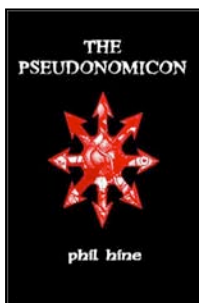

Reviews

The Pseudonomicon, Phil Hine

(New Falcon, 2004, 64pp, \$9.95)



Another *Necronomicon*?! I know. I can hear you saying it. But none of the many pretenders to the tentacled throne are really up to it, now are they? Author Phil Hine agrees with us. His is not a book trying to pass itself off as Lovecraft's fabled dread tome. Hence Hine's titling, with tongue firmly buried in cheek. *Pseudonomicon* is not a grimoire of magick in the sense that one would normally expect. It does not contain pages of wrote forumalasa and complex workings formed of a mish-mashed amalgum of fragmentary sources.

Hine has produced a short practical guide for actually working with the Cthulhu mythos. He eschews the tendency of others to fit Lovecraft's mythos into an existing magickal framework. One will not find additional columns for 777 within these pages. For Hine such attempts only serve to constrain the primal potency of the mythos. "Awesome experiences have had all the feeling boiled out of them, into short descriptions and lists," writes Hine, "always more lists, charts, and attempts to banish the unknown with explanations, equations, abstract structures for other people to play with."

Lovecraft's work resists and indeed ultimately escapes this confining impulse to corral the unknowable in the mundane. This is the joy of Lovecraft's writing, that he only gives the reader just enough

information. He teases and tantalizes—leaving the reader with only hair-raising emotion. There is no rationality in his stories. There's no happy ending and explanatory denouement. Cthulhu is always a hint just there beyond the edge of the written word. Great Cthulhu in his slumber is simply before time. He's outside the world that we know. An entity beyond even the remotest darkness of our unconscious. For Hine this is source of the mythos power, his attraction to them and their frightening aspect.

Hine is truly a modern (or post-modern) shaman, flirting at the edges of the real, the unreal and the uncanny. As one would expect of a shaman, Hine's language often merges with the visionary imagery of the poet. This evocativeness brings moments that capture, as fully as one could, the shadowy mystery of this relatively unexplored territory. "Each god brings its own madness," Hine begins.

Experimenting with the Cthulhu mythos is not for everyone as Hine himself points out. Such practice is to court madness—indeed such may be a requisite for the gnosis. In "The Call of Cthulhu" Lovecraft writes, "The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far."

Hine has long been a leading figure in the philosophical discussion of Chaos magic. He's uniquely suited to give the Old Ones their due. There's more authentic magic in these sixty-four pages than in all the classic grimoires combined.

Field Notes on the Compassionate Life: A Search for the Soul of Kindness, Marc Ian Barasch (Rodale, 2005, 356pp, \$24.95)

Reviewed by Joseph Gelfer



There's something a little saccharine about Barasch's title; 'compassion' and 'kindness' inhabit a strange world – for me at least – of high meaning and low value. On hearing these words the temptation is for an immediate, "Sure, but what are you doing about it?" Compassion fatigue sets in, not because we are tired of compassion (who could be?) but because we are tired of empty words. Barasch's aim is to set out some examples of real-world compassion and kindness in an attempt to reclaim them as actions rather than sentiments.

Barasch has written several well-received books such as 'Healing Dreams' and 'The Healing Path', the back of which carry pictures of him with a very friendly smile. He has a very friendly writing style, coupling both cerebral and popular references: one page might quote Thomas Aquinas or John of the Cross, while another might contemplate Star Trek or the fact that Audrey Hepburn suggests, "For lovely lips, speak words of kindness/For lovely eyes, seek out the good in people." Sometimes he creates little syntheses: on responding to a street person he notes, "I can't say I was pleased to meet him, but WWKD: What Would Kierkegaard Do?" This is the point in many similar volumes where I say farewell, but luckily Barasch is not in the business of dispensing wisdom, rather providing evidence; like an old-school reporter he wants to present us with facts.

There are many books currently appealing to science as an explanation for spiritual and emotional phenomena and Barasch continues this trend with a (rather familiar) comparison of chimpanzees and bonobos, suggesting we are not genetically hard-wired to fight like the former, but love like the latter. In an exploration of the science of the heart we learn from one biophysicologist that, "emotion is faster than

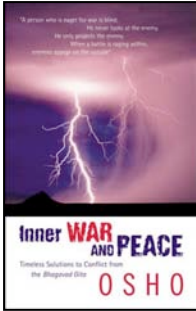
thought;” elsewhere, meditating monks are monitored in a brain lab. Other chapters are more personal, such as the man who forgave his daughter’s murderer or another who donated a kidney to a stranger.

