” (**Brennan Kettelle**)
→ “The Hex Appeal: The Allure of Feminist Witchcraft” (**Maria Østerby Elleby**)

Panel II (Fangekælderen): *chair: Olivia Cejvan*

- “The Madness of Things: The Occult Animisms of Ligottian Horror” (**Amy Slagle**)
→ “Inner Paths to Outer Space” (**Kasper Opstrup**)

Panel III (Udvalgsværelse 3): *chair: Bjarke Stanley Nielsen*

- “With Magic We Play: Pop Cultural Elements Within Modern Magical Practice” (**Andrej Kapcar**)
→ “Consciousness Division and Mystical Experiences in Theater Performers” (**Oscar Moreno Troyo**)

15.00 – 15.30: PAUSE!

15.30 – 16.30: (3 parallel panels)

Panel II (Udvalgsværelse 3): chair: Tim Rudbøg

- “When Weird Fiction Becomes Occult Fiction: A Comparison of Possible Ontologies” (**Adas Diržys**)
- “Tactical Awakening: On Inventing the Sacred” (**Aaron Moulton**)

Panel III (Fangekælderens): chair: Kasper Opstrup

- “Things Happen: Creating with Cut-Ups” (**Vanessa Sinclair**)
- “Secret Histories, Ancient Brotherhoods and the Endless Allure of Esoteric Conspiracy” (**Harald Toksværd**)

16.30 – 17.00: (3 parallel films)

- *FILM I* (Udvalgsværelse 3): “Half Folded Wings” – 23 min film (**Sonja Rendtorff**)
- *FILM II* (Fangekælderens): “In Over Your Head” – 20 min film (**Niels Østergaard Munk**)
- *FILM III* (Gobelinsalen): “Caribbean Mythogonies” – presentation + video, “Ma belle ka di” (**Cristiano Berti**)

17.15 – 17.30 (Festsalen):

Conference closing Kasper Opstrup and Tim Rudbøg

Conference sound-track: A Tide of Ghosts by *In finem*



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Mayhem - <https://maps.app.goo.gl/z1t4xe4FdJ6mxujs7>

"Veve X" & "Walk the walk" (R. Peyre & J. Cussans feat. Dungeon Acid)

Ragnhildsgade 1

- closest metro stations are Skjolds Plads or Vibenshus Runddel on the M3!

ABSTRACTS (alphabetised by first name)

Aaron French: “UFOs and Modern Esotericism: A Shifting Relationship”

In 2017, the NY Times published a story detailing a U.S. Department of Defense program called the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program, which secretly funded research to study UFOs. The article introduced new terminology, referring to such objects as UAPs (unidentified aerial phenomena). In 2022, congressional hearings were held to analyze UAP reports, and the National Defense Authorization Act established a permanent office for reporting on UAPs. Then on July 26, 2023, retired Air Force Intelligence officer David Grusch testified during a congressional UFO hearing that the US military held nonhuman technical crafts, reverse-engineered by private entities, and had found nonhuman “biologics” – all concealed from the public.

This resulted in UFOs officially entering mainstream discourse, with the US government alleged to be exploring themes of time travel, advanced states of evolution, magical technologies, and communication with non-human intelligences – themes rooted in the modern currents of alternative spirituality known as esotericism. Modern esotericism, an array of related but differentiated ideas and movements that emerged during Europe’s shift to global modernity, is often seen as a response to Enlightenment rationalism. It sought to merge distinct knowledge domains, like religion, magic, and science, and varied ways of comprehension, whether rational, mystical, or scientific. Central to esoteric thinkers was the belief that the cosmos wasn’t just scientifically explainable but teemed with spiritual significance.

This prompts the question: Is there a nexus between modern esotericism and the UFO phenomenon? Could they share a religiosity encompassing concepts like evolution, outer space, monism, and engagement with non-human entities? This presentation probes the link between UFOs and modern esotericism, especially how this link transforms contemporary religious practices and perceptions of reality, including art and politics, blending fact and fiction into a visionary approach to the real and the prospective future.

Aaron Moulton: “Tactical Awakening: On Inventing the Sacred”

Karl Popper wrote that the Conspiracy Theory of Society occurs naturally when we have eliminated other forms of mainstream religious thinking. Of course we will turn inwards on our society to understand mystical power and influence. Thanks to atheism and liberalism we are dead-ended at a level of spiritual bankruptcy. Science and politics have toxically become new religions and yet have proven they cannot answer any of the big questions of what happened before and after our consciousness. We are all vulnerably agnostic. Enter conspiracy theory.

Conspiracy theory divides the room allowing every single individual to weigh in on the narrative without anyone having true knowledge of what is real in the story or knowledge of how the outcome will unfold. Those who use the

classic callout of "conspiracy theory" as a trigger to debunk the narrator/narrative have become no different than religious zealots calling someone a witch or charlatan. They are also deeply in a state of faith-based crisis. In that way conspiracy theory has become the ultimate threat to seemingly stable and scientific modes of storytelling.

This brings the next point about folkloric ideas about "emergence" of when the stories we tell ourselves and the stories we have been told are manifested. This is both an idea known in memetic culture called "hyperstition" or "mystically willing something into reality through collective thought" but dates further back into tricksterism and hysterics with the term "pseudo-ostension". This last term shows how deeply ingrained we are in being prepared to see the mystical cultural lore that we have told ourselves are real. Think the Nisse/tomte, Santa Claus or Bigfoot but actually keep your thoughts in an exclusively fear-based realm of the Boogeyman. False Flags are a way to manifest the most evil stories we tell ourselves and the stories we have been told might happen by the media and our governments. These are forgeries. And if governments know that we are waiting for it, all it takes is someone dressing up like Santa Claus or Bigfoot and being staged/seen in the right way by the media and it spreads as a religious image that remaps everyone's worldview.

Adam Soper: "Cultural Subterraneans: the Haunting of Past Gestures in Improvised Musical Performance"

This paper will comprise of a 20-minute improvised performance on electric guitar and electronics, accompanied by a backing track made up of residue from past recorded improvised performances undertaken by Soper in the month of October dating back to 2019. These past improvisations will be collaged together, edited digitally, and combined with audio taken from sonification processes of each of the releases' cover artwork. Through the sampling of fragments (and then editing of them) of past improvisations, this work draws out the notion that hauntings present in culture are not perfect returns, but any form of repetition is always-already different, changed by the mere fact of repetition and recontextualisation.

The live improvised performance will be in a continual dialogue with the ghosts from the recordings, reacting to – and attempting to make musical sense of – the ideas that present themselves in the audio tracks. The electronics that will augment the electric guitar parts will be a delay effect, a looper, and an infinite sustain pedal. These effects will record varying lengths of the improvisations and repeat them back in a variety of ways (long sustained chords or notes, repeated fragments or longer passages that can be reversed or the playback speed changed). In this way the performance will be more than a reaction to a haunting, as the live element whilst always being reactive to ghosts, will always be in the process of becoming a ghost itself. In this way the performance will draw out and highlight questions of temporality and memory: we are not only haunted by our ancestors, or past culture or technology, but by our past selves. These past selves are both those of years prior, but also mere moments.

Adas Diržys: “When Weird Fiction Becomes Occult Fiction: A Comparison of Possible Ontologies”

While weird fiction and occult fiction often converge or even merge into one another without a possibility to separate them, both genres are not necessarily related. The godfather of weird fiction, H. P. Lovecraft, even cautioned the upcoming generation of writers against the incorporation of occult elements into their works emphasizing the importance of indescribability of reality (it could be suspected that strict leanings towards materialist philosophies influenced the choice accordingly) for the particular evocation of the feeling of horror to which familiar tropes imported from the occult world do not apply. Contrary to this, studies have shown that the occult was much more familiar personally to Arthur Machen and Algernon Blackwood, the grandmasters of the weird. Moreover, several contemporary authors of weird fiction expressed the relevance of the occult themes to their writings that also serve a purpose of a certain fictional practice (among them could be mentioned Reggie Oliver, Matt Cardin and Richard Gavin). Bearing in mind the metaphysical orientation of weird fiction, it is possible to see the intersection with occult fiction through its speculation about the status of reality. However, the tensions between the two genres invite us to ask: what kind of ontological premises and consequences could be gathered by the comparison? Do they differ between each other? How does weird fiction become occult fiction? Is it just a change of cultural ascription, or a different system of ontology?

Aepril Schaele: “down, black, down, black, down”

I propose an interdisciplinary performance of dramatic poetry and dance. Via my poems, I give testimony to my encounters with Underworld Kings: Fionnbharr, King of Connacht at Cnoc Meadha and Pluto, at the Plutonion at Eleusis. At times I speak as the Goddess herself, sometimes as a human woman, sometimes as a more-than-human animal. I will perform a devotional dance that invites you, the audience, to experience what I experience at these sites.

Den akefaliske hydra – Four Jacks: “This Is More True Than the Certain”

Why revisit the Emerald Tablet? Except for being one of the major texts affecting, directly or indirectly, all occult thought since its creation, it’s a key—a key or a map to the holy grail, to life eternal. But our eyes, covered with the sleep of generations, are still blinded by the letters that came into being while God was still awake. Therefore, this is a revision, not the key of old. This is the afterimage, the ghost, the echo of the key, and though these reshaped lines, blurred or brutalized, and the form, eerily ethereal, we might later recognize the landscape of the real map from its ghastly shape, and hopefully again come to speak with words of creation in order to wake the original substance from its slumber.

By conjuring forth this spectral voice haunting the Emerald Tablet, not only does the murky twilight void of the modern human condition show itself, but reveling in this advancing darkness, the original Emerald Tablet might show itself as the way out, as a shining fixture on the horizon, never attainable, but clearer than ever before. In that, this revision becomes the necessary unstoppable force to hit the Emerald Tablet as an immovable object, in order

to break it from its harmonic chains, by forcing the perfect circle to become an ellipse. From this impossible collision we might for a moment break the deterministic shell and peek through to the acausal reality that our ancestors fought with like Jacob at Peniel.

We stand on the shoulders of many interpreters of the tablet, hence, a direct translation is not our key focus. Rather, it is the ritual of revivification that matters. Like the rites of solstice have to be repeated annually to ensure the sun chariots continuous battle against obscurity, so the writer must continuously strive for insight in the unspoken, rather than plotting the spoken. In this sense, we challenge the so-called “realistic” (although inherently metaphysical) ambition that has been festering in European culture for hundreds of years. Our creations must soften the deafening choir of consensus, transforming the mechanical cuckoo clock of the universe into a being alive and free to soar. We must sow the seeds of creation in the acausal soil that lies in the root of being. Let literature be the death of will and birth of spirit.

