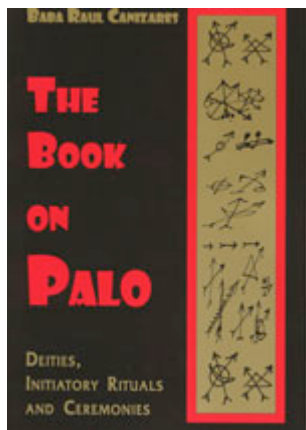


Reviews

The Book on Palo: The Wisdom of Don Demetrio, Baba Raul Canizares

(Original Publications, 2002, \$21.95)

Reviewed by Sven Davisson



Baba Raul Canizares received initiation into the mysteries of the Afro-Cuban spiritual practice known as Palo Monte while still a young boy living in Cuba. Canizares, whose palo name is Tata Camposanto Medianoche, received this empowerment from Demetrio Gomez (1874-1968) who lived in the city of Guanabacoa where for almost fifty years he led one of the most potent and influential Palo houses in Cuba.

Demetrio’s student Paco kept his mentor’s notebooks and Canizares was able to access these in preparing this work. He also had access to unpublished material by Andres Petit, founder of the Kimbisa faction of

Palo. Canizares has chosen an interesting and powerful method of writing creating this work. Half the book is written in the first-person and that personally referential I is the voice of Don Demetrio himself. Canizares states in his introduction, “it will be Demetrio’s voice you will hear, channeled through mine.”

This is one of the few books on the Palo tradition in English. I know from personal communications with the author, that this book was truly a labor of love—a project that he put a tremendous amount of energy into over the last few years of his life. The final product of his hard work is nothing less that *the* definitive book on Palo. He goes much farther than one would expect in a volume such as this detailing practices, providing complete mambos (chants), various plants & their uses, and sigils for the deities. He gives the reader a fascinating description of the making of a *nganga*—the ceremonial cauldron at the heart of the Palero’s practice.

In addition to being a Palero and Santero, Canizares was a scholar. His earlier *Cuban Santeria* is already a classic in the field of Afro-Caribbean religious studies. Echoing a similar rationale as that given by the Dalai Lama when asked about revealing previous secret tantras to the general public, Canizares states that his reason for



publishing such a detailed book on a secret tradition is both to preserve it from being lost and to protect it from being corrupted by greed and sensationalism.

Canizares does not shy away from discussing openly aspects of the religion which will most likely be troubling to some readers. Most markedly among them is the topic of animal sacrifice—an important aspect of many of the African descended new world faiths. It should be noted that the ritual taking of animal life has a long and ancient connection with the practice of religion and is still an important part of several of the world’s “big five” religions. The U.S. Supreme Court has even ruled on the constitutionality of animal sacrifice and religious practice in a landmark case involving a Santerian church in Florida. This said, Canizares approaches the use of animals in a manner that is both unapologetic and non-sensational.

There are many photographs included with the book, including images of Canizares involved in actual initiation ceremonies—“scratching.” Many of the images stand alone as works of art-photography that are as evocative as they are explanatory. The images of the various *nganga* are really extraordinarily powerful.

Baba passed way in December of 2002 and this is his last book, published just months before his death. It stands alongside *Cuban Santeria: Walking with the Night* as one of his best works. *The Book on Palo* is an invaluable contribution to the study of American religion. It should be a part of the library of anyone interested in comparative religion—regardless of their own faith.

The Ninth Arch, Kenneth Grant

(Starfire Publishing, 2002. Available from Mandrake of Oxford)

Reviewed by Mary Hedger (*Mandrake Speaks*)

‘Can you in good conscience recommend *The Ninth Arch* to someone who is only familiar with some of the early work of Grant? That is, is the new book comprehensible to a neophyte of Grant’s work or should I resume investigation elsewhere in his canon, in the improbable event that copies can be found? I’ve read *AC and the Hidden God* and part of *The Magical Revival*.