Perhaps the most interesting thing in the book is not the content, but the odd tension it may generate for the reader. There can be a self-destructive aspect that wants to crush kindness, despite the fact that it is good. Barasch notes, “Some seem to find almost a glee in wiping the moue of self-satisfied virtue from the do-gooder’s face, in stifling the trill of the pie-eyed optimist.” Often commenting on the Dalai Lama, Barasch reminded me of my own experiences attending a string of lectures with His Holiness in Dharamsala; part of me was delighted by him, another was saying, “Come on then, show me holy, you don’t look so divine to me.” It is the freeing of the ego which winces in the company of kindness that is the crucial step towards what neurobiologist Joseph LeDoux describes in the book as, “a more harmonious integration of reason and passion.”

Like many books written with a journalistic edge, Barasch’s may suffer from a lack of personal input. No doubt he feels this territory is well covered in his previous work (especially in his writing about his experiences with cancer), but some of the best parts are the darker, more personal moments, of which there could have been more. Barasch’s choice of themes could also have been more adventurous: something like compassion pursued via synchronicity may have been an interesting ingredient to the mix. In short, enjoying Barasch is likely to depend on whether you appreciate his tone, which like the title can be a little saccharine. However, the unfolding shift from this world to something better requires transmission in many different ways and Barasch’s book will no doubt play its own part in that essential process.

Inner War and Peace, Osho

(Watkins Publishing, 2005, 280pp, £9.99/\$14.95)

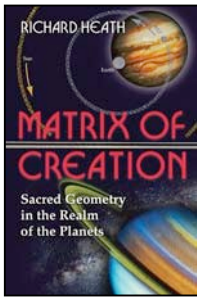


Osho was one of the most provocative spiritual teachers of our modern times. As the events of the Oregon experiment recede into the depths of memory, Osho's words are again rising to the fore. It was Osho's unparalleled ability to synthesize the world's great traditions, using them as frames within which to craft his own coherent and consistent message. *Inner War and Peace* brings us Osho's discussions on the great work of Indian scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita*. The *Gita*, but a small section of the larger Mahabharata saga, tells the story of the battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, two branches of the royal family. The events related in the *Gita* focus on the hero Arjuna, who fights on the side of the Pandavas. Krishna takes on the role of Arjuna's charioteer during the great battle. On the eve of combat, with both sides rallied on the battlefield, Arjuna's resolve wavers when presented by the prospect of killing his own kinsmen. Krishna speaks with Arjuna explaining that his doubt arises from the conditionings of his mind and his over-identification with the body instead of the immortal soul. Osho describes the *Gita* as "the first psychological scripture." He uses the imagery of the battlefield of *dharmakshetra* ('field of righteousness') to illustrate the danger of fighting wars behind the shield of religion. Osho's insightful message of peace through interpretation of a battle fought 5,000 years ago illustrate that the story of Krishna and Arjuna is as meaningful today as it was thousands of years ago. Through his verse commentary and in his responses to questions, Osho brings the conflict presented in the *Gita* to the level of internal conflict. He shows that the conflict suffered by Arjuna is, in fact, upon analysis, an inner turmoil arises from his mis-comprehension of the relation between one's soul and the body. All this is an unrecognized collaboration of one's temperament with the subtle conditionings of one's life and

environment. Arjuna's questioning of his activities are manifested his wavering resolve to fight. He looks to Krishna to provide a rationalization to resolve his guilt or to give him reason to stand down and not face his kin in battle. For Osho, Arjuna represents the divided mindset endemic in humanity. "We too are weak," says Osho, "we too have no will. The will has been lost in our 'What to do and what not to do? What is proper and what is improper?' All ground beneath our feet has been lost. The Arjuna in us is in suspension, is in limbo." In contrast, Osho calls Krishna a psychosynthesist (as opposed to a mere psychoanalyst) surpassing Freud, Jung and Adler. Krishna looks beyond the mind's fragmentations in pursuit of a mechanism for the recombination.

Matrix of Creation: Sacred Geometry in the Realm of the Planets,

Richard Heath (Inner Traditions, 2004, 135pp, \$14.95)



Numbers and ratios based on the structure of the solar system compose the foundation of ancient understanding of the universe, divinity, mythology and architecture. This concept is known as sacred geometry. Richard Heath demonstrates that ancients recognized proportions in the distribution and orbital relationships between the Earth the seven visible cosmic entities of the solar system in his book *Matrix of Creation: Sacred Geometry in the Realm of the Planets*. The formulae that express these measurements became encoded in architecture, music and religious beliefs. Mathematical descriptions of the solar system served as the matrix for original human expression.

Heath defines matrix as "an environment in which something has its origin, takes form, or is enclosed. In mathematics, a matrix is an array of mathematical elements arranged to show the numerical relations among its components." He employs the term to describe the

mathematical correlations in the solar system and how they relate to the evolution of human thought. He also argues that the elegant symmetry defining the solar system is proof of an organizing divine intelligence.

