

DV RK
SYMPOSIUM
SEPT 2026

OCCULTURE
AS METHOD

Thursday 10th September and Friday 11th September 2026



Thursday 10th September

9am Registration

9:45 Welcome – SODA cinema GF.12, (same location for all panels)

10:00 Panel 1: Research Methods for Occultural Experiences – Chair Matteo Polato

Phil Legard	Creative Seekership: Occultural Autoethnography in Theory and Practice
Jeff Howard	“A Species of Fire”: Phenomenological Approaches to Occultural Gnosis
João Ferreira	Rituals as Psychophysiological Technologies: A Review of Occult Practices in Experimental Research and Health Applications

11:30 Break

12:00 Workshops session 1

Fabrizio Cocchiarella and John Lloyd	Let's Talk About Death (SODA reception)
Chris Gladwin	Runic Acid Glyph Workshop (SODA 1.13)
Maya Chowdhry and Hannah Singleton	Electro Magnetic Coven (SODA 4.06)

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Panel 2: Sociopolitics of Occulture – Chair Julian Holloway

Stefano Pavarini	Deconstructing Extremism: The Semiotics of Esotericism, Art, and Subcultural Co-optation in Contemporary Neo-Nazism
Mikkel Rørbo	Digital Occultism as Red-String Method
Jamie Stephenson	“I Was an Angel, Though Plummeting”: Sonic Occulture in Ethel Cain’s Perverts

15:30 Break

16:00 Workshops session 2

Maya Chowdhry and Hannah Singleton	Electro Magnetic Coven (SODA 4.06)
Matteo Polato	Electronic Voice Phenomena and DIY Radio Making (SODA 1.09)

19:00 Evening social at Impiety Hour Live: Universal Veil + The Wyrding Module

scan for programme and abstracts



Friday 11th September

09:30 Registration

10:00 Panel 3: Queer, Hybrid and Subversive Occultures – Chair Maya Chowdhry

Cavan McLaughlin and Elizabeth Tomos Crossing Over as Method: Mapping an Emergent
Methodology for Occultural Studies

Kate Fox Tarot and the I Ching as Neuroqueer Knowledge Practices

Jaqueline Woroniec The Satanic Queer: Morphing Performance of Satan in Popular
Culture

11:30 Break

12:00 Workshops session 3

Fabrizio Cocchiarella and John Lloyd Let's Talk About Death (SODA reception)

Chris Gladwin Runic Acid Glyph Workshop (SODA 1.13)

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Panel 4: Occultural Hermeneutics - Chair Hannah Singleton

Fionna Barber Goddessness as method for feminist critical practice: Jesse Jones' *Mirror
Martyr Mirror Moon* (2024)

Ali Darvishi Interiority as Method: Inside, Fana, and Cinematic Becoming in Soore Vahe's
Between Two Words

15:00 Break

15:15 Roundtable: future projects and collaborations

16:30 Social, upstairs at The Salutation

Workshops

Run by DVRK research group members throughout both days, see sign-up sheets at reception desk

Let's Talk About Death

Fabrizio Cocchiarella and John Lloyd

Death is universal, yet how we understand, experience and talk about it is shaped by culture, belief, place and personal experience. Let's Talk About Death explores contemporary attitudes towards death, dying, burial and memorialisation, asking how creative practice might open up new ways of thinking about mortality. Through a combination of conversation, creative prompts and experiential practices, participants are invited to consider their own relationship with mortality alongside broader cultural and societal perspectives.

Runic Acid Glyph Workshop

Chris Gladwin

Enter the current. Learn to read and wield Runic Acid Glyphs through practices of Glyph-Werk and applied sonic sigilization. Consult your wyrd, align with the Life Current, and charge your biokinetic mantras with vibrational glyphs.