Umm good question. I regard myself as a child of the first trilogy, Cults of the Shadow, Magical Revival and Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God. I never really expected the second trilogy to even appear - Nightside of Eden, Outside the Circles of Time and Hecate’s Fountain; and I never even looked at the third trilogy, Outer Gateways, The Mauve Zone and now The Ninth Arch. So perhaps I am a bit of a guinea pig and give it a go. I was surprised how intriguing the Ninth Arch can be. I found it, to



use KG's own words 'a rush of mephitic air from the unsealed depths', a 'Kamsin blast.' truly something different in a word of publishing mediocrity.

'The Ninth Arch is an ancient Masonic concept relating to the legend of the three Grand Masters engaged upon the erection of King Solomon's Temples. After it was completed, the three deposited therein those things which were important to the craft, such as the arc of the covenant, a pot of manna, the rod of Aaron, the book of the law etc.' Inscribed about it was the lost or unutterable Word.' The purpose of Grant's book is to explain this mystery and reveal the word.

The heart of Grant's book is a 924 verse Book of the Spider, a mystical text channeled to Grants New-Isis Lodge in the 1950s. Around this sutra, Grant weaves almost six hundred pages of comment, mainly in the form of mini essays. It sounds an unpromising structure but it really works and is well suited to the lucid dreamers or to use Grant's parlance, the inhabitants of the mauve zone to whom this books is addressed. Having no acquaintance with Grant's earlier work might actually make this book even more evocative. There were some very obscure sections that would only really make sense if I totally entered into Grant's system, but there were many comments that seemed to throw light on almost any style of magick.

After all it is the books central thesis that something out there is trying to tell us something using a whole variety of mediums and modes of communication. Crowley, he tells us,, 'with prophetic acumen [] presaged the massive interest in alien phenomena which erupted soon after his death and which was caused by Kenneth Arnold's 'flying saucer' sighting [in 1947]. Whatever one's attitude to such phenomena - positive, negative or indifferent - there is no just denial of the fact that the wave initiated an era of psychomythology unparalleled since man conceived the idea of the 'gods'. unless, therefore, we are to write off the entire 'myth' as an unprecedented mass delusion, we have to accept the fact that something approaching a seemingly new and inexplicable nature began slowly and insidiously to disturb the world in the year 1947.'. (p xix)

Acting on the assumptions that 'Many a true word spoken in jest'; 'the 'ritualists of the New Isis Lodge utilized certain novels and stories as other magicians might use paintings or musical compositions to effect perichoresis and astral encounters' xxxvi. Apart from the usually occult litany, H P Lovecraft, Algernon Blackwood et al Grant primary source is Richard Marsh's novel The Beetle which contains the only published account known [to Grant] of the Children of Isis who emerge in the channelled text in rather startling form.

I haven't read Marsh's novel but guess that Grant's reworking of it is likely to be far more evocative. Really Grant's books are a new artform what I have in the past



called 'auto-romance'. I picked it up near the end of the day, not expecting a factual hit, although there are some fascinating facts here somewhere - but more as a collective grimoire. I take a little snort and am then primed to enter the mauve zone. Here's a little taster.

The oracle

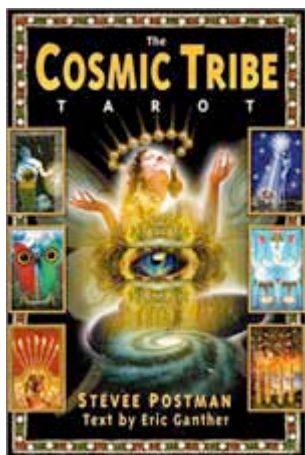
31-2 below the tunnels of the spider hanging athwart the network of alleys choked in the mud, the sand of the Mokkatam hills.