In recent years, there has been increasing support for Heath's appreciation of ancient sophistication in understanding sacred geometry. This is reflected in studies of how ancients applied these concepts to the design of both Mesoamerican and Egyptian architecture, calendar systems and art. Many once inexplicable phenomena such as the layout of Stonehenge are now consistently described as making use of early man's understanding and expression the mathematical models evident in the heavens. Evidence abounds that the ability to grasp the harmonies implicit in the solar system's makeup is a basis for human comprehension and creative expression.

Heath describes these fundamentals and demonstrates how they have been practically realized in both myth and science. His explanation is "to the point." His elegant tome is only 135 pages long and can be readily grasped by anyone with bare bones understanding of mathematics. (Although I did have the nagging feeling that I should have taken calculus rather than advanced placement history in high school when reading his book.)

Given how well formulated and comprehensible his text is, I think it not practical to recapitulate all of his theorems. Rather I think it more valuable to the Ashé reader that I make a couple suggestions for how these can be part of a continually developing dialogue about contemporary esotericism.

Among the models that really stuck in my mind when reading the Creation Matrix was that the tracery of Venus' orbital relationship with Earth when viewed from the axis of the solar system (with the sun at center) is that of a Pentagram. "So what," you're saying now. In Qabala, which serves as the basis for most Western occult theories, the numerical assignation to Venus is 7 and Mars is 5. Venus traditionally is the planet associated with eroticism, wealth and creative expression. The pentagram is a geometric expression of the five elements fire, air, water, earth and

light (or animating spirit.) It is associated with health, materialism, the five wounds of Christ, and the human hand. The only esoteric system that implicitly associates earth's relationship with Venus with the number 5 is the Yoruba. That designation is defined by the association of the orisha Oshún (commonly correlated with the goddess Aphrodite or Venus) with the number 5 in myths and divination verses that reveal knowledge of her. My point here is that the pentagram has become a substantial symbol of esoteric revelation. In terms of our solar system, its perfect model is the interpolation of earth's and Venus' orbital cycles. Perhaps we need to re-examine our own interpretations of both the pentagram's and Venus's significance in light of this model. Heath demonstrates that our ancestors had the requisite knowledge to design the pentagram as an enduring symbol based on that formula.

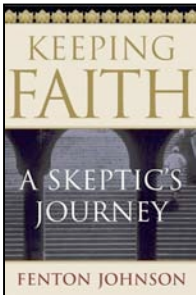
Even though we have a sense of eternal truths based on our grasp of symbol, these may still be expanded upon when we re-examine them in light of how our predecessors may have codified this knowledge.

Along this line of thought, we do find a rationale in the solar system model for the assignation of the number 7 to Venus. That is revealed by the correlation of the synods of Venus and Mars that is expressed as a three to four ratio. Venus and Mars are widely thought to represent the erotic relationship. The sum of the numbers of this ratio is 7. The assignation of the number to Venus indicates that the female embodies the sum of the erotic relationship since it is she who bares children and thus expresses its fruit.

Exploring the many formulae that Heath codifies may inspire the reader to many other such avenues of thought. They may be applied to our understanding of subtleties of human relationships, ecology, astrology, music, religion, etc....In short, *The Matrix of Creation* provides us with both a model for the historic and contemporary evolution of human thought. *The Matrix of Creation* is an invaluable reference work. In it, we have a trove of valuable formulae that can be utilized to enhance our understanding of both esoteric and exoteric realms.

Keeping Faith: A Skeptic's Journey, Fenton Johnson

(Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004, 324 pages, \$25.00)



Fenton Johnson's *Keeping Faith* could be called, more appropriately, "finding faith." The book is, as the subtitle implies, a journey—a personal journey to rise from institutionally enforced belief to the realization of personal faith. The book is part autobiography, part observation study and part historical analysis.

Following the death of his lover from AIDS, the author returns to his family home in rural Kentucky. While there a monk from the nearby Trappist monastery of Gethsemani invites him to attend a convocation of Buddhist and Christian monks. While attending the symposium Johnson discovers an underlying, recurrent question of anger. Across the days of the meeting, as the topic turns back to anger again and again, Johnson discovers the anger within himself—directed to a great extent toward the Catholic institution within which he was raised. He begins to realize what he might have lost, by rejecting the church in the face of logic. This revelatory moment at the Gethsemani encounter prompts Johnson to look beyond the façade of institutional edifice of the Catholic church and examine its origins, history and development to powerful and exclusionary institution it is today.

After the conference, instead of returning to San Francisco to work on his next novel, the author embarks on a journey exploring monasticism. His approach is two pronged. He spends time on retreat in monastic communities, interviewing residents and experience the monastic's life. At the same time, Johnson embarks on a historical investigation into the roots, influences and antecedents of the western Christian monastic tradition. He text mirrors this alternating approach,

weaving in reflections that are at times highly personal and others universalized to the larger gay community.