Part of DVRK's Occulture As Method symposium. RUNIC ACID GLYPHS WORKSHOP

Electro Magnetic Coven

Maya Chowdhry and Hannah Singleton

A participatory workshop exploring the ways in which we are entangled and attuned to the world around us

Sensing and embodiment sounded out through imagined hauntings

And a toy cat

Electronic Voice Phenomena and DIY Radio Making

Matteo Polato

Electronic Voice Phenomena, Instrumental Transcommunication, psychophonia, the ghost box, the Spiricom, the Estes method, and so much more: Occulture has always had a particularly strong relationship with radio technology, adopted both as a metaphor for etheric transmissions and as practical means for paranormal communications. In this workshop, we will experiment with such otherworldly resonances by making and testing the very circuits used by EVP practitioners to scan the radio spectrum for spectral messages.

Thursday 10 September

Panel 1: Research Methods for Occultural Experiences

Phil Legard (he/him), Leeds Beckett University

Instagram @phil_legard

Creative Seekership: Occultural Autoethnography in Theory and Practice

This paper presents an overview of how autoethnography can be applied to the study of creative practices embedded within contemporary occulture. Building on Nina Kokkinen's art-historical approach to 19th-century artists as seekers who contribute to and draw from their contemporary occultural domain (2013), the work presented here explores how the practice of analytic autoethnography (Anderson 2006) can be used to develop a structured, multi-disciplinary framework for contemporary scholar-practitioners who primarily use their creative work as a mode of occult seekership. I will outline some methods and analytical tools which might assist those interested in this form of self-study: these range from the practicalities of discursive and thematic analysis through coding and 'grounded' approaches (Pace 2012), to the application of concepts from Ann Taves' cognitive and attributive theories of religion to experiential narratives (Taves 2009, 2016). I will also address some of the criticisms brought against the 'pernicious' practice of autoethnography (Delamont 2006), and how these might be resolved by researchers – as well as a caveat on the implications of such work for practitioners themselves via the potentially disenchanting effect that constant ontological and epistemological repositioning may have on their outlooks. My PhD work (Legard 2024) examined my magical-musical practices between 2001 to 2013, culminating in the development of two theoretical contributions to be presented here. The first is a model for 'Creative Seekership' detailing how practitioners draw from – and contribute to – occulture in a variety of domains: from identity construction, to narratives of experience, and the relationship between experiences, their appraisals, and the development of 'paths of practice'. The second is a typology of forms of esoteric musical creativity, with implications for other creative arts, too. In both cases, a commitment to informants beyond the researcher's self are used to refine these conclusions through supporting case-studies.

Biography

Phil Legard is senior lecturer in music production at Leeds Beckett University. His research interests lie at the intersection of esotericism, music, and politics. His doctoral work explored autoethnography as a research method for esotericism studies, from which he developed a theory of 'creative seekership'. With Dr. Alexander Cummins, he is co-author of *An Excellent Booke of the Arte of Magicke* (Scarlet Imprint, 2020), which transcribes and analyses the 16th-century grimoire and magical record of Sir Humphrey Gilbert. He is also the author of various popular and academic articles on esotericism, magic, and creativity. He is one half of the musical duo Hawthonn, who currently have two LP releases on Brooklyn's Ba Da Bing records.

Dr Jeff Howard (he/him), Falmouth University

Instagram @gamemagiarcana

“A Species of Fire”: Phenomenological Approaches to Occultural Gnosis

In *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*, Iamblichus (in the role of the Egyptian magician Anebo) declares that “a species of fire is seen by the recipient, prior to the spirit being received.” These words suggest an early form of occultural phenomenology: an attempt to describe the mystical experiences associated with a particular occult practice. Two millennia later, at Berlin Occulture 2023, Bernd-Christian Otto proposed a multi-step framework for the study of esoteric practices. Whilst the later steps of this process leverage standard social science methodologies and methods, such as autoethnography and predictive coding, the first step hearkens back to Iamblichus’ phenomenological approach, with phenomenology defined as the introspective study of experience.

