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FROM SELF TO OTHER: ESOTERICISM AS DISCOURSE OF ALTERITY IN JEAN RHYS'S *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

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Abstract: *The paper attempts to show how esotericism is developed into a symbolic discourse of alterity of an increasing distance between imagination and reality in Wide Sargasso Sea. Particular levels of meaning will be discussed with respect to the theory of metaphors and symbols. The fluid relationship between meaning and object and the importance of esotericism as important device preventing us from restricting the significance of particular objects to one single meaning. Thus, esotericism can support the notion of ambiguity and "irreality", of the enigmatic tension between the perceptual and the intellectual elements, mingling the rational with the irrational.*

Keywords: *esoteriscism, marginality, colonial discourse, cross-cultural identities, otherness.*

1. Introduction

It is in part the historical marginality of esoteric discourses that gives our study of esotericism a distinctly postmodern feel. Postmodernism is preoccupied with *marginalia*; the recovery of hitherto marginalized voices is among its most celebrated features. Across the human sciences, a concentration upon the discourses, past and present, of those cultural elements formerly marginalized – whether by social, sexual, racial or other cultural determinants – remains a primary motivating theme of postmodernism. This explains the centrality to postmodernism of the notion of the 'other'. In Hegel's mythical rendering of the moment of confrontation, the 'master' figure – representing both dominant philosophy and its author(s) – secure the acquiescence of the 'slave' figure – the subordinate philosophy and its author(s). In so doing, the slave renders itself – and its philosophy, such as it is – 'other' to the cultural trends by which progress is to be charted. Postmodern discourses have in a sense attempted to 'liberate' the other from this subordination. Feminist, black and postcolonial theorists in particular have sought to recognize the place of the other, to assert its independent value and its contribution to history. To do so, they have had to identify the logic that governs the history of the 'one'. Esotericism might similarly be described as an exemplary discourse of the other. The focus on marginality, upon what is hidden within the religious traditions, the idea of an underside of religious history which is

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crucial to it but is largely unrecognized; all these place the study of esotericism within the theoretical milieu of which postmodernism is merely the popular form. In many ways esotericism is a more highly sophisticated form of such discourses, largely because of the extreme wealth of the tradition that it inherits. The self-conscious nature of esotericism's marginality, its celebration of its discourses as secret and hidden, means that its marginality has historically been seen as its very basis, rather than as a hindrance.

Exploiting its marginal status, esotericism has developed a logic which is distinctive. It is distinctive in that it positions its object of study – the *esoteric* – at the heart of the cultural artefact to which it is posited as marginal – the *exoteric*. Discourses of the marginal (such as postmodern discourses) standardly figure the objects of their analysis at the borders, the horizon, the extremity, the perceived limits of culture. This is so, even where the marginality of the discourse is recognized as a condition of its own possibility – that is, the discourse relies for its existence upon its marginality – and where it is recognized that existence of the marginal elements is a condition of possibility of the culture as a whole – that is, the culture relies for its existence upon its others. Esotericism, by contrast, places itself at the centre of the religious traditions more broadly conceived; it is the veiled truth of those religious discourses that circulate more widely. Our esoteric study takes us to the core of spiritual traditions (Caribbean topos) from which they emerge. The value of esotericism is thus perceived to lie in its extreme interiority; it illuminates the heart of culture.

2. The Logic of Esoteric Thought

Antoine Faivre admits that 'esotericism' is 'devoid of any particular sense' and 'shows itself to be expandable, transparent, and semantically indeterminate' (Faivre and Needleman, xi)[1]. In order to define 'esotericism' with the determinacy required to identify it as a semantic field, we must be able both to specify a quality (or qualities) that is (are) essentially its own, and to distinguish it from other fields by reference to such a quality (or qualities). A number of theorists seem to question whether this is possible in the case of esotericism. This leads us to question whether it is 'esotericism' which is at fault here, or our received account of definition, which demands such rigorous criteria of definition. Faivre treats it as a 'cluster concept':

"Esotericism is, rather, a form of thought, and the point is to identify its nature, on the basis of those currents or forms of spirituality which appear to illustrate it" (Faivre and Needleman, xi)[2].