At the outset Johnson decides to limit his investigation only to those institutions he sees as having “been present in the United States long enough to contribute to and be shaped by the American religious psyche.” This decision, to limit his study to Judeo-Christian and Buddhist traditions, allows Johnson to go deeper into his exploration, than if he had taken a more far-reaching approach. On the other hand, the decision means that he examines only two, albeit significant, panels within the great quilt of American religious diversity. By concentrating on larger institutional expressions of religion, Johnson misses the breadth of New World religious individualism.

Johnson’s experiential study centers principally on two monastic communities: the Gethsemani monastery, which first inspired the author’s quest, and the three locations of the San Francisco Zen Center. The author alternates stays at the four locations slowly progressing deeper into the communities, yet always remaining an observer. He maintains a level of scholarly objectivity to the end of his quest. The book flows smoothly as Johnson moves from his anger through his historical and personal analysis.

Despite Johnson’s stated aims, he is not a Catholic apologist. He does not shy away from the important criticisms that are leveled against the organized religion in general and the Roman Catholic Church in particular. The question of gay identity and religion runs as a recurrent theme throughout the book, as Johnson raises the topic often with those he interviews. Interestingly, his presence within the Trappist monastery creates a situation where gay monks seek him out, opening up to the openly gay man who is at once local and an outsider. Johnson also includes chapters on the question of the church’s approach to women and child sexual abuse. As with the rest of the book, he deals with these tough topics with intelligence and a historical perceptiveness that goes far beyond the typical knee-jerk reaction.

Intercut with descriptions of stays at Gethsemani and the Zen Center facilities, Johnson provides a historical analysis of the influences on early Christianity, key figures within the development of the young church and the roots of western contemplative monasticism. He proposes an interesting theory of a possible connecting influence of Buddhism on the precursors of Christianity. He traces the Greek influences of Plato and Philo on the developing Christian philosophy—especially the critical emphasis on the separation of the body and spirit. He clearly illustrates the impact that Roman imperial power and the later disintegration of said power had on the Church’s philosophical direction.

Johnson ends his search finding more than he had set out to. Beyond the institutional history he first sought to analyze, he finds his own faith. In the end he realizes that belief is actually an impediment to faith and find his own space within an institutional hierarchy that may not always be happy with his inclusion.

Voodoo Queen: The Spirited Lives of Marie LaVeau, Martha Ward
(University of Mississippi Press, 2003, 224pp, \$26.00)



Marie LaVeau is perhaps one of those figures whose definitive biography is impossible. Shrouded in a century and a half of mystery and legend, the facts of her life may ultimately prove elusive even to the most determined of biographers. The person and the legend are inseparable, confused and overlapping as the lives of Marie LaVeau and her daughter Marie are. Both Mariés themselves intertwined with the evocative imagery of New Orleans.

Many have heard of Marie LaVeau, the Widow Paris. Thousands make the pilgrimage to her alleged tomb in St. Louis Cemetary One on Bason Street. But who is the real Marie LaVeau? A few have attempted

to write the biography of this mysterious religious and political power. Raul Canizares *The Life & Works of Marie LaVeau* stands out from the small crop of previous attempts.

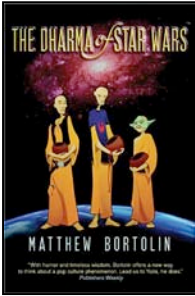
Martha Ward has made a valiant attempt in *Voodoo Queen*. She acknowledges at the outset the difficulty of her task. She notes the near non-existence of traces of either Marie with the historical record. What little might exist, would appear to have fallen victim to souvenir hunters over the years. Despite this, Ward does manage to find scant traces—an X on an old contract, for example—of the living breathing Marie.

Voodoo Queen is not a religious or magical biography—as Canizares' work is. A research professor in Anthropology, Urban Studies and Women's Studies, Ward has produced, instead, a feminist and cultural study of the two Maries. She goes farther than any other author on the subject in managing to portray a full picture of the unique placement of the Voodoo leader at the historical moment that saw the rise of Marie LaVeau. Ward has crafted from the fabric of myth and legend a biography of not just the two Marie LaVeaus but also one of mid-19th century New Orleans. She shows through careful analysis of the contemporary records, how the LaVeaus used the system of contracts to artfully manipulate the system and their relation to it for their benefit and to protect.

Ward deftly sets the context within which the Widow Paris rose to reign supreme. Through careful research she vividly captures the social and cultural forces that in many respects continue to color and shape the contrasts that are New Orleans.

The Dharma of Star Wars, Matthew Bortolin

(Wisdom Publications, 2005, 205pp, \$14.95)



Anyone who has seen any of the six films of the two Star Wars trilogies knows that the heroic epics owe more than a passing debt to Eastern philosophy. The movies themselves have created a fanbase whose enthusiasm borders on religious zealotry. The primary theme of the hero's journey is familiar to anyone familiar with the cross-cultural work of Joseph Campbell. Additionally many parallels have been drawn between the Jedi and eastern Zen practitioners. Indeed, it is reported that George Lucas based his definitive Jedi master, Yoda, on Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche whom he had met on a visit to Dharmasala.