Drawing upon both ancient and contemporary examples, the talk will explore how occultural phenomenology might illuminate practitioners’ experiences in relationship to the transcendent and the otherworldly. In so doing, the talk will explore early phenomenology in Heidegger, as well as the psychological work of William James in *Varieties of Religious Experience*. The talk will connect this early work to recent work by practitioner-scholars, such as Ian C. Edwards, whose tetralogy *Being and Non-Being in Occult Experience* gestures toward a future for phenomenological approaches in occulture. By working at the convergence of past and future, the talk will seek ways in which practitioners can rigorously reflect upon and communicate their experiences without compromising their transcendent aspects.

In pursuing this seemingly paradoxical goal, the talk will draw upon the proto-phenomenological meditations of Zen Buddhism through the Kyoto school, as well as the Western esotericist concept of gnosis: direct mystical experience constituting a form of knowledge. The quest will pose a central question: how can a phenomenological approach address mystical forms of knowledge without lapsing into “unverified personal gnosis”?

Biography

Dr Jeff Howard is a scholar of occulture and esotericism. He works as Associate Professor of Games and Occulture at Falmouth University in Cornwall, where he specialises in the occult and games. He is the author of two monographs *Quests: Design, Theory, and History in Games and Narratives* (now in its second edition) and *Game Magic: A Designer’s Guide to Magic Systems in Theory and Practice*. He translates theory into practice as a core team member of Apocalypse Studios, where he consults on worldbuilding and systems design. He is also the creator of “Howard’s Law of Occult Design,” published in *100 Principles of Game Design*. Howard has presented on games and the occult at a variety of international conferences, including Berlin Occulture, Trans-States, and ESSWE9. In addition, he has been an invited speaker at Viktor Wynd’s Last Tuesday Society, where he has spoken about folk magic and folk games. Howard studies Sabbatic Craft at the intersection of the Left Hand Path and the Typhonian current. Through his scholarship and creative practice, Howard is an ambassador for the power of play as a transformative and transcendent practice.

João Miguel Alves Ferreira (He/him), University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Joao-Alves-Ferreira>

Rituals as Psychophysiological Technologies: A Review of Occult Practices in Experimental Research and Health Applications

Esoteric traditions have developed structured ritual practices aimed at inducing altered states of consciousness, modulating emotional responses, and facilitating non-ordinary modes of cognition. This narrative review examines the potential of these practices as experimental methods within psychology, psychophysiology, and health sciences. Drawing on historical, theoretical, and empirical literature, the review analyses contemporary adaptations of ritual techniques and their documented effects on human functioning. Special attention is given to psychophysiological outcomes, including heart rate variability (HRV), electroencephalographic (EEG) patterns, cortisol regulation, oxytocin release, and interoceptive awareness. These biomarkers suggest that certain ritual protocols can produce measurable changes in autonomic nervous system activity, brainwave patterns associated with insight and creativity, and stress-related neuroendocrine responses. The review also explores the integration of data science approaches (such as time-series analysis, machine learning applied to phenomenological datasets, natural language processing of experiential reports, and network analysis) to identify patterns within ritual-induced experiences. This hybrid methodology offers a bridge between intuitive, correspondence-based epistemologies and conventional quantitative research frameworks. Findings indicate promising applications in areas such as emotion regulation, trauma-informed care, and mental health support. The review critically addresses methodological limitations, ethical considerations (including informed consent, psychological safety, and cultural appropriation), and the challenges of integrating non-mainstream practices into academic research. By conceptualising esoteric rituals as psychophysiological technologies, this work contributes to the emerging discussion on occulture as method, proposing a reflexive and interdisciplinary approach that expands the methodological repertoire of psychology and health sciences while maintaining scientific rigour and critical reflexivity.