The comment

The spider is here symbolic of the web of alleys that existed at the time Crowley received from Aiwass "The threefold book of the Law", not far distant from the Mokkatam hills. This verse sets the scene for a series of events concerning the Children of Isis, of whose activities a fragmentary account was given in fictional form by Richard March writing in the 1890s. It is assumed that he was oblivious of the actuality of the events he described. It may not be so easy to assume that he was not an indirect descendant of that Obed Marsh of who Lovecraft writes in *The Shadow over Innsmouth*. It is also not impossible that he was related to Dr. Phineas March Black, a great uncle of the present commentator. Details of Dr. Black's mysterious life are given in *Against the Light*, which contains much information relevant to this Book OKBISH. Note that the present verse constitutes verse Thirty-One of the Books as a whole.'

Kenneth Grant's numerology may be suspect, his historical sources unreliable, but his poetical intuition is strangely prescient. I may not want to be part of the only true order but I can't help admiring his eclecticism, his culture, his generosity towards other artists and writers. So this book is really a triumphal arch - the final act from a highly creative magician and writer who has done more than any other living adept to explicate Crowley's magical universe and to initiate us all into some very sinister mysteries.





The Cosmic Tribe Tarot, Steve Postman
(Destiny, 1998, \$32)

It is impossible to describe in words how wonderful and enchanting and innovative Steve Postman’s tarot is, so I will begin straight off by giving the URL for Mr.

Postman’s website. www.stevee.com Get yourself there and check the cards out for yourself! *The Cosmic Tribe Tarot* stands apart from the handful of other “postmodern” tarot decks that have come out in the past several years.

Each card shows an attention to artistic detail that is more often than not lacking in other thematic decks. Each card is a singular work of art, infused with beauty, light, fun and a spiritually charged eroticism. The ethereal beauty of the naked form dances through the various cards. This is not the body neutered by an “Golden Age” earthy naturalness; this is, instead, the postmodern body, equally sensual and sexual, sometimes comfortable, sometimes comforting, and sometimes aggressively threatening. This is the body of the magician who has recreated him or herself and reclaimed the Godhead. This is the technoshaman body: tattooed, pierced and in your face.

A quality of energy runs through the cards like lightning or electricity. Postman has developed his own meta-symbolism that plays throughout: eyes, lotuses, butterflies, fairies, serpents and stars. The Devil is an image of Pan dancing through the greenery, Death is Kali-ma dancing through flame a gigantic mouth gaping across the stomach, the Tower is a flaming tower of televisions. It is truly a testament to Mr. Postman’s abilities that the digital manipulations that underlie all the cards never obscure the images. Each card possesses a unity and none look as if they were a mere collage. Also of note: the deck includes three different versions of the Lovers card: male+male, female+female and female+male.

The text of the accompanying book by Eric Ganther works very well with the deck. The writing style is playful and draws one into each card with a clear descriptive analysis and helpful divinatory meaning. Ganther manages to do this without becoming didactic or taking away from the imagery by heavy-handed over interpretation.



The Way of Mystery. Magick, Mysticism & Self-Transcendence, Nema
(Llewellyn Publications, 2003, \$15.95) Reviewed by Jan Fries (*Mandrake Speaks*)

In the early eighties, Kenneth Grant amazed the occult establishment by publishing a book (*Outside the Circles of Time*) that was based to a major extent on the visions and experiences of a hitherto unknown initiate called Sorror Andahadna, or more briefly, Nema. Nema's experiences provided a silver key and much needed counterweight to the better known current of Horus, her work being the pre-shadowing, but also the manifestation of the elusive and all-inclusive current of Maat. Nema was channeling Maat, the ancient Egyptian goddess of truth, balance and justice. All of these are subtle and sometimes elusive concepts that seemed a lot more difficult to understand than the more simple seeming formula of Horus, the falcon-headed god of will, force and focused activity. Many Thelemites who felt comfortable with the Horus current found it hard to comprehend Maat, who was always dancing around the focus of their awareness, visible and invisible at once, comprehensible by paradox and enigmatic to the point where reason gives way to laughter. Where the prophet of Horus, Aleister Crowley, offered a number of almost straightforward stratagems of yoga and ritual magick, Nema's manifestation of Maat seemed cryptic as it was so simple, refined and essentially self-focused. The two approaches to the magick of the Nu Aeon balanced, but only for a handful of dedicated researchers who developed their own methods of blending and manifesting the twinned approach in courageous subjectivity.