Amy Slagle: “The Madness of Things: The Occult Animisms of Ligottian Horror”

A breathing, seething undercurrent of terrifying aliveness courses through the haunted terrains of Thomas Ligotti’s horror fiction. Strange, unsettling transpositions of agency regularly occur in his stories between his human characters and the objects and places of their physical environments. Ricketty houses, ancient grimoires, and wire-rimmed spectacles are just a sampling of the many objects that rise as cruel taskmasters to powerfully shape the actions and fates of human protagonists unable to escape. At the same time, amidst the dark demiworlds of madness they inhabit, the human characters of the Ligottian hellscape are often transformed into and are rendered as “things,” manikins, puppets, or unspeakable slithering creatures seemingly devoid of sentience. In this paper, I will explore the occult relationships between persons and things (with the categories of the non-human and human as indistinct, transposable, and contingent), that appear in Ligotti’s short fiction. Drawing upon the work of Bruno Latour, Graham Harvey, and Timothy Morton among others, I argue that Ligotti’s fiction serves as a case study for exploring ontologies of agency and the unseen and unknowable relationships between persons, both animate and inanimate, that permeate the cosmos. Concepts drawn from New Animism will take center stage in this paper. Furthermore, the exquisite stories of Ligotti’s imaginary reflect humankind’s initial, faltering steps into the Anthropocene, in which non-human entities and phenomena, including viruses, climate change, nuclear weapons, and artificial intelligence, have the potential to limit capacities for unending material growth and nullify dreams of technological mastery. Thus, the resonances between Ligotti’s fictional depiction of the “madness of things” with our current moment will be explored.

Andrej Kapcar: “With Magic We Play: Pop Cultural Elements Within Modern Magical Practice”

The practice of magic in contemporary society is truly a dynamic, ever evolving phenomenon. Next to the more traditional teachings, new forms of magic were emerging for several past decades. The rise of Chaos Magick marked the probably most important transition towards “DIY” magic, defined by the non-traditional, non-hierarchical, experimental, and often playful practices. With the idea behind it being to apply what resonates the

most with the practitioners, characters, worlds, and practices from popular culture started to play a significant role in the ritual design. According to my respondents, sometimes the more “traditional” deities or spirits are not something the practitioners can associate themselves with, and thus they search for more emotionally, or aesthetically relatable alternatives. The warrior Kratos, from the God of War series, the electrical rodent Pikachu from the Pokemon franchise, or even the singers Lady Gaga or Dolly Parton are being included into the rituals, serving as servitors representing certain associated traits or archetypes. In similar fashion several chaotes (the practitioners of Chaos Magick) use astral travel to visit fictional worlds inspired by video games, or anime. In this presentation I will focus on examples of magic that implements pop-cultural phenomena, from the theoretical foundation to the practical usage. In chosen case studies, I will show the progression in modern magical practice and the importance of the narrative and aesthetic function of popular culture within the contemporary esoteric milieu.

Andrius Hofmann-Lagunavicius: “The Video Games Industry as a Producer of Occulture”

The thesis of this project is that the videogame industry can be viewed as a cultural phenomenon which reproduces esoteric content. By that I seek to investigate how esoteric elements related to the academic field of western esotericism are being (re)presented in the videogame industry. With 3.2 billion gamers, and annual revenues which surpasses the film and music industry combined, the videogame industry’s (re)presentations of religious ideas may have a cultural impact.

Methodologically I employ Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis (CDA) to the sources (5 types of videogames), in which the focus lays on intertextuality, discourse formations, and construction of identities. With CDA as methodological framework, I seek to understand how elements from videogames branch out into other cultural spheres. The result of this project aims to contribute to the academic field of western esotericism, by introducing and engaging Post-Marxist perspectives such as the ontology of Agamben, capitalist realism by Fisher, and the concepts of technics and time by Stiegler, and by setting the videogame industry on the map, as a significant source for studying contemporary esotericism.

Bjarke Stanley Nielsen: “Fact or Fiction: Attitudes towards the Spiritual and occult in 19th-century fiction”

Some of the most prolific authors of the 19th century incorporated themes in their work which in contemporary academia is referred to as esotericism. Mary Shelley’s (1797-1851) *Frankenstein* (1818) and Herbert G. Wells’ (1866-1946) *The Invisible Man* (1897) dealt with esoteric and invisible aspects of humanity and nature. Leo Tolstoy’s classics such as *Anna Karenina* (1878), and *War and Peace* (1869) reflected spiritual themes and familiarity with esoteric traditions like Freemasonry. The relations to esoteric traditions are however in many cases much more than thematic. Shelly was aware of Cornelius Agrippa, while Wells and Tolstoy seemed to have been familiar with Theosophy. This paper approaches the role of esotericism within the works of these 19th-century authors, by distinguishing between three nuances through which esoteric elements are expressed: (1) fiction as the means of conveying the author’s attitude on esoteric or spiritual matters; (2) fiction as a means of

conveying an attitude in society; (3) fiction as means of conveying a purely fictive story with no grounding in the attitude of the author or the society.

Based on these three nuances this paper asks to what extent the esoteric elements in the writings of Shelly, Tolstoy, and Wells reflect the attitude of the authors, the attitude of the surrounding society, or are of the purely colorful elements meant to entertain? In short, the paper aims to discuss the borders between facts and fiction related to the use of esotericism in 19th-century fiction. The paper argues that esoteric elements were only partly fictional. They often reflected contemporary attitudes, such as public skepticism towards the spiritualist movements or the ridicule of esoteric elements within the scientific community. Yet beneath such skepticism, there was admiration for at least parts of the esoteric tradition. Sometimes, what is presented as fiction is to some extent facts.

Bob Cluness: "Traces of (Neo)Lemuria: The World Building of Virtual Continents in Space and Time"

In this paper I trace the ongoing discursive developments regarding the "lost" continent of Lemuria in 20th century occulture. From Theosophy and the pulp Sci-Fi retellings of Richard Schaver's *I see Lemuria*, to its proliferation in New Age/UFOlogy subcultures and William Burroughs' last story, *The Ghost Lemurs of Madagascar*, I will highlight how Lemurian discourses and mythos underwent a divergent development through the works of the Cybernetic Cultures Research Unit (CCRU), generating a hidden history of immanent and multiplicitous time sorcery of Lemurianism that is pitted against the perennial high magick of the Atlantean Architectonic Order of the Eschaton.

In her study of the historical, scientific, and occult origins of the lost continent of Lemuria, Sumathi Ramaswamy argues against the determining on the value of whether Lemuria actually exists as a material reality, but instead asks the reader to view the mythical continent as a "place-world" as a site of "loss" or "the representation of an unfulfilled potential seeking to be realized." Lemurian discourses thus, represent the construction of utopian "non-places" as an imaginal line of flight, representing an enchanted construction of new ways of being and doing that are oppositional to dominant social narratives.

Said discursive history and contemporary occultural developments have set the scene for an emergent "philosophical, occult, and artistic movement," that calls itself *Neolemurianism*. This community seek to research and develop the idea of "Neolemuria" as "the body which Lemuria constructs in time." In its utilisation and exploration of Lemurian discourses, I will go on to explore Neolemurianism's various creative and occult experiments in developing concepts and engineering a virtual mythos that seeks to explore the pre-personal ideas of multiplicity and non-linearity that lie behind the organising principles of space and time at the heart of human experience and the inner life of the psyche.

Brennan Kettelle: "Comrade Lilith: Infernal Collaborations between the Subaltern and the Monster"

Within the framework of monster theory, the monster is a figure that betrays the anxieties, taboos, and shames of a given culture. Whereas certain monsters are universally feared by a particular society, others become the focal point of a dynamic cultural interplay between vilification and reclamation. Through examining the mythic qualities and narratives of the monsters that occupy this dualistic position, tensions between hegemonic values and institutions versus subaltern positionalities and social movements are exposed. The religiomythic demoness Lilith is one such monster. For the past several centuries, Lilith has penetrated Western culture through her presence in artistic, literary, sociopolitical, and occult discourses. Popularly embraced by feminist and queer movements, Lilith is also weaponized by heteropatriarchal anxieties responding to the threat of increased agency among oppressed groups. Through contrasting these discourses, a nuanced lens in which to analyze hegemonic power structures is presented. As such, this paper situates Lilith not only as an injection of occulture into society, but further as a locale of Western power dynamics and stratification. In providing an overview of divergent Lilithean discourses and identifying similar narratives expressed in both vilifying and reclamatory perspectives, this paper suggests that the social groups who engage with the monstrous from a place of solidarity typically represent socially ostracized populations. Furthermore, this paper argues that the monsters in which marginalized populations embrace reveal the transformations and revolutions that said oppressed groups wish to see manifested into the material world. Through examining the figure of Lilith in terms of this subaltern alignment, we may observe the trend of socially vilified populations utilizing monsters as comrades of liberatory potential and reclamatory power. In this way, Lilith offers a demonic collaboration that transcends the terrestrial, invoking the infernal realms of the mythic as a site of inspired resiliency and revolutionary power.

Carl Abrahamsson: “Seconds Away – A prescient Identity Crisis in John Frankenheimer’s adaptation of David Ely’s classic novel”

Looking at John Frankenheimer’s 1966 film *Seconds* (and the 1963 novel by the same name by David Ely), Carl Abrahamsson will present themes and perspectives of prescience in this absolute classic of paranoid science fiction. The protagonist’s journey from existentialist victim of malaise, over taking drastic measures (identity swapping, cosmetic surgery etc) and ending up in the Abyss of negative self realization constitutes a great model for studying many dominant themes in our present day. Dealing with malaise by creating false identities in the hope of being or becoming what others project on you has never been easier to experience, and never harder to deal with. Frankenheimer’s masterful dystopian epic gives us both insights and outlooks so that we can balance our own individual processes of genuine *becoming*.