It is not surprising then, that attempts have been made at extrapolating a spiritual philosophy out of the Star Wars saga. It has been linked to Buddhism, Taoism and, even, chivalrous Christianity. Other authors have attempted to draw forth a unique Jedi religion from the movie's celluloid frames.

In *The Dharma of Star Wars*, Matthew Bortolin has produced a clear and clever introduction to Buddhism. This is not a Buddhist interpretation of the films. Instead, Bortolin has written a concise and easily approached book on Buddhist using symbols drawn from his extensive knowledge of the films. The influence of Buddhism and other Eastern thought on Lucas makes the author's job that much easier.

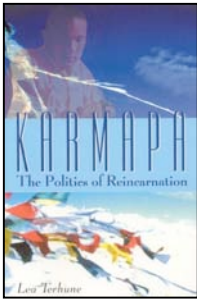
The book is primarily a book on Buddhism for die-hard fan and Star Wars neophyte alike. The work will also broaden anyone's understanding and appreciation of the subtle underpinnings of Lucas' films.

Dharma of Star Wars is not simply another attempt at capitalizing on the Star Wars franchise. Published by the nonprofit Wisdom Publications, Bortolin's work is an important contribution to the lexicon of modern Western Buddhist studies. The book draws an arc of

meaning and wisdom across the centuries from the deer park to the pinnacle of 21st century pop culture.

Karmapa of Tibet: The Politics of Reincarnation, Lea Terhune

(Wisdom, 2004, 224pp, \$14.95)



The concept of reincarnating Tibetan spiritual leaders is a strange mysterious notion for Westerners. This remains true even for many of those drawn to the growing practice of Tibetan Buddhism over the past several decades. Without the socially inculcated and historically rooted understanding of reincarnate lineage systems, Westerners were even more puzzled by the debate that emerged over the past several years

centering on the recognition of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa.

The Karmapas are the leaders of the Kagyu or ‘Black Hat’ school, one of the four main lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. The Sixteenth Karmapa was one of the most visible faces bringing expatriate Tibetan Buddhism to the West. He attracted thousands of Western followers during his frequent visits to Europe and the Americas. The Sixteenth Karmapa died in 1981 and his four heart sons, Tai Situpa, Sharmapa, Jamgon Kongtrul and Gyaltzapa incarnations were entrusted with searching for the Karmapa’s next incarnation.

Several years went by without the recognition of the new Karmapa. Generally the previous incarnation leaves clues that may be decoded to lead searchers to the lama’s next incarnation. In the case of the Sixteenth Karmapa, no clue was immediately found. Great unease began to develop in the Kagyu community as more time passed without the recognition of their leader.

While engaged in a long retreat in 1990, Tai Situpa recalled an amulet the Karmapa had given him just prior to his death. Upon opening it, Tai Situpa discovered an envelope with “Open in the Iron

Horse Year” written upon it. The year 1990 is known as the year of the Iron Horse in the Tibetan calendar. The four members of the search team finally came together in early 1992 and the Karmapa’s prediction letter was opened. Jamgon Kongtrul and Gyalsapa were enthusiastic at the letter’s discovery and the clues it contained. According to Terhune’s reportage the Sharmapa, however, had an immediate negative reaction to the letter—going as far as accusing Tai Situpa of forging it.

The opening of the prediction letter appears to have exacerbated growing tensions between the four Heart Sons. Trihune shows how the Sharmapa worked against his fellows even before the letter’s discovery. Here the mysterious merges with a more familiar story of power and the desire to hold onto it once attained. This was increased by the tragic death of Jamgon Rinpoche in a car accident in April 1992 just months after the four had opened the letter.

A search party was eventually sent into Tibet and, following the previous Karmapa’s instructions, his Seventeenth incarnation was discovered. Orgyen Trinley Dorje was enthroned that fall at age seven as the new Karmapa. The Shamarpa refused to recognize the validity of the recognition and eventually produced his own claimant to the Kagyu lineage throne. Since that time, backed by a group of the Sixteenth Karmapa’s European followers, the Sharmapa has waged a public relations and legal battle against his fellows on the search committee and the vast majority of Kagyu Tulkus who recognize Orgyen Trinley Dorje as the Karmapa’s true incarnation.

In January 2000, the story of the young Karmapa captured the attention of the whole world. Realizing that he could not pursue his studies and requirements of his office while under the control of the Chinese occupational government, the fourteen-year-old made a treacherous and secret escape across the Himalayas. He arrived in India and Dharamsala, the home of the Tibetan Government in Exile. The legal battles with the Sharmapa over Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim, India, the seat of the Kagyu lineage in exile, continue to this day.