It was not until 1995 that a full book called *Maat Magick* appeared, a much needed work that offered a full program of experiences leading to self-initiation in a system that was guaranteed to destroy itself upon fulfillment. Nema's first book seemed a simple system of things that can be done, it's deep and artistic subtlety remained hidden to the more casual readers, and indeed to all who did not bother to do the exercises and find their own approach to Maat, Truth, in and through their own true will. Maat, however, was not to be confined to a single approach. Eight years later I am delighted to see that another manifestation of the current has appeared which balances the dynamic doing of the first volume with a more subtle approach.

The Way of Mystery, originally entitled *Wings of Rapture*, provides a counterweight to the first volume by offering initiation into the way of mystery, or mysticism, as you might call it.

What is mysticism? The concept may or may not appeal to you, depending on what you have learned to associate with this subject. Most people in modern magick seem to believe that mysticism means "doing without." The publisher, Llewellyn,



obviously subscribed to the popular and totally misleading idea that mysticism is something practiced by doddering elders who have given up on life and decided to transcend the world, the flesh and the devil, as they are not up to them any more. If you see the cover of the book, you will understand what I mean. Instead of making use of the brilliant and illuminating paintings of the author, the publisher decided to cater to the public opinion, and printed a picture of a monk who might have come from a cheese advertisement.

This is exactly the sort of mysticism which you will not find in Nema's brilliant book. Mysticism is not for senile recluses; *The Way of Mystery* is for people who are very much alive and enjoy it. This is a book of magick, discovery and self-exploration. It focuses on aspects of magick which are conveniently forgotten by the result-hungry and shows that mystery is the counterweight to magick. Where magick is the weaving of illusions (maya), mystery is the freedom to transcend them. To use a simple metaphor, we could propose that mystery means going up the Tree (or the spine, if you prefer Kundalini yoga), a process that means leaving the limitations and confines of everyday life, everyday consciousness and everyday belief in reality, in a process of continuous refinement and simplification. Mystery is very much being yourself, once you have come to understand how all-inclusive Self has ever been. Magick is coming down the Tree again, bringing change and transformed awareness into the world of phenomena. More simply, you have to get out before you can come back again. Most modern magickians desire to work change in this world, but unless they embrace mystery, there is little chance that they will get out far enough to come back again with a laugh, a word, and a fire in their eyes that will set the world aflame. Where medieval mystics practiced abasement and denial to the point of stupidity, Nema's *Way of Mystery* means adventure, rapture and the wild joy that comes from meeting the Forgotten Ones, unfolding Self in its totality and doing will in ways that are far beyond Crowley's modest achievements. This is a very practical book. Its center is You, and as you read, do and discover, you will find that there can be no magick without mystery, and no mystery without magick, as the twinned forces shape the flow of evolution. For the beginner, *The Way of Mystery* offers a system of excellent and useful practices that work in shaping awareness and identity to transform the personality into a stream-lined vehicle of True Will. The experienced mage will find some of the practices familiar, and be delighted to discover the depth and subtlety that is woven into the seeming simplicity. Nema is a very methodical and well-organized philosopher, behind each of her lines you can discern a lifetime of courageous self-exploration that is well worth contemplating in depth. For the advanced adept, *The Way of Mystery* is one of those rare and priceless works that can be read again and again



without coming to an end of its many levels of meaning. This is a book to explore, embrace and enjoy through a lifetime of self-evolution.