Cavan McLaughlin: “Re-vision and Weird Worlding: Redefining Occulture in Theory and Practice”

This presentation will present some of the conclusions of the recently completed practice-based PhD, ‘Occultural Production as Re-vision and Weird Worlding’. One of the central pieces of practice in this research project has been the creation of the Trans- States research network and its associated conferences and exhibitions (trans-states.org). The construction of these radical convocations—and the networks that both feed into and emerge from

them—was undertaken to examine the role and function of occulture and the processes that generate and propagate occulture—that is, the processes of occultural production.

Trans- States is a proponent of alternative forms of knowledge production through the construction of radical research methodologies and has been (in)formed, in part, by way of an intuitive think/feel process wherein the agency of the entity 'Trans- States' itself was deliberately integrated into its manifestation. The construction of Trans- States' convocal assemblages has required a great deal of consciously undertaken systematising and methodical thought; however, given the entity, Trans- States, is understood to have a certain 'life' of its own, it was also afforded a measure of 'alienated agency', allowing space for intuitive leaps and unanticipated 'lines of flight' (Pasi, 2014; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

Entification is a common process and is, for example, how legal fictions known as corporations function. They are given an identity (name, logo, and branding) and a statement of intention (the Articles of Incorporation) to guide their ongoing activities. However, one can take this a step further by planning, strategising, and ultimately acting as though such fictive entities are real, for example, by utilising agential realism as a framework for interpreting their intra-actions and entanglements (Barad, 2007).

The presentation will offer reflection and analysis as to what the practice of co-authoring these occultural productions with other fictive entities and alienated agents has revealed about the role, function, and definition of occulture itself.

Clara Vestergaard-Thomsen: "Occult Realism and Hauntings of the Past in Astrid Ehrencron-Kidde's *Martin Willén Stories*"

From 1909 to the 1930's, the Danish writer Astrid Ehrencron-Kidde published a series of tales about the psychic lawyer Martin Willén. As Willén roams the dark, desolate forests and the rural villages at the outskirts of 19th century Swedish society, he is haunted by vibrant visions of past tragedies in the lives of the common people, eerily rooted in the places where they once unfolded. The untold stories of the past haunt the present and demand to be told. Subjected to these visions, Willén transcends the border between the past and the present, and unwillingly finds himself obliging the demands of these spectres of the past, causing him significant distress – what he himself terms a 'burden of eeriness' ('uhyggebyrde'), resembling a Freudian repetition compulsion. The visions are presented as a form of embedded stories, in which Willén becomes the witness of bleak human tragedies of solitude, alcoholism, women's conditions, social hierarchies, death, revenge, and merciless nature.

What I wish to explore in my presentation is the way in which these embedded stories resemble a realist interest in the unembellished representation of the lives of ordinary people, but that the telling of them are contingent on supernatural, occult events in the form of Willén's psychic visions. Ehrencron-Kidde, then, not only juxtaposes two very different ways of literary representation but shows them as dependent on each other, only existing in the narrative because of each other.

Theoretically, the presentation proposes that a specific type of 'occult realism' is at work in Ehrencron-Kidde's

stories about Willén, one in which supernatural or occult happenings are subservient to overall mimetic purposes of depicting hardships of common people in rural areas. My theoretical framework consists of theorists such as Gérard Genette, Peter Brooks, Sigmund Freud and Gísli Magnússon.

Cristiano Berti: “Caribbean Mythogonies” – presentation + video, “Ma belle ka di”

Myth is generally considered a narrative that comes in multiple variations. According to the Romanian scholar Ioan Petru Culianu, author of a radical revision of the conceptions of religion and magic, the myth is neither a basic story nor the totality of its variants, nor is it made up of the elements that these variants have in common. The myth does not exist, only variants exist and - always following Culianu - the same dynamics of poesis that applied to the men who invented the myths transmitted by tradition, also apply to modern man, the modern mythopoeist. Furthermore, and here comes the contribution for which Culianu is most remembered, myths, like religions, are the result of cognitive processes, of ramifications of conscious and unconscious choices. Therefore, by analyzing a text, one may encounter latent myths: myths that were not “invented” by the author, but which are embedded in the text and are just waiting to be discovered.

Before a murderous hand took his life, Culianu was able to combine his research as erudite scholar of Renaissance magic and Gnosticism with fictional prose writing. In a series of stories, among which the one entitled *The Emerald Game* stands out, he explored those imaginary and multidimensional worlds that would later constitute the subject of his last essay, dedicated to out-of-body experiences. These tales are mythogonies, which can be analyzed with the same method that their author reserved for late antiquity, medieval, and renaissance texts.

I am a visual artist. In my contribution I propose to subject to a comparative analysis Culianu's *The Emerald Game* and my video *Ma belle ka di*, shot in Martinique in 2011. The video presents curious analogies with Culianu's story, as they both show an initiatory path. *Ma belle ka di*'s path is based on the meetings with a traditional healer and a storyteller, both immersed in a mystical dimension. Beyond my intentions, through the assembly of these mythographic fragments and other images, the video becomes, itself, a bearer of latent myths. The analysis, carried out more than ten years after the creation of the video, constitutes an experiment in discovering some of these latent myths.

Domas Junelis: “Three Levels of Reified Consciousness: Ideology, Video Games and the Hyperstitional Occult”

Reality is not obvious, reality is weird. It is of this contention that these three forms of reification testify: ideology, video games, and the hyperstitional occult. Ideology points to the necessary dependence of consciousness on a given social totality. Video games generate an immersive world *that is not*. Hyperstitional occultism, on the other hand, talks about the mystery that is *not yet here*. All these forms are united by the common attitude that everything is not as it appears. This paper can be understood as a thought experiment about three levels of reified consciousness. First of all, we start with 1) social reality that subjects individual consciousness to imposed ideological dispositions, then we proceed to 2) a video game, itself emerging within social conditions, that simulates its own peculiar world in which 3) we find various manifestations of hyperstitional occult. All of this brings us to the epistemological-ontological dilemma as considered by authors such as A. Sohn-

Rethel („real abstraction“) and R. Brassier („strange sameness“), as well as the particular occult angles found in examples such as *The Elder Scrolls*, *Bloodborne*, *Cyberpunk 2077*, carrying its hyperstitional ambition (CCRU, Gruppo di Nun). As a result of such consideration, we can come to conclusion that reality only ever appears to us through interposed representations and never directly. However, to recognize the necessary weirdness of reality means, at the same time, to recognize it as a real rather than an illusory quality of reality.

Efram Sera-Shriar: “Battling Demonic Forces with a Joystick: Popular Occulture in Videogames between the 1970s and 1990s”

Popular occulture has been a mainstay in videogames since the emergence of the medium in the 1970s. For many, the 1978 arcade mega hit, *Space Invaders*, has been positioned as an important precursor to horror and occult videogames due to its basic premise: giant aliens invading the Earth, seeking to destroy humanity. The survival-like gameplay with its dark aesthetic, menacing soundtrack, and steadily increasing speed, produces an almost desperate effect on the player, with many of the elements typical of later horror and occult themed videogames like *Resident Evil*, *Diablo*, and *Five Nights at Freddy's*, to name a few examples. Even the artwork on *Space Invaders'* arcade cabinet features elements of Lovecraftian weird fiction [See attached image]. The iconic image on the side of the machine shows a shadowy, monstrous figure looming over a desolate desert-like landscape in space. However, it was not just at the arcade where gamers have encountered popular occulture. There has been a wide-range of home console videogames with horror and occultic content. Atari, for example, produced a string of successful videogames featuring magic, horror, and occult themes throughout the early years of the 1980s. Many of these videogames were adapted from the blockbuster films of the era including *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.

Today, videogames continue to be one of the biggest platforms for horror, magic and occult entertainment. Best-selling franchises such as *Diablo* and *Resident Evil* have sold over a hundred million copies each. And yet, despite the central role videogames hold as a key conduit for producing and disseminating knowledge about horror, magic and the occult for broad audiences, it remains severely understudied. This paper will explore the popular occulture of videogames from the golden age of arcades between 1978 and 1983 to the end of the 16-bit era in the mid 1990s. It will consider the horror and occultic aesthetics and symbolism present in these games, as well as issues of reality versus fiction in relation to the gameplay. Key examples will include: *Space Invaders*, *Haunted House*, and *Ghosts 'n Goblins*. The paper will also position the history of horror and occult themed videogames against the backdrop of both the occult revival in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Satanic panic of the 1980s. Both had significant impact on the production and reception of horror and occultic videogames.

Fredrik Gregorius: “Escaping the human condition: Millenarianism, counterculture, and anti-humanism in the Process Church of the Final Judgment.”

The Process Church of the Final Judgment was a short-lived apocalyptic movement active only between 1966 to the middle of the 1970's, being completely disbanded and reformed as the Foundation Faith of the Millennium in 1977. Then the group was in total disarray, one of the founders, and for all intent, the public face of the Church, Robert

De Grimston, had been expelled and the teachings of the unity of Christ, Satan, Lucifer, and Jehovah, that had been the primary theology of the movement, had been thrown out. Despite being active for a short period the Process became one of the most notorious and legendary esoteric groups in the 60's and 70's, being the subject of different conspiracy theories and accusations of associations with Charles Manson and David Berkowitz, the Son of Sam-killer. They also served as an inspiration for later esotericist and movements like the Genesis P-Orridge and the Satanic Temple. There has also been a resurrection in interest about the Process through art and music like the work of the Sabbath Assembly. As a movement the Process appeared like an inversion of both the flower power era, with black clothes and use of Satanic imagery, and as an inversion of Christian dispensationalist theology, focusing on the unity between Christ and Satan rather than their final conflict. Also, the movement preached a form of apocalyptic anti-humanism.

Recurring in the texts produced by the Process was a millenarian idea about the "end". What this meant, and what would happen after was often very vague, but a strong theme was a rejection of humanity. "Humanity is the Devil" was the title of one of the Process most famous texts, and a theme that recurs throughout their production. Humanity was about to end and there was to be a unity of the great gods of the universe. But what would happen after was less clear. In the following paper I suggest that the idea of the "End times" was not so much based on an idea about a future millennial paradise, rather the experience of End was what was more of a performative experience and more subjective, an approach to life. The paper will analyze the Process as part of a larger countercultural millenarianism that identified themselves as in opposition to the mainstream, the Grey Forces, as the Process called them. The apocalypse was experienced in the opposition to the mainstream Grey Forces that was seen as heading the world towards a disaster or an existence without any substance. The paper will be based on the publications from the Process and archival material.