Bio:

Psychophysiolgist; Psychologist; Data Scientist; PhD Candidate in Health Sciences; Recipient of two National Merit Scholarships from DGES; Holder of three Marie Skłodowska-Curie Grants; Winner of the Portuguese Volunteering Trophy in the “Rising Star” category.

Panel 2: Sociopolitics of Occulture

Stefano Pavarini (He/him), University of Bologna

Deconstructing Extremism: The Semiotics of Esotericism, Art, and Subcultural Cooptation in Contemporary Neo-Nazism

Within contemporary radical-right ecosystems, the intersection of art, cinema, music, and esotericism functions as a sophisticated apparatus of "metapolitical" subversion. Rather than relying purely on conventional political discourses, the neo-Nazi avantgarde operates through an aesthetic and spiritual paradigm deeply rooted in traditionalism and nineteenth-century "völkisch" Ariosophy. My research shows how this framework, deeply influenced by the Reactionary Modernism, weaponizes artistic production to dismantle democratic pluralism and cultivate a transgressive, elitist mythos.

From a cultural studies perspective, this synthesis manifests as an aggressive appropriation of subcultural styles. In music, National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM) and Neofolk coopt runic typography, pagan folklore, and industrial textures, transforming subcultural transgression into spaces for exclusionary identity formation. Visually, this ideology rejects Modernism as "degenerate," romanticizing classical Realism as a symbol of an idealized racial purity. Simultaneously, this nostalgic gaze morphs into digital-native art forms like "Fashwave," where the "anti-capitalist melancholia" is hijacked and inverted. By layering neon retro-futuristic visuals over fascist iconography, "Fashwave" strategically exploits internet irony to camouflage extremist rhetoric.

Moreover, my research utilizing occulture as a method reveals that individual intentionality is secondary to the systemic functionality of these visual artifacts. Through cinematic recodings like the gnostic "Redpill" narrative, mainstream pop culture is routinely decoded and re-weaponized through a reactionary lens. In conclusion, this interdisciplinary fusion demonstrates how contemporary neo-Nazism operates as a complex cultural formation. By hijacking artistic mediums, it codes arcane, once-gatekept occult doctrines into accessible, viral lifestyle aesthetics, normalizing radicalism through the seductive power of transgressive art.

Biography

Stefano Pavarini is an Italian researcher. He had a "Laurea" in Classics at University of Bologna, a PhD in Italian Studies, and finally the Italian National Scientific Qualification to teach Italian Literature at the university level. He has participated as a speaker and chair in numerous International Congresses on Modernism and on contemporary philosophy and politics.

Mikkel Rørbo, Weibel Institute for Digital Cultures, University of Applied Arts Vienna
Instagram: @nonstalgianonsense

Digital Occultism as Red-String Method: Tracing Correspondence in a Technoculture of Conspiracy

The corkboard strung with red yarn has become the folk-emblem of a mind that connects everything: the detective's wall, the QAnon conspiracist, the mapping of technocratic network influence. This paper takes that emblem seriously as a research method. "Digital Occultism," the framework developed across our work, reads the contemporary internet as a working occulture – a milieu co-populated by egregores, meme-sigils, and psyops, where fictions labor to make themselves real. A study conducted at safe analytic distance forfeits access to that milieu's operative logic. The red-string method adopts the occult's core epistemic gesture, the tracing of correspondence, and disciplines it into a reflexive practice of scholarship. Correspondence-work moves laterally, by resonance and linkage, along the same channels that carry contemporary conspiracy – the proximity that is at once the method's value and its hazard. Following paranoid reading and the axiom of "everything is connected", the paper accepts that the scholar of digital occulture already shares an apparatus with the figures under study and asks how that apparatus is operationalized. Two commitments run together: analysis of networks, statements and artifacts that tie each length of red thread to a documented circulation across platforms, and an avowed reckoning with the researcher's own embedding in the material, under which intuition and "vibes" are declared openly and carried as revisable hypotheses. Held to these commitments, the paper traces how deterritorializing occult-technical currents – meme magick, accelerationist hyperstition and technological narratives – are captured and reterritorialized into reactionary conspiracy. What emerges is an occulture-as-method adequate to a moment when technology, ideology, and conspiracy get scrambled: a way of knowing that proceeds by correspondence while remaining answerable for every connection it draws.