The Edge of Certainty: Dilemmas on the Buddhist Path, Peter Fanner.
(Red Wheel/Weiser, 2002. \$16.95) reviewed by Prem Arun

I was very unsuspecting when I picked up this deceptively slim volume (a scant 111 pages not include notes and index). Peter Fenner has written an very thought provoking book. As one progresses through the book, one finds oneself in a puzzle-box. The dilemma that Fenner is primarily concerned with is the dichotomy between orthodox and non-orthodox Buddhist cosmology—the question rather practice produces enlightenment or if enlightenment is already present and therefore not producible. The author provides a good introduction to the major Buddhist traditions—enough of an intro to set up his juxtaposition of their diverse positions on the question of attainment and practice. He begins the work with a good, straight-forward introduction to the Four Noble Truths. After laying this groundwork, he moves through the various Buddhist traditions: Theravada, Mahayana, Tantra, Zen, Dzogchen and Mahamudra.

One does feel two-thirds of the way through the book that you're reading a long introduction that, given the slender book, won't give you much once you arrive. Then all of a sudden, Fenner begins breaking down the various positions, throwing one against another. With each page he successfully pulls the ground he just so nicely filled in on the previous page out from under you. As one nears the conclusion (if you can call it that), you realize that the author is playing a very deliberate mind-game with his readers. At this point you either smile and continue where he might lead, or put the book down with annoyance or boredom and return to the mat.

Looking back, the book itself is constructed as a practice. If one makes it to the end, the reader should come away with a shift in their thinking—even if it is simply disrupted enough to not be capable of “thinking” through the dilemmas at all. The book is described as being about dilemmas of the Buddhist Path and the entire context of its philosophical discussion is firmly rooted in the breadth of the Buddhist schools. Of particular note, is his nutshell sketch of Nagarjuna's masterwork the *Mulamadhyamakakarika*.

The Edge of Certainty is, however, a work that would prove fascinating to a much larger set of spiritual seekers. He provides enough of the foundation to set up his



discussions, without the necessity, on the part of the reader, to bring a large amount of pre-knowledge to the table.

Tankhem: meditations on tantrik and Egyptian magick and the mysteries of Seth, the great dragon, Mogg Morgan

(Mandrake of Oxford, 2003, e-book, or £5 or \$8.00)

Reviewed by Z. A. Sibsi al Vauteth

I purchased a copy of the first edition of Mogg Morgan's *Sexual Magick* over a decade ago in a small bookshop in Oxford. To this day, I vividly remember the shop and the little bridge over which I had to walk to reach that particular street. Without exaggeration, Morgan's earlier book *Sexual Magick* defined a significant portion of my earlier spiritual life. His innovative and, dare I say, groundbreaking theories set me on a course which I still walk today. This current book *Tankhem* is a superb practical follow-up to *Sexual Magick* building on the theories and hypotheses which he began in the previous work. He draws a tremendous amount of varied, but surprising cohesive, material into this book. It is above all else a explication of a particularly interesting subset of ancient Egyptian mythology set in the midst of a very practical, modern construst. He calls this magickal cosmology "Setanism" as it focuses on the Egyptian god Set (or Seth), a member of one of the earliest divine families (Abydos) of the Egyptian pantheon.

Morgan addresses some touchy areas including a pointed analysis of both LaVey's Church of Satan and it's more esoteric offshoot the Temple of Set. He asks pointed questions about the mythic basis of thelema (the religion founded by Aleister Crowley soon after the turn of the last century). Morgan ties in long explications of tantra vis a vis Egyptian magick, modern sexual magick, the Erotic Landscape, the visionary experiments of W.B. Yeats and more.