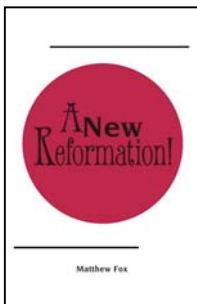
Lea Trihune may be accused of being a partisan for the recognition of Oryen Trinley Dorje. This is due to her longstanding connection to the Kagyu lineage begun before the departure of the Sixteenth Karmapa. Trihune is an experienced journalist and has worked for CNN, Radio Deutsche Welle and Voice of America. This shows through in her impartial story-telling and the depths she has gone to collect the facts and intricacies underlying the ‘politics’ lying below the surface of the Karmapa’s recognition.

She draws on numerous interviews conducted over years with the majority of the story’s key figures—including the Karmapa himself. She unlocks the mysteries underlying the recognition process and the historical background for the incarnate lineage tradition. At the same time she carefully builds the ground work for her insightful analysis of the politics surrounding the process. She goes centuries back in time to draw out the threads and tendrils of history that nuance Tibetan temporal and spiritual politics to this day. *Karmapa: The Politics of Reincarnation* presents a riveting tale and Trihune upholds the highest journalistic ethics throughout its telling.

A New Reformation, Matthew Fox

(Wisdom University Press, 2005, 100pp, \$16.00)

Reviewed by Joseph Gelfer



WITTENBERG, Germany – 500 years ago Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of Castle Church, protesting against the indulgences and corruption of Pope Leo X. On a recent cloudy day, Matthew Fox repeated this act with his own 95 Theses, though Wittenberg bureaucrats forbade any door-nailing and Fox instead resorted to sticking them on a sandwich board.

Fox is the author of 26 books focusing on the themes of eco-spirituality and mystics such as Meister Eckhart and Hildegard of Bingen, and his 95 Theses comprise a significant chunk of his latest book, “A New Reformation,” in which he sets out his beef with the Catholic Church. Fox is no stranger to run-ins with the Vatican, having been forced by John Paul II and the then Cardinal Ratzinger to leave the Dominicans, subsequently converting to the Episcopal Church.

Fox’s small volume (just 100 pages) begins by drawing parallels between Reformation times and today: of technological revolution, the waning of nation-states and the rise of multi-national corporations, the corruption and ineffectiveness of Western religion, and an awakened scholarship. He then charts the divide between two Christianities, one that focuses on, “a Punitive Father in the Sky and a teaching of Original Sin,” while the other, “recognizes the Original Blessing that all being derives from.” Fox goes on to describe the Vatican’s hunger for domination, crowned by Ratzinger’s “coup d’eglise” and its sad treatment of women, gays and lesbians, liberation theologians and pretty much anyone with an ounce of magic and charm about them.

Fox does not spare other denominations in his critique, noting the similarities between Catholicism and other fundamentalist denominations, quoting numerous unsavoury passages from right-wingers such as George W. Bush and Ann Coulter. But all is not lost. “What is the good news in all this?” Fox asks: “That we can start anew. That a New Reformation for a new millennium is upon us.” This is where the 95 Theses come in (provided also in German for extra “authentisch”) which are so life-, person-, creation- and Christ-affirming that it is hard to imagine anyone complaining. But of course they will.

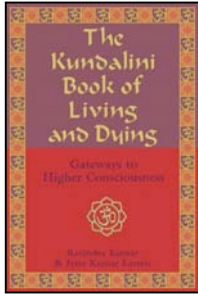
There is nothing new in Fox’s 95 Theses, but something does not need to be new to need saying out loud, and what Fox says will ring true for many Catholics caught between Christ and the Vatican. In an email shortly after John Paul II’s death I wrote, “I was watching JP’s funeral on TV and saw Ratzinger hold up the broken host and I had a powerful vision that the host was the Church, forever split into pieces... but the

rubble and the dust is back-lit by Christ who feels very close at hand.” This is the immediacy of our accelerating times and it is just possible that Fox’s act on the steps of Wittenberg Cathedral turns out to be less of a stunt and more of a symbol for a turning point in church history.

The Kundalini Book of Living and Dying: Gateways to Higher Consciousness, Ravindra Kumar & Jytte Kumar Larsen

(Weiser Books, 2004, 274pp, \$24.95)

Reviewed by Ron L. Adams



Ever since I had my Transient Ischemic Attack (mini-stroke), January 18, 2005, I’ve been meaning to read this book, but because of my health concerns the word Death kept me from it.

Of course, I finally gave in, since it also has the word Living in it.

This book was wonderful and really helped me understand St. Paul’s quote “One must die daily.”

This fits right in with Aleister Crowley’s “Ah! Ah! Death! Death! Thou shalt long for death. Death is forbidden, o man, unto thee. The length of thy longing shall be the strength of its glory. He that lives long & desires death much is ever the King amongst Kings.” (*Liber AL vel Legis* II:73-74)

Ravinda Kumar, Ph. D. experienced his Kundalini awakening in 1987 and he goes into detail how that changed his life. He went from a math teacher to writing books on yoga, chakras, dreams, and psychic development. The Kundalini experience usually opens up the spiritual side of life for most people who experience it.