Fryderyk Kwiatkowski: "From Video Game Dystopia to Solarpunk Utopia: Occultural Revolution in *Free Guy* (2021)"

Free Guy is a science-fiction action comedy about Guy, a background AI character in an online open-world video game "Free City," where players act like violent sociopaths and commit crimes for fun. After Guy becomes self-conscious due to the work of programmers Millie and Keys, he tries to save his world, and all virtual denizens in it, from a greedy company's owner Antwan, who tries to annihilate the game in the name of profit. In this talk, I will look at how the film merges elements of ancient Gnosticism with video game aesthetics and environmental thought to present a Marxist-infused critique of capitalist exploitation and a simulation of a greenish utopia, brought about by the virtual characters' spiritual revolution. More specifically, I will show, first, how *Free Guy* utilizes elements of the so-called classical Gnostic myth as a basis for its storyworld. In the next step, I will present how the film's video game visual style is employed to distinguish Free City from the diegetic real world and to portray the main character's inner transformation. Here, I will pay special attention to analyzing the reactions of players who, once they discover that Guy is nothing but a semi-sapient AI entity, start exploring existential questions of what it means to be alive and what makes life worth living. In the last part, I will look closer at the political status of the Edenic urban utopia emerging in the film's post-apocalyptic happy ending, which subtly points toward a solarpunk movement as a potential solution to climate change.

Giuliano D'Amico: "Negotiating Spectrality in Henrik Ibsen's *Catiline* (1850)"

My paper stems from an ongoing book project focused on a hauntological reading of four early plays by Henrik Ibsen, *Catiline* (1850), *The Pretenders* (1864), *Brand* (1866) and *Emperor and Galilean* (1873). In this paper I will concentrate on the first, showing how it already epitomizes the spectral tensions that are evident in the others.

The history of conceptualizations of theatrical ghosts and spectrality is rife with psychologizations and metaphors, which have reduced ghosts to projections of the minds of other characters. My project goes in a radically opposite direction, arguing that the now broadly recognized field of study that goes under the rubric of the "spectral turn," opens up and gains importance when metaphorical and psychological readings are put aside and one instead takes a ghost for a ghost. More generally put: what role do these seemingly marginal figures play? If one or more of the characters is in fact a ghost, what are the consequences for our interpretation of a play?

Drawing upon different approaches to spectrality, and most notably on Jacques Derrida's concept of *hauntology*, I will discuss the spectral manifestation characters in *Catiline* and how they affect our understanding of the play. In addition to Catiline's old general and mentor Sulla, who appears in a ghostly cloak towards the end of the play, I will show how the play muddies the waters when it comes to understanding the nature of Furia, Catiline's lover. This figure has traditionally been ascribed demonic traits, but based on a comparison of the two versions of the play (1850 and 1875), I argue that Ibsen leaves much unclarity – or spectral ambiguity – regarding how we as readers, Catiline as her lover and opponent, and Furia herself should understand her status. Is she a living character, a ghost or a living dead?

Harald Toksværd: "Secret Histories, Ancient Brotherhoods and the Endless Allure of Esoteric Conspiracy"

Harald Toksværd presents his new novel, *God Will Know His Own*, in a talk about the ways esotericism suffuses our literature and, by its nature, subverts the archetypical detective novel genre as the search for material truth becomes a search for inner, experiential truth. From Dan Brown to Umberto Eco, more or less informed actors have utilized the language of esotericism and occultism to weave mystery and intrigue into more traditional literary narratives, often to great commercial success. Firstly, esotericism here becomes a tool of its own surface; it is efficient as a storytelling device **b_e_c_a_u_s_e_** it is opaque and not easily available to the reading audience. The unintelligibility of esoteric text and the obscurity of its history makes its mere mention magical, naturally exuding mystery to the reader. Secondly, it can represent a subversive ontology by nature of its obscurity, allowing the reader access to new modes of thought through the introduction of a secret tradition which has survived the birth of the modern world, and so opens the possibility of different worlds born by different modes of thought than those deemed currently hegemonic. Finally, it is **f_u_n_** – understood here in the sense that esoteric imagery and history, in its opacity and tendency towards colorful and fantastical metaphor, inspires imagination and possibility. This presentation will introduce these ideas through an introduction to the newly released novel, *God Will Know His Own*, and the ways it utilizes esoteric history and imagery to not only catch the imagination of the reader but challenge the mnemohistory of European modernity and the birth of the Renaissance.

Inge Birgitte Siegumfeldt: "Sign, Scission, Seal: Esoteric Cosmogony and Contemporary Theory"

According to kabbalistic theosophy, creation began when the infinite being inscribed the first letter of its secret name in the primordial void. Graphically, this initial is minute. Even so, it holds the entire creative power of the universe and is pure perfection. Perfection, however, must contain its opposite and so, fracture is instituted in the created world. In Pentateuch we find several divine covenants established at crucial moments in the biblical history of mankind, each marked by a particular seal or sign. Perhaps the most distinctive is the birth of monotheism attested by circumcision. The ritual of circumcision involves the preputial cut which in esoteric thought is morphologically identified with the divine initial. Now, can we possibly translate these esoteric images into the intellectual idiom of contemporary theory, which situates itself so radically outside any metaphysical models of thought, and which persistently seeks to unsettle fixed doctrinal frameworks? Well, we can, but a necessary condition of proposing such a relation is to strip these notions of their religious aspects and look at them, simply, as tropes and by extension connecting them with the imagery of rupture which accompanies such modes of contemporary thought as poststructuralism, deconstruction and post-postmodernism. My discussion thus centers on the notion of creation as an act of naming, sealing, or signing, and seeks to present the authorial signature as a moment of scission in which esoteric notions of creation, the covenant of circumcision and contemporary theory converge.

Jeff Howard: "Key to the Mysteries: Kenneth Grant's *Against the Light* as Roman à Clef, Occult Allegory, and Play"

Kenneth Grant chose to write the tenth, unofficial volume of his Typhonian trilogies as a novel called *Against the Light*: a roman à clef in the classic mode, with figures from his occult milieu fictionalized as thinly veiled characters. At the same time, *Against the Light* is a "clef" or "key" in more than one sense, in that it is both a grimoire in fictional form and a key to the dense mysteries of Grant's system. *Against the Light* is thus occult fiction in the original etymological sense, containing hidden truths of occult practice that are simultaneously concealed and revealed through fictional allegory. Moreover, this novel slots into Grant's larger ideas about the role of fiction in the occult, i.e. that works of fiction (like dreams, to which they are analogous) can communicate occult truths of the Left Hand Path. Specifically, Grant argues that works of fiction can operate as portals through which "negatively existent" entities from the Nightside of the Tree of Life can enter the mundane waking world. Moreover, fiction allows Grant to encode occult practices that he would otherwise be forbidden to communicate by his occult injunctions to keep silence. Grant thus consciously aligns himself with a tradition of fictionally allegorized occult practice that stretches backwards to Apuleius' *Golden Ass* and forwards to the hypersigils of Grant Morrison. Investigating the interrelationship between Grant's *Against the Light* and the nine-volume Typhonian trilogies of which it is the fictional précis reveals an unusually comprehensive and cogent example of the interrelationship between occult history, fiction, and practice. This relationship offers lessons for current occult practice and occulture, including the media influenced by Kenneth Grant, with emphasis on games such as *Invisible Sun*, which operate as generative ludic frameworks in which the currents summoned by Grant can be experienced as play.

Justyna Balisz-Schmelz: "Occulture and Eigen-Sinn in the "Communist Realism" of Carl Friedrich Claus"

In my presentation, I would like to discuss the work of East German artist Carlfriedrich Claus (1930-1988). Even as a teenager, Claus delved into Jewish mysticism and studied foreign languages such as Hebrew, Armenian, Georgian, and Russian. In 1948, his reading list included – alongside Marx – Spinoza, Steiner, Novalis, Paracelsus, and Jacob Böhme. From the 1950s onward, the artist delved into Jewish mysticism, the secrets of shamanism, Tibetan Buddhism, dream yoga, and tantric art. Claus was also significantly influenced by the views of his penfriend, Ernst Bloch. As he declared, all of these inspirations helped him find the best form of expression for "communist realism," but he remained a dangerous heretic to the East German authorities throughout. Researchers do mention his esoteric interests, but most in-depth analyses are primarily based on theoretical references to structuralism and post-structuralism (Barthes, Deleuze), reader-oriented approaches (Iser, Eco), or Marxist authors (Benjamin, mysticism mediated by Bloch). However, the early intellectual and spiritual fascinations of the artist suggest the need to seek the sources of his artistic practice directly in the traditions of Western esotericism and "new spiritualities." One of Claus's most significant accomplishments was the so-called *Sprachblätter*, which involved phonetic experiments and series of drawings, all stemming from the artist's profound belief in the power of language, embodied knowledge, and imagination. In these works, references to broadly understood esotericism can be found not only in the titles, motifs, direct quotations, or content but also in the very way of seeking communication with the audience. Using Claus as an example, I will refer to a lesser-known and still unexplored chapter in the history of art in the GDR. Furthermore, Claus will allow me to demonstrate how current political and social dynamics can become the catalyst for new conceptualizations of esoteric traditions, and vice versa - how esoteric currents can serve to renegotiate the forms of expression and meanings of seemingly distant phenomena such as "communist realism." Finally, I will argue that in the case of Claus, the turn to esotericism can be perceived as another manifestation of *Eigen-Sinn* (a sense of one's interest) as defined by Alf Lüdtke and Thomas Lindenberger.

Eleonora Paklons: "Worlds of the Necromancer: Magic Lantern Travelogues between the Real and the Imaginary (1880-1929)"

Karin Ström Lehander: “The Swedish Artist Tyra Kleen – A Constant Seeker”

The Swedish artist Tyra Kleen (1874–1951) was an adventurous and urbane woman, and a constant traveler. Described by her contemporaries as a vagabond and cosmopolite, she also lived abroad for long periods. Tyra Kleen was born in Stockholm and raised in an aristocratic setting at the family estate Valinge near Nyköping in Sweden. Her father was a diplomat who brought his family along on his assignments, making Tyra Kleen a seasoned traveler in her childhood, so she made many international friends and learned several languages.