Pursuing this method, Faivre adopts a descriptive, rather than prescriptive or stipulative, approach to the definition of his subject. An 'abstract' definition of esotericism runs the risk of 'being held hostage to an *a priori* idea of what it "ought" to be, its "true" nature'[3]. Why is *this* current exemplary of esotericism but not *that?* The grounds one gives for answering such a question will surely indicate what one takes to be its 'true' nature. That said, the approach does have the advantage of being relatively transparent. It is undoubtedly better than a definitional approach that covertly imports one's presuppositions about esotericism as if they were simple givens. For example, the very act of asserting a positive definition of esotericism – that is, of defining esotericism by its own qualities rather than by virtue of its relation to the exoteric – can bring to light the presuppositions that so concern Faivre. Primary among these is the tendency 'sometimes due to ignorance and

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sometimes to an inquisitorial spirit' to draw an essential link between esotericism and religious marginality. For Faivre, esotericism cannot be defined merely by reference to its relation to dominant religious traditions, nor indeed as the secret currents within an otherwise overt religious domain. Esotericism has it own trajectory within the history of religions – albeit complex and often difficult to discern – which gives it its own independent status relative to the exoteric.

While refusing to make it definitional, the theme of the marginality of the esoteric repeatedly appears in Faivre's descriptions of what gives the esoteric its singular character. For example, primary among the qualities he attributes to exotericism is the appeal to correspondences. The idea here is that, across the visible and invisible universe, there exists a harmony of resonance that is at once real and symbolic. From this arises the understanding of the world as a series of signs, to be decoded for the encrypted meaning that links them across creation – and so the *element of mystery* which is so characteristic of esotericism. From this also arises the reversals of logic which situate esotericism in such tension with prevailing Western intellectual traditions. For, instead of the principles of contradiction, excluded middle and linear causality, esotericism espouses principles of included middle and of synchronicity[4]. This theme of correspondences captures the features of esotericism that most closely link it to the themes of postmodem philosophy, as also to the increasingly popular self-styled field of postmodem theology. For example, there seem to be clear resonances between the central esoteric theme of the universe as a book to be deciphered and the much discussed claim of Jacques Derrida that 'there is nothing outside the text' (Derrida, 157-158)[5]. To take one clear example, in trying to characterise the influence of esotericism on exoteric culture, it is often tempting to appeal to the notion of the cultural unconscious that has been employed so successfully across the textual studies. Sigmund Freud's term has been adapted by the French philosopher Jacques Lacan and by the poststructuralists influenced by him to describe the process whereby cultures, and not merely individuals, store concepts that they have not ... or for whatever reason cannot – fully assimilate at an ordered, conscious level[6]. Taken as a whole, these concepts and ideas come to operate as a sort of unstated language that subtends the language of culture. Perhaps ironically, the cultural unconscious provides much of the material that sustains and enlivens the language of culture – its metaphors, its figures of speech, symbols and images. And thus these can be seen to have an underlying or encrypted meaning. Given the means to bring this unconscious to the surface, to decipher its meaning, we find that the unconscious provides us with a deeper understanding of culture – and particularly such artefacts as its religious doctrines and practices than does the conscious. Esotericism provides the postmodem thought with a 'logic of the other', namely the way in which esotericism situates itself as a discourse, as a text – and, by extension, how it situates the author or speaker of that discourse, the esotericist himself or herself. My claim is that esotericism is similar to postmodemism in that it situates itself as an 'other' to exoteric discourses. This has been evidenced elsewhere in the study of religion by a renewed fascination for mystic theology and for negative theology, the relationship of which to the so-called philosophies of alterity (such as those of Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas) is the subject of ongoing speculation[7].