Jytte Kumar Larsen had her Kundalini experience in 1992, which led to her meeting Ravinda at one of his seminars.

These two authors have constructed a very useful book on the use of yoga, mantras, and exercises to facilitate awakening the Kundalini.

They also tell the history of Kundalini and its connection to spiritual growth.

The Kundalini, or Serpent Fire, is something the East's spiritual masters have known for thousands of years. Only recently has the West begun to understand this spiritual emergence. The West used to misdiagnose this event as a mental disturbance and only recently has Electro-shock therapy been halted in the treatment of what they didn't understand.

I had my own Kundalini experience in the summer of 1984, without even knowing anything about it, with only a little experience with yoga and mediation since I was 18.

I can confirm from my own personal experience that these authors have experienced the same thing, in their own unique way. The information in this book is genuine and a great primer for those who want to experience a very dynamic spiritual awakening.

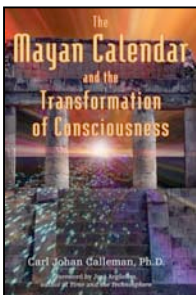
I believe that the Kundalini awakening is an evolutionary trigger for humanity and from reading this book I think it is safe to say that the authors would align with that statement.

The Mayan Calendar: And the Transformation of Consciousness,

Carl Johan Calleman, Ph. D.

(Bear & Company, 2004, 320pp, \$18.00)

Reviewed by Ron L. Adams



The Mayans kept very accurate calendars. It is speculated that there are probably over 18 different calendars, like the Haab, Long Count, Venus calendar and the Tzolkin, but modern man only knows a few of these. Some of the Guatemalan Mayan Day count shamans keep some of these sacred calendars secret, because of the prophecies that they contain.

Carl Johan Calleman has studied the Mayan Calendar since 1979. In this book, Calleman proposes an interesting theory of what the Mayan Calendar was saying and how its layout predicted the growth of world history.

Calleman uses the Mayan concept of the 13 Heavens as an outline of world history. He puts particular emphasis on what has happened on each even numbered Heaven and then what comes about on the odd numbered Heavens.

His section on the World tree is very interesting, as it uses the sacred view of the 4 directions of the ancient American Indians. In a lot of ways, this relates to the Hebrew Kaballah as well—they can be interchangeable if the student wishes to explore further.

Calleman explains the Tzolkin, the 260-day count of the Maya. He goes into depth about the prophecies of the Nine Underworlds, which are very revealing to where we are at today.

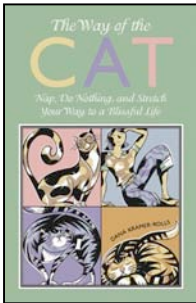
The author also suggests some practical uses of the Mayan Calendar.

My Tzolkin count is Kin 121, Red Self-existing Dragon.

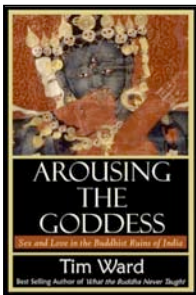
If you are interested in another look at time, one that is more in sync with the natural rhythms of the universe, then *The Mayan Calendar* is the book to read. It makes better sense than the oddly-partitioned Gregorian Calendar that we use in the world today.

There is a foreword by Dr. Jose Arguellas, who wrote *The Mayan Factor* and created the Dreamspell. This even though Calleman disagrees very much with Arguellas' Galactic Count. Nothing like a little in-house fighting to spice up the book.

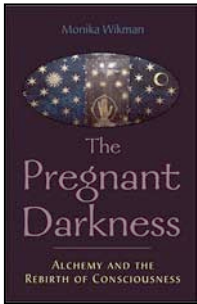
New & Notable



The Way of the Cat, Dana Kramer-Rolls (Conari Press) “Nap, Do Nothing, and Stretch Your Way to a Blissful Life.” The Way of the Cat contains exercises, amusing cat stories and feline food for thought. Kramer-Rolls draws on observations of the blissful lives cats lead every day to bring us a book which combines yoga and self-realization. “They are my teachers, and filled with a wisdom that goes beyond words or philosophy or theory,” writes Kramer-Rolls. “They live their wisdom... we will turn our hearts to loving Mother Earth, and listen to her teaching, just as our cats do everyday.”



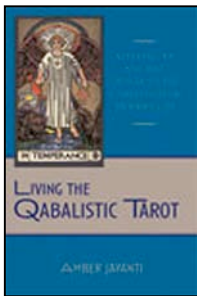
Arousing the Goddess, Tim Ward (Monkfish) This is the mystical and erotic story of the author’s two-year journey through India and the Far East. Ward spent three months in a Himalayan monastery before falling in love with an Austrian Indologist, Sabina. The two travel together on their joint spiritual quests through the Buddhist ruins of India. During the course of the journey, they begin to experience a new energy in their sexually charged relationship—a energy with all the hallmarks of ancient Tantric symptoms. *Arousing the Goddess* tells this true story of two lovers walking amidst the ruins of Buddhist India while wrestling with the truths being awakened by their passionate and surprising tantric practices.