Already at a young age Tyra Kleen displayed a talent for drawing and painting. She studied art abroad, first in Germany (1891–1895) followed by Paris (1895–1897) and Rome where she worked and studied for almost ten years (1898–1907). As an artist, Tyra Kleen was trained in the symbolist and art nouveau/jugend styles and is best known for her symbolist lithographs and portrayals of temple dancers in Java and Bali.

Kleen was influenced by the esoteric tendencies of her period. As a member of the Theosophical Society, she attended seances and showed her art in theosophical circles. Kleen was inspired by poets such as Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) and Edgar Allan Poe (1809– 1849). She was also interested in theosophical mystics and visited philosophical and theosophical lectures.

Kleen was a famous and established artist in her lifetime. Her works were exhibited in galleries and museums all over the world. However, interest in her oeuvre dwindled when modernism came to dominate the Swedish art scene, and she was practically forgotten after her death in 1951. Tyra Kleen’s estate was bequeathed to Sweden’s House of Nobility, on the condition that the collection should be kept hidden for fifty years after her death. In 2001, 50 years after Kleen died, the collection was reopened. It is today managed by Tyra Kleen’s family at Valinge.

Kasper Opstrup: “Inner Paths to Outer Space”

This talk explores the notion of cosmos as an artistic imaginary in the long 20th century with special emphasis on, on the one hand, Russian Cosmism, which can be seen as a type of esoteric futurism, an idealistic materialism predeceasing the Western modernist avantgarde movements in its attempt to create a new society built upon an overcoming of the category of the human itself, and, on the other hand, the 1970s cosmic futurism of Timothy Leary

and Robert Anton Wilson which resulted in their proposed global solution to a string of global crises and problems: SMI²LE (= Space Migration, Increased Intelligence, Life Extension).

Linda Stupart: “After the Ice, the Deluge: Queer Ecologies, Leaky Boundaries, and the Melting Polar Ice Cap”

After the Ice, the Deluge is a long term practice-based project, figuring relationships between the melting polar ice caps and other traumatised, abject, alien, and outsider bodies - queering the question of survival towards less boundaried ways of being in crisis.

This presentation uses strategies of science fiction writing and filmmaking to propose new empathetic possibilities for living ethically in death worlds (e.g. as in the AIDS crisis) and sick worlds (as with chronically ill bodies); and practices of intimacies against and without the futurity the ecological crisis so clearly deems impossible.

Throughout the presentation I will be sharing performance documentation, diagrams, and narratives developed on a research trip to the Arctic Circle, which focussed on becoming the alien/virus/bacteria/corpse increasingly appearing from underneath the (melting) ice.

Magdalena Germek: “Anatomical Ghosts”

Human anatomy is one of the fundamental sciences of medicine, perceived as an objective science that significantly contributes to the understanding of the human body constitution. One could say that it is a science that has nothing to do with the occult. But the beginnings of its development were not so clearly defined. If we just look at European anatomical illustrations from the 16th and 17th, a completely new world will open before us: not simply the world of objective science, but a world that combines empirical, medical research with mythological, religious and thanatological motifs.

Vivid and artistic Renaissance anatomical depictions in the 16th to 17th century portrayed the dissected dead human body as very much alive and spectacular, holistically and in dramatic poses, representing the body as a microcosmos, a living entity with exposed, open, dissected organs. Religious and mythological motifs of death, ecstasy, Danse Macabre, memento mori and vanitas are also present. All these non-scientific and aesthetic elements will disappear in the anatomical illustration of mid-19th century where the body will be presented fragmented and realistic.

Using examples of anatomical illustrations from famous anatomists (Andreas Vesalius, William Cheselden, Charles Estienne, etc.) and sources from the history of anatomy, thanatology, hauntology and the methodology of visual epistemology, the presentation will open the following questions: Why the anatomical visual representation of the human dead body tolerates the occult and esoteric more than the medical textual discourse? What kind of “spirit” is created when anatomy relates to hauntology? Can we say that hauntology takes something from anatomy and vice versa? Did Renaissance anatomy create an “anatomical ghost” that haunts us even in modern times?

Marc Herbst: “Energy, Surrealism, Dreaming and the Dirt Gang”

I am experimenting with individual and collective night-time dreams, surrealism and its Communist history and energy infrastructures. With an appreciation of the wide record of human dreaming’s meaning, I am working through all of this on a timeline from the modern European era until today, through an eco-social lens that appreciates that the surrealist vision was eclipsed by mass consumption. The core of my research is to grasp the extent to which we literally fell in love with the electricity from the grid, and how its buzz normalized the era of mass consumption and spectacle. The outcome aims to glimpse at how other infrastructures that will be coming into place via planning or collapse will afford actually different dreams. Anthropologically, Dreams were once central to collective human governance and still are open portals between ourselves and other things in the world. They are always orientated beside that which eco-social entanglements demand us to attend to. To dream differently is to emotionally profit from the transitions. The project assumes theoretical and creative risks in order to center the illogical and the disjointed within discursive framework. When we treat fictions as real, we create a space for things that are neither true nor false but possibly necessary.

This presentation is either an interactive invocation, experiment with alternative energy sources and imaginal dreaming, a lecture, or all the above. It may involve a fictional narrative about righteously angry people purposefully living with things that don’t work, under normative accounting methods, to just bother people.

Topics include Surrealism, Situationism, Anthropological and current accounts of dreaming, the Power Grid, Post-Migrant Theory, Eco-Socialist Anarchism.

Maria Østerby Elleby: “The Hex Appeal: The Allure of Feminist Witchcraft”

In contemporary culture, the figure of the witch has undergone a powerful resurgence, especially within feminist discourse. From Witchrature to Wichtok, from Sabrina the Teenage Witch to Marvel’s Wanda Maximoff, the archetype of the witch persists, evolving to encompass new narratives and expressions. This paper proposes to explore the allure of feminist witchcraft, examining its appeal as a narrative of primordial power for women that exists independently of male dominance; intriguing, enthralling and exciting. A concept I call “the hex appeal”, drawing on a lineage that stretches from legendary witches from an ancient past to contemporary self-identifying witches fighting against injustices, feminist witchcraft offers a compelling framework for addressing political inequality.

The narrative of the persecuted witch, transformed into a near-mythical reformist and freedom fighter, possesses a profound resonance in the modern feminist movement. By reclaiming the witch as a symbol of resistance and empowerment, practitioners might feel like they are able to tap into a wellspring of ancient, secret knowledge and collective strength. This paper aims to investigate the multifaceted usage of feminist witchcraft, analysing both its pull, its positive aspects and its potential pitfalls.

This paper will trace the evolution of feminist witchcraft from its modern esoteric origins to its present-day forms. Furthermore, it will explore the intersections of feminist witchcraft with broader socio-political movements, such as environmentalism and social justice activism, thus seeking to illuminate the complex dynamics at play within the feminist witch identity. While acknowledging its empowering potential, it also recognises the need for critical reflection on its darker aspects, including the risk of essentialism, exclusionary practices and historical distortion, resulting in the erasure of the voices of persecuted minorities. By engaging with these complexities, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the enduring allure of feminist witchcraft in contemporary society.

Marja Lahelma: "Artistic Creativity, Esotericism, and the 'Ghost in the Machine'"

The late nineteenth century transformed the Romantic notion of imagination, drawing ideas from both popular esoteric ideologies and contemporary science (most importantly, the emerging field of psychology). For the Symbolist artists, creative imagination indicated the ability to perceive the correspondences between the visible and the invisible worlds. The emphasis was increasingly placed on unconscious creativity, and the absolute control of the artist over the artwork was questioned. The process became at least as important as the finished work of art. For example, according to the symbolist author and theorist Albert Aurier, the Symbolist work of art, despite the unavoidable materiality of the object, only truly existed in the immaterial realm of imagination. This idea forms the basis of the notion of the work of art as dynamic and expressive, almost a living being, and the artist as a divine creator. Thus, art gained unprecedented importance for human life – even, in some respects, replacing religion.

In this presentation, I will examine the notion of artistic creativity as it was conceptualized in the context of Symbolist art at the turn of the twentieth century. The perception of imagination as an active and dynamic energy that creates something new and self-sufficient—instead of copying and imitating something that already exists—is central to modern art and affects our understanding of artistic creativity even today. However, the esoteric roots of this notion have regularly been played down or ignored. While the idea of artistic creativity as partly unconscious and controlled by something external to the individual artist still prevails, it is unclear how this 'ghost in the machine' should be defined – is the artistic process guided by spirits, the unconscious mind, or the forces of nature, for example? I will discuss this issue in the light of examples drawn from Nordic art, such as August Strindberg, Hilma af Klint, and Sigrid af Forselles.

Mark Sedgwick: "Soviet ghosts, the art of the absurd, and the esoteric roots of the Russo-Ukrainian War"

When the Ukrainian secret services attempted to assassinate the Russian public intellectual Alexander Dugin in August 2022, they were probably focusing on his role in promoting the Russo-Ukrainian War, not on the way in which esotericism, rejected and largely forgotten in the Soviet Union, returned as a tide of ghosts to claim its presence in post-Soviet Russia. Dugin was one of a few Muscovite dissidents who awakened certain sleeping ghosts in the twilight years of the old order, resurrecting Gurdjieff in his native land, summoning Evola and Guénon and the *prisca theologia* movement. He initially focused more on the artistic implications of esotericism as a member of a group including novelists, poets, and alternative musicians. Then he mixed the aesthetic with the

political, as one of the leaders of a so-called political party that was as much a circus of the absurd as it was a political provocation. But slowly serious politics pushed out the aesthetic, which is how a Ukrainian hit-squad ended up going after an esotericist. This paper traces Dugin's engagement with esotericism, art, and politics, and shows how esoteric ghosts rose to re-enchant Europe's biggest war since the fall of Berlin in 1945.

Minoo Mirshahvalad: "Shiism's Dual Faces in Italy: Bridging Esotericism and Exotericism"

This presentation is based on an extensive socio-historical research project on the conversion of Italians to Shiism. The empirical data for this study was gathered between 2018 and 2023 through qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, literature analysis, and ethnography, conducted in Rome, Turin, and Trieste at the gathering places of Italian converts. The paper will explore how certain aspects of Shiism have been rehabilitated as a result of converts' efforts to publicize this religion in Italy. Converts are the primary agents who promote Shiism through their print and digital publications. Guénonian Traditionalism, which has fueled Western fascination with Islam, facilitates the reemergence of certain proto-typical aspects of Shiism that were downplayed during the Middle Ages.