Biography

Mikkel Rørbo is an interdisciplinary researcher and producer of cultural detritus. He is currently undertaking a PhD at the Weibel Institute for Digital Cultures, University of Applied Arts Vienna, where his work focuses on questions of reality-production, desire and abstraction. His recent work has concretely examined how these themes connected to machinic cognition and computation as well as capital. He recently published in *Šum Journal* and co-authored the book *Digital Occultism* (Aksioma, 2026) with Sophie Publig.

“I Was an Angel, Though Plummeting”: Sonic Occulture in Ethel Cain’s *Perverts*

This paper proposes sonic occulture as hermeneutic method, through a musicological reading of Ethel Cain's *Perverts* (2025). Existing outside the narrative arc established by *Preacher's Daughter* (2022) and *Willoughby Tucker, I'll Always Love You* (2025), *Perverts* functions as an aberrant threshold text: a work of drone, noise, and devotional excess that resists narrative coherence in favour of immersion, distortion, and constitutive absence. Rather than treating occult aesthetics as thematic content alone, I argue that the album's sonic structures enact an occultural mode of knowing grounded in liminality and the productive failure of language.

Drawing on D. Ferret's "dark" ensonification of "the fall" of woman (2020), Haela Ravenna Hunt-Hendrix's esoteric Christianity (2024), Lacanian conceptions of lack, and Georges Bataille's theory of excess, I develop sonic occulture as a research method through which distortion, degradation, and drone operate as epistemological practices rather than merely aesthetic devices. Across *Perverts*, noise is organised simultaneously around absence and excess: language repeatedly collapses while sonic experience communicates through immersion and duration. Distortion thus emerges as both an aesthetic strategy and a conceptual principle, rendering the void not as negation but as a generative site of transfeminine and spiritual transformation.

Close readings of tracks including "Onanist" and "Pulldrone" examine how submerged timbres, degraded textures, whispered vocality, and sustained drones evoke ritual and suspension. These sonic environments articulate experiences of religious trauma, transfeminine becoming, and esoteric Christian cosmologies through forms that resist stable interpretation. Rather than resolving meaning, they invite listening as an intuitive and speculative embodied practice. By positioning drone and noise as occultural methods rather than simply objects of analysis, this paper argues that *Perverts* offers an alternative epistemology – one in which listening itself becomes a mode of research capable of engaging uncertainty, incompleteness, and the transformative potential of the void. In doing so, it demonstrates how contemporary experimental music mobilises occultural practice to generate new modes of knowledge beyond conventional musicological and critical frameworks.

Biography

Dr Jamie Stephenson has taught Aesthetics, Fine Art, and Phenomenology at York St John University following a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the University of Leeds (2023–2024). His research explores how sound can reshape philosophical inquiry, challenging the visual bias that has historically structured Western thought. Working across musicology, philosophy, and critical theory, he investigates how listening can generate alternative epistemologies and reconfigure questions of perception, subjectivity, and more-than-human relations. Alongside his academic research, Jamie composes experimental music as Hermetic Abyss, an artistic practice through which he explores drone, ritual, and occultural approaches to sonic knowledge.

Friday 11 September

Panel 3: Queer, Hybrid and Subversive Occultures

Cavan McLaughlin, University of the West of England and **Elizabeth Tomos**, Falmouth University

Crossing Over as Method: Mapping an Emergent Methodology for Occultural Studies

While occulture has become an important analytical category for understanding esoteric, occult, spiritual, and counter-normative currents within culture, it emerged within practitioner communities as an operative concept: one that not only described cultural processes but participated in them. If occulture operates through continual crossings—between esoteric and exoteric, meaning and materiality, participation and observation, visibility and concealment—then these crossings characterise not only occulture itself, but the way it becomes knowable.