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Postmodem theorists such as Mark Taylor have named such discourses of marginality 'discourses of alterity'; the expression has widespread use in referring to such philosophies as those of Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard, as well as their contemporary followers[8]. I am arguing, then, that esotericism gives us a logic for placing such discourses of alterity. Writing in a cultural milieu highly attuned to reactive cultural trends, Edward A.Tiryakian[9] suggests that the rise of interest in esotericism and occultism has a political motive: 'as a spiritual reaction against the rationalistic-industrial-bureaucratic ethos of modern society, it is part of the counterculture' (Tiryakian, 496). He defines culture as 'a collective paradigm which provides the basic interpretations and justification of ongoing social existence' (Tiryakian, 496). Esoteric worldviews, then, coexist with the exoteric, providing alternative 'cognitive mappings of nature and the cosmos, the epistemological and ontological reflection of ultimate reality' (Tiryakian, 499). Tiryakian explains that the esotericists' knowledge is developed internally to the individual, that as such it liberates him from the structures of everyday life: 'esoteric culture provides leverage against the existing order by grounding political reflection and action in a reality that transcends that of everyday life, but which is a reality that may become actualised in the historical future by reversing the present order of the world' (Tiryakian, 506). But, more importantly, while recognising that esotericism can act as a vehicle for social change – it 'functions as a seat of inspiration to new systems of social action' (Tiryakian, 502) – Tiryakian nevertheless falls back upon the account of esotericism as 'a marginal or underground movement'. Situating esotericism at the margins of culture rather undennines his characterisation of it as a latent force operating at its heart. The idea that esotericism acts as a reactionary force, operating against the narrow-mindedness of the dominant cultural perspectives is attractive insofar as it allows esotericism a certain cultural influence. So, for example, the various esoteric currents supervene upon the several religious traditions of the West, having in some ways more in common with each other than with the various religious traditions from which they emerge. Indeed, more than ambiguity, esotericism enjoys a certain paralogical status: the very conditions that make it marginal are what contribute to its centrality, and *vice versa.* As such, it has important contributions to make to contemporary discourses of alterity.

2. Marginality of the Western traditions

I wish in this section to take feminist philosophy as an exemplary discourse of alterity. For feminist analyses of language provide one of the clearest avenues of approach in contrasting different models of othemess. The feminist analysis of models of otherness suggests that, as soon as the exoteric is accorded the status of dominant paradigm within the cultural tradition, the marginality of esotericism will correspondingly be understood in terms of its subordination to that paradigm. Feminist theorists of many persuasions have been united by the claim that the alleged neutrality of traditional disciplines can be asserted only refusing to acknowledge any voice beyond that which is historically privileged –, that of white Western man. These theorists have been joined by many more contemporary voices in arguing for the singular nature of this standpoint – and the existence of many others united by class, race and many other historical contingencies. Feminist concerns in this matter may be traced to Simone de Beauvoir[10]'s well-known lament that 'humanity is male and man defines woman

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not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being ... she is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her ... He is the Subject, he is the Absolute, she is the Other' (de Beauvoir, 8). The category of man is hegemonic in that it reserves for itself the ability to define itself and its values in the singular, as the universal or neutral set of values operative across the entire symbolic field. Summarising feminist attempts at non-hegemonic epistemologies, Val Plumwood has argued that there are three primary models of otherness[11]. Interestingly, de Beauvoir's discussion of the othemess of woman appeals to all three of these models, assuming them to be largely interchangeable. The first focuses on the negative attributions implicit in the dichotomous structure of classical logics: woman, according to this logic, is devalued because she is defined as not-man, she lacks the qualities that are valorised as masculine. The second, by contrast, focuses upon the relativity of such logics: woman, according to this logic is devalued because she is defined relative to man, her qualities are attributed solely by reference to those that are valorised as masculine. According to the classical logic, woman is defined by reference to man but not man by reference to woman. The definition of 'other' commonly occurs in negative terms, certainly; so too, the 'other' is commonly defined in terms relative to that centre. But the issue here the final cause of the disparity in power between one and other – lies in the positing of a centre per se. It is the existence of the centre as source of value that is the root cause of the asymmetrical valuation of one and other, centre and margin. It is, I believe, fair to say that most so-called postmodem theories feminist, black and postcolonial discourses most particularly – tend to identify something like centrism as the problem with traditional logics.

This explains the very common tendency to revalorise marginality as a locus of speech; the claim to be speaking 'from the margins' or 'from the limit' is well-attested, marking one's discourse as countercultural in some sense[12]. The metaphor of marginality is the most common one used for mapping the relation of the one to its other. And indeed, this model is extremely useful in that it accords the marginalised speaker with a position of speech, ensuring that her speech will be heard and valued (especially by other others) precisely because it is marginalised. Contemporary discourses of alterity have tended to emphasise the Hegelian master/slave dialectic that there is a certain (perhaps ironic) status in consciously occupying the position of subordinate. For the subordinate retains a closeness to the material reality of day-to-day existence that the dominant culture denies itself by throwing its own interpretive overlay across the facts. As with Hegelian dialectics in general, the problem here lies in avoiding a simple inversion of the binary logic, thus leaving the master/slave or hegemony/subordinate structure intact. The question that esotericism poses is whether the marginal discourse must always be figured as subordinate for reason of its marginality. Can a marginal discourse not figure itself at the centre of culture and empower itself by virtue of this position? Historically, esotericism has illustrated the fact that being marginal to tradition can provide a worldview that is distinctive, original and authoritative in its own terms. The study of esotericism may thus give contemporary studies of the other an alternative model for representing the relation of one to other within the Western symbolic.