During the Middle Ages, Shia jurists purified this minor branch of Islam of its "troublesome" features, which could have hindered their participation in politics. These features include cyclical time, superhuman Imams, the constant emergence of saviors, and apocalyptic visions of the end of history. However, due to various push and pull factors that encourage conversions to Shiism in Italy, these "troublesome" aspects have been re-incorporated into modern Shiism, particularly evident in converts' digital and print publications.

Through this analysis, the paper delves into the paradoxical yet fascinating world of Italian Shiism, a movement that, while primarily inspired by the international appeal of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, seeks and produces an esoteric understanding of the religion. It is drawn to one of the products of Shiism's juridical developments, namely the Iranian Revolution, yet it simultaneously prioritizes metaphysical perspectives over juridical developments within this religion. In this way, converts form a distinctive trajectory in their engagement with the minor branch of Islam making it diametrically different from Shiism of Shia-born migrants in the same country.

Nathan Fraikin: "Extraterrestrial Life Beyond Fact and Fiction: Psychological Epistemologies of Mediumship and UFOs Encounters from T. Flournoy to C. G. Jung"

Two major figures of the history of psychology approached the question of extraterrestrial life in their researches. In *From India to the Planet Mars* (1900), Théodore Flournoy engages in a psychological study of spiritualist phenomena manifested by the medium Catherine-Élise Müller (also known as Helen Smith). A major part of Miss Müller spiritualist communications are established with inhabitants of the planet Mars. Later, Carl Gustav Jung wrote *Flying Saucers. A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky* (1958), where he understands the UFOs encounters phenomenon as the unconscious manifestation of a religious need, currently unsatisfied in modern times.

Through their respective approaches, both authors present a common feature : they are establishing the psychological dynamics at the roots of such testimonies. However, the two psychologists express, each in their

own way, that this topic of extraterrestrial life must be apprehended by abandoning the aim to prove or to reject its physical authenticity. One can only understand properly these phenomena by considering them beyond the dualistic frame of fact and fiction. This paper aims to shine light on these specific epistemological claims regarding martian spiritualist communication and UFOs encounters. A central focus will be applied on the historical influence of Théodore Flournoy over Carl Gustav Jung.

Niels Lyhne Løkkegaard: "Surfing the River Styx: Softenings & Inquiries Into Matters of Toxoplasmatic Ectoplasm (and Other Plasmatic Bodies)"

It is said that vampires feed on human blood due to the lack of red blood cells within their own blood stream. But what if it is enfact not the red blood cells, but the open-ended blood plasma the vampire desires?

I'm interested in plasmatic bodies, hence different plasmatic matters offer different vectors outlining speculative threads within my artistic work and research. Plasmatic threads in relation the world of (quantum) physics, as superpositioned matter, hovering within gravity defying magnetic fields. Suspended between conditions, very much like the super-positioned Cat in Schrödingers box.

Threads to the world of medicine in the form of blood plasma; a watery substance that constitutes the liquid portion of blood in which our red and white blood cells are suspended as they move throughout our bodies. Blood plasma as carrier signals - capable of carrying other bodies thereby becoming an infrastructure of other matters. A hollow body, or a Body with no organs - with no particular desire and therefore all desires. From the body with no organs across the vampiric body (with some possible weird organs within) we head on to Ectoplasm - an opaque substance suspended between life and death just like Schrödingers tormented Cat (or the vampire). Matters of the past with the capacity to occupy, posses and (over)saturate the present

There are surely many more kinds of plasma, but the last kind of plasma currently relevant to my work is toxoplasma – a parasitic kind of fungi plasma with the capacity to occupy and control other bodies. The capacity to oversaturate the horizon of the host, thereby controlling the host from within.

I 'm interested in all of these above mentioned plasmatic matters, and the question of, if and how, the instable (or intangible) can attain in/stable elusive open-ended plasmatic bodies?

Niels Østergaard Munk: *In Over Your Head* 20 minutes

The film's starting point is the ironic fact that the water park Lalandia is located behind a storm surge levee at the bottom of a no longer existing fjord - and that the large water slide on the outside of the building is called Tornadoen. In the cross-cutting between my own recordings and the regional play, I thus try to cross across time and space, to revive the ghosts of the (sub)ground and to point out the relationship between image and memory.

The undulating, sloshing images in the film are an "analog" visual effect in the sense that they are not due to digital post-processing, but are solely a result of the so-called rolling camera shutter that is used today. By overriding a

gimbal (a hand-held camera stabilizer), I have provoked a systematic shaking of the camera, which results in the undulating image - i.e. a forced stabilization of the image with the opposite result. I have thus also been interested in the irony in the fact that the dry, digital photo technology has in turn given us a wavy image, as well as what a camera closes up about its contemporaries. It should also be noted here that Eadweard Muybridge developed the instant camera shutter precisely in the period when the storm surge hit and the dike was built - from 1872 to 1878.

Nina Kokkinen: "Intertwining Art, Esotericism and Fiction – Artist-Seekers as Driving Forces in Occulture"

The notion of occulture plays a central role in outlining the relationship between art and esotericism in the post-nineteenth century. The circulation of various religious, scientific, speculative and fictional materials is essential to the ever-changing fields of occulture. Artists have been particularly busy and imaginative in combining such materials. They have taken beliefs from theosophy or spiritualism, for example, and combined them with their own dreams, national myths, or elements borrowed from fairy tales and literary fiction. In this way, occulture is continuously transformed and renewed in their works of art.

Such interweavings become clearly visible when focusing on individual artists. In my presentation, I will therefore examine artists who worked in Finland during the 20th century and define them as 'seekers' who keep the fields of occulture in motion. In other words, they are important agents in the circulation processes of occulture. These artists-seekers were interested in esotericism, but they did not commit themselves to any esoteric movement. Instead, they actively combined various esoteric ideas with fictional and political materials in order to find their own "spirituality". In my presentation, I will discuss these interweavings and, at the same time, show why the concept of seekership offers a meaningful theoretical way of studying the relationship between art and occulture.

Nemanja Radulović: "Blavatsky's Fiction Between Exotic Balkanism and Occultism"

Blavatsky's short stories contributed to the emergence of fantastic literature in 19th century, which, given that she draws from occult themes, reminds of occult sources of fantastic. This itself deserves more research regarding relation between definitions of fantastic (either by Todorov or by Cailllois) and that of "magical literature" (Versluis). What remained under-researched is Blavatsky's image of the Balkans, as exemplified in the story "Can The Double Murder". The tale reveals an exoticising image, understandable within the framework of Victorian Balkanism, which is subtype of her Orientalism (and with historical context now known enough to her readership). At the same time, this literary image is at odds with Blavatsky's political opinions of the Balkan region influenced by Pan Slavism. The confluence of exoticism and occultism in 19th century fiction proves to be an important topic, just as the relation between occultism and politics on another level.

Olivia Cejvan: "A Magus in the Closet: Autoethnographic Methods and the Hauntings of Magic"

This paper delves into the relatively uncharted territory of lived esotericism, specifically focusing on the magical practices of the esoteric order Sodalitas Rosae Crucis (S.R.C), which perpetuates the heritage from the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Grounded in my three-year fieldwork as an initiate and my extensive use of autoethnography, I discuss the dichotomy of insider-outsider perspectives and the haunted notions of 'going

native' and 'magic'. These notions, often used as othering-devices, haunts and challenges scientific standards and neat categorizations.

As an anthropologist, I anticipated extensive group-based fieldwork but was unprepared for the solitary ritual work prescribed by the initiatory system of learning. This led to the transformation of a wardrobe into a field of magical practice, where I conducted the curriculum-prescribed rituals for up to an hour daily. Group interactions were limited to monthly meetings for rituals such as initiations or study meetings. The autoethnographic method emerged in response to the conditions of the field but proved to be a promising approach for understanding initiatory learning and magical practice as a "lived esotericism". This aspect, often overlooked, is brought to the forefront in this paper, providing a fresh perspective on the study of esotericism.

Oscar Moreno Troyo: "Consciousness Division and Mystical Experiences in Theater Performers"

Performing as an actor, or actress, guides most of the practitioners to a particular phenomenon, the sensation of a double consciousness, one that deals with fiction and the other that deals with the reality beyond the fictional world.

We developed a questionnaire aiming to develop an awareness of this experience, reaching 11 experienced actors actresses and theater directors and 6 new theater students who talk about some experiences of awareness about this double consciousness experienced acting in different plays, this proposed activity will deepen in the findings of these experiences and how they can relate to sacred mystical experiences like the connection with the human Nous in the hermetic texts and the experience of a complete on stage awareness of everything surrounding, the internal, the character, the actor, the audience, the feelings of the audience and the acting partners as a whole. This pantheistic experience is a goal for most of the actors interviewed and their goal is to achieve a perfect mirror between themselves and the unknown people watching them perform.

As a final experience, the goal is to understand "the world as a play" as Calderón de la Barca once proposed, with the self as the character and the Divine Nous as the performer of a play where the greatest experience is the connection of the inner self, the awareness of the surroundings, and the feelings of our closest ones as our main audience. everything as a whole and perfect mirror of one and another.

R. Peyre & J. Cussans feat. Dungeon Acid: "Veve X" & "Walk the walk"

The contemporary artists and educators John Cussans and Roberto N. Peyre have, on various occasions since 2012, staged collaborative performative installations consisting in immersive sonic environments and floor drawing sessions using prepared powders and/or sands and objects. Through these workings they fuse traditions of sigil- and diagram making negotiating and kalibrating their various affiliations with transatlantic spiritual currents (such as Haitian Vodou), alongside animist, pagan and European esoteric currents. These informal but ceremonial

artworkings have been intuitively elaborated through psycho-geographical explorations on each of the specific locations and occasions, and implicitly situated within their specific contexts.

A mutual long time collaborator throughout various projects of Peyre & Cussans, and also in some of the aforementioned ones, is the electro acoustic composer, and techno musician Jean-Louis Huhta. Together the three share a profound audiovisual sensibility of transatlantic tradition, futirities and contemporaneity, stemming from both their transatlantic family histories, and a profound interest in both geopoliticalities and subject formations at stake in transatlantic pop- and sub cultures.