Reflecting on almost a decade of practitioner-scholar collaboration through *Trans- States*, this paper maps an emergent methodological logic for Occultural Studies by critically re-visioning our own practice. Rather than proposing a finished methodological system, we seek to articulate the methodological tendencies that have become visible through post-textual analysis and sustained reflexive distance.

We argue that “crossing over” names the methodological logic through which occultural understanding becomes possible. It is not merely movement between practitioner and scholar, emic and etic, theory and practice, or participation and analysis, but a transpositional orientation that traverses and sustains these positions, recognising understanding as emerging through the relations that connect them rather than through the privilege of any single perspective. Crossing over, therefore, names the epistemological expression of a process whose ontological character is already present within occulture itself.

By formalising this emerging orientation, the paper contributes to ongoing conversations surrounding practitioner-scholarship, arts-based research, and the methodological foundations of Occultural Studies. Rather than prescribing a definitive methodology, the paper argues that practitioner-scholarship is not simply a specialist mode of inquiry but a reflexive recognition of the practices through which scholarly inquiry is always produced. The question is therefore not whether researchers are practitioners, but how the practices through which knowledge is produced are recognised, inhabited, and critically re-visioned. In doing so, the paper offers a conceptual foundation from which methodologies appropriate to Occultural Studies may emerge.

Biographies

Cavan McLaughlin is a Senior Lecturer in Culture, Media and Creative Industries at the University of the West of England (UWE), a filmmaker, artist, and creative media practitioner. Editor of the volume [*Trans- States: The Art of Crossing Over*](#) (2019), Cavan’s practices and scholarship explore occulture, and their practice-based PhD, *Occultural Production as Re-Vision and Weird Worlding*,

establishes a (re-)definition and framework for future investigations within the emerging field of occultural studies. With more than twenty years of professional experience, Cavan has been involved in almost every aspect of audiovisual production, specialising in video art, music videos, and visual poetry. Current academic positions include founder and Chair of Trans- States (trans-states.org); co-founder and Editor-in-Chief of *Monad: Journal of Occultural Studies* (monadjournal.com); and a trustee of the Research Network for the Study of Esoteric Practices (www.rensep.org). Cavan has a profound affection for cows, fungi, and rainbows.

Elizabeth Tomos is a performance artist working with expanded notions of drawing and printmaking. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, most recently at Sydney Contemporary and Impact11 conference in Hong Kong [online due to pandemic]. She has also been working in HE for over a decade and is currently a lecturer in Fine Art at Falmouth University in the UK. Elizabeth is undertaking a PhD at Edinburgh College of Art, exploring the interstice between printmaking and performance practice. Her research interests encompass transdisciplinary, ritualised, and embodied practices in relation to explorations of phenomenological experience, liminality, and transitional space. She is co-director and the curator for Trans- States (trans-states.org) and an Associate Editor of *Monad: Journal of Occultural Studies* (monadjournal.com).