The heart of the work is a detailed and systematic meditative exploration of the temple built by Seti I at Abydos. His walk-through description is as much a guided magickal exercise as it is a descriptive analysis of the temple and its metaphysical significance. The most controversial aspect of the work is his discussions of thelema and its relation to Setian metaphysics. He proposes that Awaiss is equitable to Set (a notion supported by Crowley's own writings) and that Liber Samech is in fact an invocation of Set. For Morgan, an aeon presided over by Horus alone with be untenable. He instead proposes a thelemic cosmology with a joint rule of Horus and Set—something that is



very much supported in the early Egyptian myths, where the pharaoh ruled by “the Horus and the Set.”

Even as a self-described “amateur Egyptologist” Morgan does a superb job with this both difficult and arcane material. I highly recommend this work and hope that it gets a wider distribution within (and without) the greater magickal community. This edition is described as a beta version, but I would not wait for a final edition before purchasing it. The book is available as a PDF from Mandrake of Oxford.

Ayurveda: The Mantra of Niramaya

Interactive CD-Rom on the ancient system of Indian Medicine.

(Recommended price 20 Euros. Available from Mandrake of Oxford.)

This is quite a useful introduction to the Ayurvedic medical system covering all possible aspects of interest - history, personalities, pharmacology, philosophy, basic principles and therapies. I found it a relatively trustworthy and informative guide to material that can so often be the field of 'nationalistic' history and mythmaking. Illustrated with beautiful modern renditions of traditional images. But it is just that - introductory - the section on pharmacology, for example listed and illustrated a great many interesting medicaments but I would have liked a little more detail. I really appreciated the biographies of several seminal medics. On the whole, if you like the medium of CD ROM, which apparently many students at Gujerat's Ayurvedic University do, then this product is pretty good. It could perhaps do with a better index and perhaps the interactive aspect could allow some kind of self analysis of body types etc. But otherwise recommended. *-mm*



new & notable**America IV: The Man Comes Around**, Johnny Cash

(America, 2002)

Thankfully, as the old saying goes, reports of his death were greatly exaggerated. But who would have thought that two years into the next century one would have a new Cash album. His voice is not that of “Ring of Fire” or even “Fulson Prison Blues,” but this is still the Man In Black—if anything more dark and brooding than ever. This is Cash the story-teller, now a voice scratched and broken with life, age and illness. It is precisely this wizened, flawed sound that lends dramatic poignancy to the songs on this album. Cash continues his innovative and unexpected choice of songs and collaborators, begun with volume one of this series *American Recordings* (1994). In addition to his own songs which include the title track and an updated “Give My Love to Rose,” he’s recorded a very surprising selection of material: Trent Reznor’s “Hurt,” Paul Simon’s “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” Sting’s “I Hung My Head,” Depeche Mode’s “Personal Jesus,” Lennon and McCartney’s “In My Life” as well as classics like “First Time Ever I Saw Your Face,” “Danny Boy” and Hank Williams “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry.” Don Henley joins Cash to sing on Henley’s “Deperado.” Nick Cave duets on “I’m So Lonesome” and June and Rose sing along on “We’ll Meet Again.” Despite the eclectic selection of music and collaborators, this album comes together as a whole each song deftly blending to the next. Cash takes each of the diverse pieces and makes them uniquely his own, so that one can easily forget that they are the same number performed by the Beatles, Simon and Gardunkel or Sting. We can be thankful that the world never righted itself enough to allow Cash to put on that suit of white.

Cruelty Without Beauty, Soft Cell

(Cooking Vinyl, 2002)

2002 also saw a new album from Soft Cell—the first original studio release in 18 years. The synth-pop duo remembered best for their cover of the northern soul ballad “Tainted Love” and “Memorabilia” (widely considered to be the prototypic techno album) has returned with a fresh and innovative album. This is not surprising, since in the almost two decade hiatus singer Marc Almond and partner Dave Ball have been busy. Almond has had a varied career spanning more than 20 albums, four record companies and a repertoire including songs about masturbation, Judy Garland and English translations of