For the conference ***Tide of Ghosts*** this draft proposes a performative art installation along the lines of the latest collaborative artworks performed by Cussans & Peyre at the Documenta Art Biennale in Kassel 2022, and Rising - Melbourne festival of arts & Culture, 2023. In both occations a floor sigil was researched and articulated on site over a couple of days before the opening performance when it was then drawn to conclusion in public accompanied by sonic prerecordings and improvisations performed by our musical collaborator for, up till a given moment when atmosphere in the space shifts intensified by our libations and the positioning of candles as the music turning into rhythms and alluring textures teasing bodies, minds, spirits and beyond. The drawings was progressively destroyed throughought the evening as dance and/or flux of spectators smears the imagery into oblivion.

Ruth Bayer & Caroline Wise: “Ghosts in Communion with Artist: How to Call Them into Your Work”

Ghosts are rich fuel for the writer, artist, and musician, whatever the reality of the phenomenon or one’s personal beliefs. Ghosts are spectres on the threshold between states, whether actual, or in our imagination. Fleeting, transitory, they manifest at liminal places, the places ‘between’, at both grand and mundane sites. A crossroads in a wood, a windy rubbish strewn street corner, the expectation in an empty theatre when the curtain is closed. At the snap of a twig, creaking plumbing, or a fleeting glimpse of movement, the adrenaline starts flowing. The change in consciousness and perception in this heightened state can inspire creativity and a different view of the world. Ghosts or imaginings of ghosts invoke an atavistic, primal response.

Whether ghosts are atmospheric phenomena or the actual walking dead, over time, spectral manifestations become masked with the tale of a tragic event: the poor maid, the executed rebel, the jilted lover. As artist and writer, we felt a reflective and sympathetic communion at the location of the ghost’s stories was the best way to summon them to take shape in our magical imaginations, to some degree giving them some agency, telling their stories beyond fact and fiction. It can also bring to the surface vivid political and social history.

Samanta Viziale: “Art Blurring Boundaries: A Semiotic Perspective on the Expansion of Consciousness Beyond Reality’s Edge”

In the liminal space where imagination converges with reality, art emerges as a transformative force, challenging the boundaries of our perceived world. This presentation proposes a semiotic exploration into how art (particularly through the lens of theosophical influences in the works of Piet Mondrian, Emma Kunz and the Angeli Solari group)

serves as a catalyst for expanding consciousness and transcending the material realm. The evolution from representational to abstract art mirrors the quest for spiritual truth, stripping down the complexity of the visible to its most fundamental elements. By engaging with these artists' works, the focus is on reality's edge, the threshold where the subjective (the individual) and the objective (the universal) intersect, where a personal vision can reshape collective interpretation. Artistic contemplation through painting can provoke visions and elevate consciousness, blurring the lines between the imagined and the real. This process crafts a new reality, born from the depths of imagination, questioning the very essence of what is considered to be real. This presentation will explore the interplay between these artistic tools and their role in fabricating the real, ultimately transforming the physical into a realm of pure abstraction and redefining the parameters of what is deemed real.

Sanabel Abdelrahman: "Haunting as Agency: The Return of Palestinian Ghosts"

Investigating ghosts within the magical-realistic mode of Palestinian literature opens numerous portals to the past and the future as embedded in Palestinian collective memory and experiences. Often, the ghosts emerge out of the Palestinians' martyred bodies and return or 'infiltrate' back to Palestine. Often in Palestinian novels, when ghosts reunite with their living kin who make space for them, they play essential roles in fueling the steadfastness of the living while preserving and holding space for their memories of the past and their hopes for a liberated future.

In this paper, I would like to trace and expand on these instances within a selection of Palestinian novels and short stories. Within my analysis, I will propose reframing and rethinking traditional Palestinian tropes, such as martyrdom and Palestinian connection to the land, through ghosts. For example, I will investigate the political potentialities and agency inherent in the ghosts' mobility between realms and temporalities, read as an anti-colonial practice. I would also like to trace and investigate the repercussions of Palestinian ghosts' lingering in third or in-between spaces as seen in *al-Bāb* play by Ghassan Kanafani or Elyas Khoury's novel *Gate of the Sun*. These approaches would allow rethinking death as an 'endpoint' and invite thinking about it, within the settler-colonial condition of Palestine, as an alternative starting point.

Further, how can the 'haunting' of settlers be an anti-colonial practice? Why is the ghosts' possible 'infiltration' back to Palestine subject to fear and paranoia- as in *The Book of Disappearance*? To address these questions, I will incorporate theories and art practices around indigenous hauntology, such as *Super Futures Haunt Collective* (SFHQ), which tackles 'future ghosts', as well as Eve Truck and C. Ree's artworks and texts, including "The Glossary of Haunting."

Scott Jeffrey: "Terminators, Avatars and the Changing Image of Man: A Hauntological Analysis of Transhumanism"

Among the lost futures currently haunting our cultural moment is the once-common vision of a world in which technology was a source of wonder. It is not, of course, that we are not surrounded by technological marvels of all kinds. Rather, we have witnessed what Cory Doctorow had called the 'enshittification' of technology in recent decades. In a more avowedly sociological register, both Mark Fisher and David Graeber have described how the neoliberal hegemony of the early twenty-first century has been marked, not by the realisation of a brighter, happier and freer World of Tomorrow, but by what Fisher has called as the "slow cancellation of the future".

I want to illustrate this process of 'enshittification' by examining how the philosophy of Transhumanism came to almost fully embrace an avowedly materialist, techno-capitalist outlook. To counter this trend, this 'hauntological analysis' of Transhumanism attempts to excavate a strand of cosmic evolutionism that rooted Transhuman transformation in the body, mind and spirit rather than mere technology; which was collective rather than individualistic; and one that embraced, rather than dominated, nature. Think, pace Fisher, "Terminator vs Avatar".

I take, as my starting point, the Stanford Research Institute's study *The Changing Images of Man* (1974, revised 1982). This text (the subject of much conspiracy theorising online) offers a prescient exercise in hyperstitional engineering and represents well what Kaiser and McCray dub the 'groovy science' resulting from the convergence of the Academic-Industrial complex with the counterculture of the 1960s. As an hauntological excavation, the aim is here is not simply mourn a future that did not come to pass, but to reaffirm its power as That Which Has Not Happened Yet. To re-remember that the enshittification of Transhumanism was neither inevitable, nor irreversible, and that the eclectic, experimental and optimistic spirit of 'groovy science' persists as a virtual tendency today. In short, that the future is not yet cancelled, and Transhumanism may still yet be re-enchanted.

Sonja Rendtorff: *Half Folded Wings* 22 minutes

Half Folded Wings considers themes of alienation from nature, transformation, and the delicate balance between realities and imagination.

Synopsis: A uniformed group embarks on a quest to restore their dying world by seeking nature's wild essence on a remote island. As one member slips between reality and fantasy, the group's unity fractures. Enigmatic visions challenge their understanding as the wilderness distorts their perceptions.

Stuart McLean: "Mid-Winter Masquerades"

Across Europe (and beyond) the middle of winter (along with other moments of seasonal transition like the arrival of spring) has been the time for a variety of often elaborate masquerade performances, the contemporary persistence of which has been abundantly documented in the work of photographers like Charles Fréger (France), Axel Hoedt (Germany) and Alys Tomlinson (UK). From the Atlantic seaboard to the Balkan peninsula, masked and costumed figures have taken to the streets, or in some cases entered into homes demanding hospitality, only to depart until the next year. Sometimes these figures are explicitly identified with the returning dead, sometimes they are simply described as visitors from another world. Folklorists, taking their cue from Victorian anthropologist Edward Tylor, have often identified such performances as "survivals" of ancient magic and fertility rites. Historians for their part have often challenged such interpretations, pointing to a lack of hard evidence to support claims that these practices are in fact of pagan origin, and suggesting that many of them may be of considerably more recent provenance. In this presentation (a lecture performance combining spoken verse and prose with images) I ask whether such objections really matter, and whether what is at stake is rather the performative conjuration of a "past" that refuses to be assimilated to the chronological order of historical time. As such they demand arguably a

response that is creative rather than hermeneutic or historicizing. I consider too the implications for such seasonally embedded practices of climate change's threatened disruption of the rhythms of seasonal change that have provided their occasion. In years to come, will the ghosts thus summoned include also the once familiar rhythms of seasonality and their association with a climate shifted beyond recognition? In such altered circumstances, what tidings might the midwinter visitors be expected to bring?

Tancredi Marrone: "Cyberdelic://Technofantasy"

At the cornerstone of many magical practices lie altered states of consciousness. These states are considered necessary for the interaction with occult forces, aetheric beings and the passage to secret and hidden worlds, lying just below the surface of our own. Much of the study and practice of magic in its various forms is dedicated to the achievement of such states, leading to experiencing bliss, connection, realization and inspiration. The increased experimentation and sophistication of these techniques has transformed the practice of magic and the occult, incorporating elements from various disciplines and fields of thought. These have included, art, technology, politics, ideology, linguistic experimentation, psychedelics, music and much more. In this presentation I will discuss a meeting between two contemporary expressions of the Esoteric and the Occult. The meeting between futuristic technology with an animistic twist, or the channelling of subtle energies through electronics, is a subgenre in multiple cultural expressions which are at the same time a mark in the history of human thinking and exploration. What is the impulse behind this intuition? What are the ideas that underlie the exploration of the mind and the numinous through a reconciliation between the enchanted and the technological? Will we eventually reach a point to enjoy a form of Sacred Science which will change the perception of what it is to be human and divine? This presentation will discuss how the hybridization of these ideas expresses a new frontier in the exploration and reconceptualization of consciousness in the context of contemporary Esotericism.

Thomas Kirkegaard: "Esotericism in Twentieth-Century Danish Art Music"

In recent years, musicology has witnessed a surge of interest in the occult (see for instance *Journal of Musicological Research* vol. 37, no. 1, 2018), shedding new light on the multifaceted influence of esotericism on composers such as Alexander Scriabin, John Foulds, Anton Webern, and more. However, within Danish music historiography, esotericism remains conspicuous by its absence, often relegated to occasional symbolist interpretations of works by Carl Nielsen (1865-1931). Yet, at the turn of the century, various esoteric movements profoundly impacted Danish composers, many of whom have been marginalized or forgotten.