Kate Fox (she/her), Independent Scholar

Instagram @katefoxwriter

Tarot and the I Ching as Neuroqueer Knowledge Practices

This lecture-performance argues that divinatory practices, specifically Tarot and the I Ching, can be mobilised as serious knowledge practices, and that doing so is a form of what Nick Walker (2021) calls neuroqueering. I understand how these practices work through Jung's "acausal connecting principle": meaning generated not by causal determinism but through correspondence, intuition and synchronicity. To read the cards or the hexagrams as a way of knowing is to refuse neuro-normative authority over what counts as legitimate cognition. It enacts neuroqueering in two of Walker's senses: subverting one's own ingrained neuronormative and heteronormative habits to reclaim fuller expression of one's "uniquely weird potentials," and intentionally altering one's neurocognitive processes to widen one's divergence from prevailing norms. I will ground the argument in performance. Drawing on my forthcoming book for Manchester University Press on the goddesses, mystics and saints of Northern England, I will perform extracts in which I used Tarot to open lines of inquiry around a woman's skeleton excavated during a dig on Lindisfarne, letting the cards ask questions the archive could not. I connect this to my doctoral research on stand-up comedy as performed resistance by women marginalised through gender, class and geographical identity, proposing Tarot as a kindred resistant practice: a staging of knowledge that escapes classification, tokenisation and quantification. Where the dominant order privileges the measurable, divination keeps faith with the hidden, the intuitive and the not-yet-known. It offers neurodivergent and queer makers a method for working with it.

Biography

Kate Fox is a performance poet, writer and facilitator with a twenty-year career spanning published collections (Nine Arches Press), regular work for BBC Radio 4, and spoken word projects funded by Arts Council England. Her doctoral research at the University of Leeds examined stand-up comedy as performed resistance by women marginalised through gender, class and geographical identity. She runs neurodivergence-affirming creative writing workshops and is completing a book for Manchester University Press on the goddesses, mystics and saints of Northern England. An autistic and ADHD poet, she works with Tarot, the I Ching and astrology as tools for calibrating inner and outer worlds.

Jacqueline V Woroniec (she/her), University of Szczecin, Poland

Insta: @GotkaNaKatedrze

The Satanic Queer: Morphing Performance of Satan in Popular Culture

From the perspective of literary studies, this paper seeks to contribute to the discussion of aspects of the occulture such as popular cultural narratives that are not oriented towards living practices. Building on my recently completed doctoral project on depictions of Satan in contemporary Anglophone digital culture (encompassing non-horror television series, novels, music videos, and social media), this study examines the ways in which the figure of the Devil is performed. I have developed and operationalised a theoretical model, which I term the Satanic Queer, to explain how the Devil becomes a legible cultural phenomenon through the very process of performance.

My central argument is that, in contemporary cultural texts, the Devil functions as a dynamic, “morphing” cultural code. My methodology brings together three theoretical traditions: queer theory, performance studies, and digital culture studies, while remaining grounded in historical approaches to the figure of the Devil, from antiquity to contemporary Satanism. Taking into account the occultural diversity of the Devil and rejecting essentialist readings of this figure, I argue that Satan is culturally produced through processes of morphing: his various iterations do not reveal an underlying essence but constitute queer performances through which his form is temporarily actualised, only to be transformed again in subsequent performances. Consequently, the Devil emerges as a phenomenon in perpetual becoming and continuous transformation.

Biography

Jacqueline Victoria Woroniec is an Assistant Professor at the University of Szczecin, Poland. She received her PhD in literary studies for her dissertation, titled *Performing Satan: The Satanic Queer in Contemporary British and American Popular Culture*. She previously completed an MA at the University of Szczecin with a thesis on spatial transgression in Tim Burton’s cinema. Her research interests include Gothic studies, queer theory, and digital culture, with a particular focus on contemporary popular culture.

Panel 4: Occultural Hermeneutics

Dr Fionna Barber (she/they), Reader Emerita, Manchester School of Art

Goddessness as method for feminist critical practice: Jesse Jones' 'Mirror Martyr Mirror Moon' (2024)

This paper explores some implications of 'goddessness' for a feminist understanding of issues raised by a recent project by the Irish artist Jesse Jones, 'Mirror Martyr Mirror Moon' (2024). In kinship with Kathleen Skott-Myhre's analysis of the politicised potential of feminist spirituality under capitalism (2018), I am adapting the notion of goddessness to refer to aspects of feminised knowledge suppressed and marginalised within both capitalism and patriarchy. The emergence of these suppressed values as symbolic attributes embodied within named deities has been a feature of strands within feminist neopaganism (Starhawk 1979). Here, however, I focus on the generative role of goddessness in some of Jones' recent work as proposing a means of engendering radical change within both the politics of female embodiment – and also art history.