The Pregnant Darkness: Alchemy and the Rebirth of Consciousness, Monika Wikman (Nicolas-Hays)

As a Jungian psychologist and astrologer, Wikman has worked for decades with clients and their dream symbols. Through the course of her work, she has witnessed the presence of the divine hand at work in the psyche. In *The Pregnant Darkness*, Wikman shows that the best way to cope

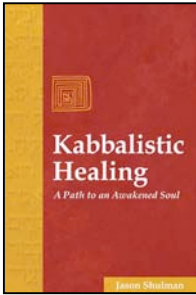
with one's darkest hours is by fostering a connection to the deeper current of life, those mysteries that give life form and meaning. Through her analysis of dream material, Wikman leads readers into a practical explanation of alchemical symbolism.



Living the Qabalistic Tarot, Amber Jayanti (Weiser Books)

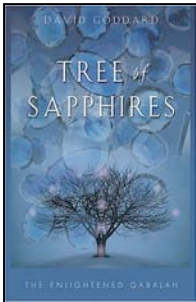
“Applying an Ancient Oracle to the Challenges of Modern Life.” Jayanti is the founder of the Santa Cruz School of Tarot and Qabalah Study. Within this book, Jayanti brings the reader her 22-week Qabalistic Tarot classes. She provides a step-by-step guide for experiencing the tarot in our daily lives. Each of the lessons is followed by suggestions

and guidelines for practical application and integration into everyday life. In *Living the Qabalistic Tarot* Jayanti combines her years of teaching into an accessible guide that even beginners may experience at their own pace and comfort level. Jayanti's other books include *Principles of the Qabalah* and *Tarot for Dummies*.



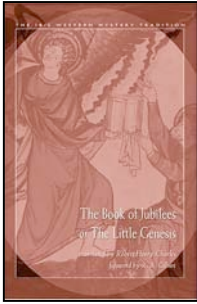
Kabbalistic Healing, Jason Shulman (Inner Traditions) Shulman describes how the Kabbalah—the Jewish mystical path—can assist in awakening us to our potential for uniting with the divine. He describes the healing possible for the human soul: an awakening to our essential nature that makes our former life seem as if we have been asleep.

Kabbalistic Healing presents a process of unification, joining with reality. Shulman then brings this process down to its implications on daily life. Shulman is the founder of A Society of Souls, a school dedicated to the awakening of the human spirit through the work of Integrated Kabbalistic Healing. The book draws upon Shulman’s work with the Society in promoting the creation of a unitive or nondual state of consciousness.

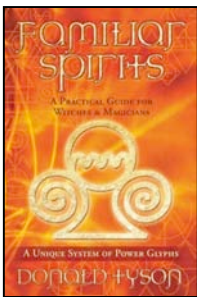


Tree of Sapphires: The Enlightened Qabalah, David Goddard (Weiser Books) Goddard offers students a working knowledge of the Qabalah, providing them with the key to unlocking the ancient and modern Western mystery tradition for themselves. The author avoids heavy theory, opting instead to offer exercises, meditations and visualizations as well as a prayer book to help readers

gain a better understanding of the Qabalah and the Tree of Life. Goddard explains how the Qabalah is the root source of all Western mystery traditions—Kabbalist, Rosicrucian and Sufi—as well as the more modern classic Western systems, such as the tarot, alchemy, angelology and ritual magic.



The Book of Jubilees or The Little Genesis, translated from Ethiopian by Robert Henry Charles (Ibis Press) This work purports to be a revelation given by God to Moses through the medium of an angel and contains a history, divided up into “jubilee periods” of 49 years, from the creation to the advent of Moses. Likely written in the 2nd century B.C., the author includes events of particular interest to his time as well as those events of Moses’ birth and early career. This text, though containing one or two passages of an apocalyptic character, is unlike typical apocalyptic works. The book is largely based upon the historical narratives in Genesis and Exodus, interspersed with legends and emphasizing certain practices (such as the strict observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, etc. The author’s primary objectives appears to have been the inculcation of a reform in the regulation of the calendar and festivals in place of the lunar calendar, which he condemns. He proposes to substitute a solar calendar consisting of 12 months and containing 364 days. The result of such a system is to make all festivals, except the Day of Atonement, fall on a Sunday—a radical idea for its day.



Familiar Spirits, Donald Tyson (Llewellyn) For centuries, magical familiars have assumed many forms: the heavenly lover of the shaman, the wise imp of the witch and the elemental companion of the theurgist. Whatever the form, the familiar’s function is always to help the practitioner. Tyson is the author of numerous books on the Western mysteries. In *Familiar Spirits* he reveals his own unique system for generating spirit sigils based on a set of symbols called Power Glyphs.