Jacques Brel and Charles Aznavour. Ball's collaboration *The Grid* is still a powerful, behind-the-scenes influence on modern dance and techno. Unlike many of their compatriots riding the eighties "vintage" revival, Ball and Almond have produced a new album of fresh material, rather than simply attempting to replicate a sound that may have made the famous but is now dated and derivative. Ball's production and arrangement stands out from the current crop of formulaic pop, slower and without the requisite, repetitive, canned backbeat. Almond allows his wit and a dash of camp to come through in his lyrics which he accomplishes their delivery with the agility of comfortable music veteran. Almond sings in "Last Chance" *In a city lost in time/Somewhere sordid and sublime/We met over a gin and lime/One rainy evening/Survivors clinging to the mast*. The familiar characters of vintage Soft Cell are all present, the prostitute, the fallen star, the sex-addict, the down-and-out and morally bankrupt, just now they have reached middle age. "In Whatever It Takes" Almond croons, *I tried meditation/Crystal therapy/Colonic irrigation/Didn't agree with me/Road rage and new age/Just tricks of the mind/The onset of middle age/Is all that I find*.

Yoga: Science of the Soul, Osho.

(St. Martin's, 2002. \$11.95)

This work is actually a selection from Osho's multi-volume discourse series on the yoga sutras of Patanjali *Yoga: The Alpha and Omega*. The series has been out of print for some time and the republication of Osho's insights on yoga, even in selected form, is a welcome return.

The Big Bang, the Buddha, and the Baby Boom: The Spiritual Experiments of My Generation, Wes "Scoop" Nisker

(HaperSanFrancisco, April 2003, Cloth, \$24.95)

The author of *Crazy Wisdom* chronicles his wide-ranging search for spiritual bliss—a long, strange trip that takes him from Bob Dylan to Ram Dass and all the points in between.

Doomed Megalopolis DVD

(ADV Films, \$29.95)

Finally Hiroshi Aramata's classic supernatural anime is available on DVD. This two DVD set includes all four episodes of this epic: *The Haunting of Tokyo, The Fall of Tokyo, The Gods of Tokyo* and *The Battle for Tokyo*. In his drive to conquer Tokyo, the powerful sorcerer Kato awakens Masakato, the city's guardian. Kato's diabolical plan



which involves the corruption of an unsuspecting, innocent woman, results in the near destruction of the entire city. A small band of unlikely heroes are, of course, the only thing that stand between Kato and the realization of his plans. Doomed Megalopolis is a dark and complex saga of good versus evil, depravity and redemption. Chilling, mysterious and miraculous.

Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession, I.M. Lewis
(Routledge, March 2003, \$22.95)

States of spirit possession, in which believers feel themselves to be “possessed” by the deity and raised to a new plane of existence, are found in almost all known religions. From Dionysiac cults to Haitian voodoo, Christian and Sufi mysticism to shamanic ritual, the rapture and frenzy of ecstatic experience forms an iconic expression of faith in all its devastating power and unpredictability. Third edition, originally printed 1971.

Samurai Zen: The Warrior Koans, Trevor Leggett
(Routledge, 2003, \$14.95)

For centuries, the Zen Buddhist masters used koans—riddles that test the inadequacy of logic—to train samurai in the art of patience, precision, and practicality, hallmarks of Asia’s supreme warriors. Zen expert Trevor Leggett gathers 100 of these medieval Japanese interviews rescued from secret temples of the 13th century. These early koans are unusually pure and vivid. For unscholarly warriors, the masters created instant koans from incidents of everyday life—a broken teacup, a water jar, a cloth. The pupils could reply with a poem, brush strokes, a song or a line from the No drama. The resulting koans are rich in simple, powerful images that meld the serenity of Zen with the mental steel of the samurai warrior.