In 2024 Jones was invited by the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham to develop a project in response to the Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi's 'Self Portrait as St Catherine of Alexandria' (1615-1617), on loan to the Ikon as part of the National Gallery's bicentennial commemorations. Jones' immersive installation placed Gentileschi's painting at the centre of narratives involving two other historical or quasi-historical female figures: the philosopher and scientist Hypatia of Alexandria (c.355-415 CE) and the possibly mythical St Catherine. All three are linked through their experience of devastating male violence. In Jones' elaborate staging combining opera, film and archival practices that also involve the healing powers of Ireland's holy wells, however, they also signify intertwined facets of a triple or triadic goddess. Her presence underpins the viewer's participation and, ultimately, opens up a significant practice of reparation in relation to interrelated themes of embodied violence, empowered spectatorship and the role of cultural institutions as agents of colonialism.

Biography

Dr Fionna Barber retired from the Department of Art and Performance in the Manchester School of Art in 2025 and is now Reader Emerita in Art History. She has published extensively on art in Ireland (particularly Irish feminist art), which she increasingly tries to combine with other interests around the significance of ancient stones in contemporary art practice and the feminist representation of goddesses. Fionna is also a member of The Stones Project as part of the Visual Culture Research Hub at MMU.

Ali Darvish (he/his), ICU

Instagram @alii.drivsh1

Interiority as Method: Inside, Fana, and Cinematic Becoming in Soore Vahe's *Between Two Words*

This paper examines interiority as a creative and epistemological method through Soore Vahe's *Between Two Words*. In mystical traditions, reality is often understood as layered and hierarchical, where every visible form contains an invisible interior. In the metaphysics of Ibn Arabi and Mulla Sadra, interiority is not self-contained: the "inside" (باطن) exists only in relation to another inside, producing a continuous movement of relation and becoming. A thing functions like a link in a chain, always connected in two directions. The paper proposes interiority not as an object of interpretation but as a method of inquiry. In cinema, objects, spaces, and characters gain meaning only within structures of belonging that exceed them. Positioned between theatre (embodiment) and photography (trace), cinema becomes a medium where existence is disclosed through relation. Film is therefore not representation alone but a field of nested interiorities in which relations become visible. This framework is explored through the protagonist of *Between Two Words*. His movement is suspended until he enters the interior of a tree. This entry marks a shift toward death, transformation, and fana. Fana is understood not as annihilation but as becoming through immersion in what exceeds the self. The tree functions as a threshold where the human subject encounters itself as part of a larger structure of existence. The paper argues that neither ritual nor art can remain self-sufficient. When reduced to form, both lose vitality. They become meaningful only within relations of interiority and belonging. Following Ibn Arabi, autonomy emerges not from separation but from participation. Such relations are not limited to fixed objects; they may take poetic form, as when a tree is approached as a beloved or an image as a site of encounter. Through *Between Two Words*, the paper shows how interiority functions as method in film and artistic research, opening alternative ways of understanding creativity, knowledge, and transformation.

Biography

Alireza Darvish holds a Master's degree in Islamic Philosophy and Theology, with a research focus on the relationship between philosophy and the arts. He has authored several critical essays in the field of cinema and currently serves as an editor on the editorial board of *White Fox*. His academic work includes presenting research at international conferences in Oxford, Singapore, Brussels, Romania, Greece, Germany, and the United States. His master's thesis, *The Status of Art and the Artist from al-Fārābī's Perspective and an Evaluation of Hitchcock's Cinema Based on It*, explores the philosophical foundations of art and their application to film analysis.

Supported by AHEAD - Arts and Humanities Engagement and Dialogue. AHEAD is the public engagement programme of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Manchester Metropolitan University. **Find out more and to book for events visit:** ahead.mmu.ac.uk and linktr.ee/aheadmmu



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