Louis Glass (1864-1935), for instance, demonstrated a deep interest in both Theosophy and Martinus' cosmology, evident in his fifth symphony, *Svastika* (1920), which serves as a musical representation of "the wheel of life." Similarly, Tekla Griebel Wandall (1866-1940) constructed her musical ontology on Theosophical principles, while Ludolf Nielsen (1876-1939) composed cantatas for the Masonic Lodge in Copenhagen. Rued Langgaard (1893-1952) likewise drew inspiration from various esoteric factions in his numerous works.

In this paper, grounded in an ongoing and unfinished project, I will argue that esotericism, particularly Theosophy, played an integral role in Danish music in the earlytwentieth century. It provided a means to uphold elements of Romanticist musical ideology within the context of emerging Modernist paradigms. Special attention will be devoted to Tekla Griebel Wandall's unpublished music-theoretical treatise, *Tonernes Mikrokosmos*[Microcosm of Tones] (1933), and its synthesis of Theosophical principles with speculative Western music theory. Finally, I will contend that the esoteric foundations of Danish modernist music establish direct continuities with later Danish musical modernisms exemplified by figures such as Vagn Holmboe (1909-1996) and Per Nørgård (1932-).

Thore Bjørnvig: "Windows to Eternity: The New UFO Movement and Jacques Vallée"

In recent years two events have caused a tectonic shift in the conception of UFOs. In 2017 the New York Times published the article "Glowing Auras and 'Black Money': The Pentagon's Mysterious U.F.O. Program", revealing the US military's funding of a UFO research program. Subsequently the Pentagon released three videos recorded by fighter aircraft showing aerial objects moving in ways inexplicable by current science. These events caused a turning of a tide that for decennia had submerged UFOlogy in the murky waters of conspiracy theory and intellectual dubiousity. As the UFO field emerged into the bright lights of mainstream media, science and culture the US-based French astrophysicist, UFOlogist and Silicon Valley venture capitalist Jacques Vallée (portrayed as Lacombe by Francois Truffaut in Spielberg's *Encounters of the Third Kind*) found himself at an influential tidal junction. Vallée offers an interpretation of UFOs that purports to go beyond both religious and sceptical interpretations. Instead he suggests that the phenomenon may be a kind of koans in the sky, or windows to a deeper reality, aimed at controlling human consciousness while at the same time offering opportunities of enlightenment. In order to understanding Vallées position, however, one must take into account his Rosicrucian roots, which he shared with Allen Hynek, scientific advisor to various studies of UFOs conducted by the U.S. Airforce from the 1940s to the 1960s. From what in effect has become a tidal island Vallee influences thinking on and politics of UFOs through major players on the field such as Professor in Neurobiology Garry Nolan, historian of religion Diana Pasulka and UFO activist Jeffrey Corbel. Thus, this paper presents an instance of how esotericism infiltrates science and politics in the age of the post factual.

Tim Rudbøg: "A Ghost in the Moog?: Occult Music Technologies"

During the 1960s, new musical technologies emerged, most notably the Moog synthesizer, which opened up an entirely new sonic landscape for musicians. This technology introduced electronic sounds that had never been heard before, leading some to describe it as a form of "electronic consciousness"—a new way of experiencing music and reality. However, critics soon challenged its legitimacy, arguing that the synthesizer did not produce "real" music, but rather artificial, mechanical sounds. Through a series of historical case studies, this paper explores how both the enthusiastic embrace and critical rejection of the Moog synthesizer contributed to the development of an occult current in music, one that became intrinsically linked with electronic sound. It argues that the advent of electronic musical technologies like the Moog catalyzed significant innovations in esotericism and spirituality, transcending traditional boundaries and extending into the arts. These transformations, which redefined spiritual and metaphysical expression through sound, are crucial to understanding the broader historical

evolution of contemporary esotericism. This paper calls for greater attention to these developments in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the intersections between technology, spirituality, and esotericism.

Tom Banger: “Everything is True, Nothing is Permitted – Towards a Manual of Mendacity”

Ironically, the Information Age appears to be threatened by Misinformation.

Where Truth with a capital T was once absolute, we are entering into an age where truth is negotiable.

Austin Spare asks, “*Is it by symbolizing we become the symbolized? Were I to crown myself King, should I be King?*” If on the Internet, no-one knows you’re a dog, would they think you’re a King? This appears to be precisely the case on social media.

Self-proclaimed experts and thought leaders broadcast their unsourced and often unsupported opinions as Truths. And many believe them. How can there be such certainty in times so many describe as “uncertain”?

While democracy dies in darkness, the data that by turns enlightens and endarkens us are selected, increasingly generated and served by algorithms that serve interests not our own. Our only input seems to be to like the statement or unfriend the author. Or create an echo chamber of one’s own.

In a talk that is by turns diatribe, spell, evocation and banishing, Banger will expose the elusiveness of consensus reality and suggest strategies to subvert the Socials and appropriate misinformation to create alternate pasts, presents and futures. Using Vaihinger’s Philosophy of “as if” and Wachter’s “telling true lies”, is it possible to untell Truths we find unappealing and replace them with more palatable realities?

TRK/JBH

TRK/JBH is a Danish noise duo consisting of Tobias R. Kirstein and Jesper Bagger Hviid who will probe ancient mysteries and veiled apocalypses by playing their piece ‘Sfinx’ at Mayhem.

Vanessa Sinclair: “Things Happen: Creating with Cut-Ups”

Things Happen is Vanessa Sinclair’s first novel, which was created partially by using the cut-up method, and is drawn from her life experiences growing up in 1990s Miami. It mixes fact and fiction or where is the line between dream, fiction and reality. This session will discuss the process of creating the book, and Vanessa will read a selection of the text.

Vibe Overgaard: “The Ghost In the Industrial Loom - A Historical Materialist Approach to Magic, and a Spiritual Approach to Art in the Cultural Industry”

In my artistic practice, I investigate an occultism that is rooted in the material conditions of industrial society. As a ghost in the textile loom at my father’s carpet factory or the spell-work that is performed in synthetic growth

economy. I am occupied with a definition of magic, mysticism and the occult, as seen through the lens of the social, political and economic stirrings in this time of late capitalism.

My artistic practice is based in analysis of societal conditions. The analysis is a methodical approach to create a more fundamental understanding, but it also repeatedly brings me to a kind of borderland, which lies at the periphery of the conditions that can be rationalized. Here, the bodily, spirituality, psyche and nature are at work: a condition that is marginalized rather than normalized, occult rather than affirmed, and defined by being rather than having. It is a condition that calls for standing in what is, and untangling the fantasy produced by ideology, popular culture and societal expectations. Standing in what is, also means recognizing the actual material conditions (the industry, the growth economy, etc.)

At the conference I wish to present my artistic practice and the ways in which it allows me to get familiar with dynamics between technology-nature, mind-body, rational-emotional, logic-mythologic. I will go a bit into my research on production relations and the idea of capitalist economy as “evil magic” and present my sculptural work that take shape as modernist, machine-like forms: Hereunder how the Machine in Western collective imagination, becomes a fiction as well as a reality and back again. I will then talk about, what it means to search for vulnerability, sensitivity and connectivity with nature, precisely within the sphere of the destructive machine.

William Redwood: “Ectoplasm, Energy and Ephemerality”

Focus will be on the ‘materiality’ of the ghost and the esoteric fiction of ‘subtle energy’. What might these be and how might they describe and prescribe the form and flow of contemporary esotericism? Energy - of various kinds - has been noted by almost everyone who has studied contemporary spirituality; it is near ubiquitous in its presence within discourses and practices as diverse as spiritualism, paranormal investigation, ceremonial magic, alternative or complementary healing, neo-shamanism, and much popular occulture. Energy however is also amorphous, elusive and ambiguous on both emic and etic levels, so the first question addressed is what precisely it may be. From a historical perspective, it would appear that esoteric energy is a relatively recent notion, a fictional late modern misreading of electro-magnetism and the cultural impact of resultant technologies. From a social constructionist angle, wherever it might have originated from, the fiction of esoteric energy is now a social fact and a cultural concept. Does it have function or meaning? Is the notion of nebulous energy a description of - and a prescription for - the late modern maelstrom of incessant change and existential ephemerality? Does it denote the promised progress of modernism, or decry protean instability and procession of fleeting futures? Furthermore, does the idiom of energy allow for, or even encourage, the flourishing of individual variation, rapid reinvention, and proliferation spiritual pluralism which characterises the esoteric subculture? Drawing on the theoretical approaches of (amongst others) Alvin Toffler, Zygmunt Bauman and Michel Serres, this paper suggests that this may be precisely the case. The ‘refusal of solidity’ shown by the ‘ectoplasmic’ or ‘energetic’ idiom seemingly places esotericism – especially in its most fiction-friendly forms such as chaoism - in the paradoxical position of being simultaneous resistor to, and conductor of, the discontents of late modernity.

Yongwu Weu: "Fiction and Initiation: Rosicrucianism in Edward Lytton's *Zanoni*"

As a spiritual and cultural movement, Rosicrucianism plays a notable role in the history of Western esotericism since the early modern period. Rosicrucianism gained significant prominence in 19th-century Victorian literature, with Edward Bulwer Lytton (later Lord Lytton) contributing one of the most significant fictional novels with a Rosicrucian theme—*Zanoni*. Among the many fictional novels written during the lifetime of Edward Lytton, *Zanoni* had a profound influence on esotericism in the late nineteenth century. For example, Madame Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, believed that the novel's presentation transcended fiction and conveyed a truthful description in a poetic manner.

At the same time, many nineteenth-century occultists valued the practical function of fictional works, particularly for stimulating the imagination. Consequently, some occultists, such as Blavatsky and William Scott-Elliot, were also significant fiction writers. For occultists like Edward Lytton, who delved deeply into esoteric knowledge, fictional writing meant not only incorporating one's reflections on Rosicrucianism into one's work but also aiming to enable the reader to unconsciously absorb the symbols of Rosicrucianism and achieve spiritual initiation while reading the fictional work.

In this paper, I will deeply examine Edward Lytton's fictional work *Zanoni*, where he linked his interpretation of Rosicrucianism to the practical initiation of the reading experience. I will discuss how the use of certain esoteric imagery and symbolism could bridge the gap between fiction and reality, allowing the reader to "participate" in the journey of the protagonist. Furthermore, this paper will also discuss Lytton's esoteric literary view of how the fictional novel becomes a medium to blend the prototypal Rosicrucian symbolism into reality, thereby making them real. As a result, the reader will attain initiation and embark on a journey of individualization through the reading of the fiction.