Philosophy and Religion: From Plato to Postmodernism, Max Charlesworth
(OneWorld, Oct. 2002, \$19.95)

From the Greek philosophers to the postmodern theories of Jacques Derrida and Richard Rorty, this authoritative survey encompasses over two thousand years of interaction between philosophical and religious thought. Exploring the various ways in which philosophy can relate to the monotheistic religions, Charlesworth follows a chronological pattern, considering both major and lesser known philosophers.

Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition, J.D. Turner
(Peeters, Belgium, 2002, 80 Euros)



No less than eleven of the fifty-three treatises of the Nag Hammadi Library fit the designation ‘Sethian Gnostic.’ They reveal the existence of a hitherto unrecognized religious competitor of early Christianity. With its own roots in second temple Judaism and in various first and second century sectarian baptismal movements, Sethian Gnosticism is now the earliest form of Gnosticism for which we possess a great deal of textual evidence. Like the Christian school of Valentinus (120-160 CE) and his followers—which it seems to antedate—Sethianism not only allied itself with the early Christian movement, but was also vitally indebted to the (Middle) Platonism of the first three centuries, even to the point that several of its heological treatises became the subject of scrutiny in Plotinus’ third century Roman seminars.

Accordingly, Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition is divided into five sections: an introductory discussion of the scholarly attempts to characterize the relation of Gnosticism and Platonism, followed by three main sections: Part One, an analysis and history of Sethian literature, mythology, and ritual practice in its pre-Christian, Christian, and post-Christian phases; Part Two, a survey of the development of Platonic metaphysics from Plato to Theodore of Asine; and Part Three, an extensive analysis of the four Platonizing Sethian treatises and their implication for the history and development of Middle and Neoplatonic metaphysics. The final section offers a concluding overview of the Sethian religion.

The Ethiopian Jewish Exodus: Narratives of the Migrational Journey to Isreal, 1977-1985, Gadi BenEzer

(Routledge, 2002, Cloth, \$95.00)

Between 1977 and 1985, some 20,000 Ethiopian Jews left their homes in Ethiopia and embarked on a secret and highly traumatic exodus to Israel. Due to various political circumstances they had to leave their homes in haste, go a long way on foot through unknown country, and stay for a period of one or two years in refugee camps, until they were brought to Israel. The difficult condition of the journey included racial tensions, attacks of bandits, night travel over mountains, incarceration, illness and death. A fifth group did not survive the journey.

Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination, Conrad Ostwalt

(Trinity Press, 2003, \$27.00)

In this provocative volume, Conrad Ostwalt challenges assumptions and presents fresh ideas about the relationship between religion and secular culture. Organized religion may no longer dominate culture, but predictions of its demise in a secularized society—from



the Enlightenment to the “secular city” of the 1960’s—have not been borne out, he says. However, religious institutions face significant new challenges because of the transitions they have made in a world where they do not set the agenda.

Poems of Hanshan, Translated by Peter Hobson

(Altamira Press, 2003, \$19.95)

Hanshan, which means Cold Mountain, was the pseudonym adopted by an unknown poet who lived in China as a hermit twelve hundred years ago. The poems collected under his name have had an immense impact worldwide, especially among Zen Buddhists, and have been translated into many languages. Peter Hobson’s translation of more than a hundred of the poems, almost all of which are published for the first time in this volume, brings those qualities of timelessness, poetic diction and engaging rhythm that do justice to the concepts and language of the original.

Religion & Postmodernism 4: Transcendence and Beyond

(Conference, Villanova University, PA, 18-20 Sept. 2003, \$95, Students \$50)

The fourth international colloquium of philosophers will address the relevance of the concept of transcendence today. Is the post-modern age also an age of post-transcendence? Speakers include: Jean-Luc Marion (Sorbonne), Gianni Vattimo (University of Turin), Richard Kearney (Boston College), Catherine Keller (Drew), Fergus Kerr, O.P. (Edinburgh University and Blackfriars, Oxford), Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza (Harvard Divinity School). For more information and on-line registration: www.villanova.edu/ReligionAndPostmodernism