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3. Colonial witchcraft between magic and incantation in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

The new colonizer cannot evade slavery and this dehumanizes him as well as his new slave. If Antoinette becomes an expressionless doll or marionette at the hands of the new colonial encounter, Rochester is likened to a zombie. History and its ghosts, Jean Rhys intimates, produce, on both sides of the Sargasso Sea, dehumanized ghosts or acted-upon zombies whose spirits have been stolen by colonial witchcraft. Through the character of Christophine (obeah[13] woman) the former slave of Antoinette (the master), Jean Rhys introduces into the text the motif of witchcraft (Black magic or voodoo) through Afro-Caribbean culture of magic. As a surrogate mother, Christophine introduces Antoinette to/the black culture of the Caribbean and instills in her a sensitivity to nature and belief in the practices of *obeah.* Significantly, it is Christophine's voice that opens the novel, as she explains Annette's exclusion from Spanish Town society; Christophine is the voice of authority, the one who explains the world to Antoinette and explains Antoinette to the readers. With her words gliding from a French patois to a Jamaican dialect and back into English, her command of language corresponds with the power of her words and her ability to invoke magic. She seems omniscient, intimately linked with the natural and tropical world and attuned to animal and human behavior. Christophine, much like Antoinette and her mother, is an outsider. Coming from Martinique, she dresses and speaks differently from the Jamaican blacks. She is a servant, but, unlike the other black servants who live at Coulibri, she remains loyal to the Cosway women when the family's fortunes dwindle – an alliance at which the other servants sneer. Like Antoinette and her mother, Christophine becomes the subject of cruel household gossip, although she still commands some household respect because of her knowledge of magic. A wedding present from the old Mr. Cosway to Annette, Christophine is a commodified woman, but is still fiercely self-willed. She provides a contrast to Annette in that she exercises complete independence from men and implicitly distrusts their motives. When Mr. Rochester arrives at Granbois, he immediately senses Christophine's contempt, and he associates her with all that is perverse and foreign about his new Caribbean home and his indecipherable Creole wife. A threat to Rochester's English privilege and male authority, Christophine calmly monitors his attempts to assert dominance. She instructs Antoinette that "woman must have spunks to live in this wicked world." Christophine adopts an increasingly assertive role in protecting Antoinette when Rochester begins to challenge his wife's sanity. Ultimately, Christophine advises Antoinette to leave her increasingly cruel husband, citing her own independence as an example to emulate. Having had three children by three different fathers, Christophine remains unmarried, saying "I thank my God. I keep my money. I don't give it to no worthless man." Christophine's final confrontation with Rochester establishes her as Antoinette's more lucid spokeswoman.

Realistically motivated by the West Indian context, witchcraft does not merely function as a picturesque inscription of native culture, but as a metaphor of the relationship between language and power, and more specifically of the mechanisms by which the subaltern is silenced by master narratives. *Wide Sargasso Sea* exhibits the processing, transformation and distortion of reality by the dominant idiom which leaves the subaltern with an inoperative language, incapable of acting

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upon Jamaican reality. Although, as Gayatri Spivak puts it, Christophine is "a commodified person" who was given to Antoinette's mother as a wedding present and is "tangential to [Jean Rhys's] narrative" (Spivak, 252-253), she nonetheless plays a prominent role in the drama and in the local communities. One might even argue that, thanks to her occult and awe-inspiring activities as obeah woman, she is a figure of power. At the beginning of the novel, for instance, Annette suggests that her presence alone saved the family from further persecution. Black girls help her with the washing because they are "terrified of her" (7) and Christophine's threats send bold Amelie "creep[ing] out of the room" (64). For all her influential status in the black community, her magic proves ineffective in the framework of the dominant culture. Her love potion, for instance, fails to circumvent the dereliction of Antoinette and "Rochester's" relationship but, with the added ingredient of colonialism, it does act upon reality, albeit with calamitous consequences: thinking that he has been poisoned and determined to take his revenge," Rochester" is drawn, as if by magic, into the ruts of colonial and literary history. He becomes the angered and deceived husband *of Jane Eyre* and, sleeping with the young servant Amelie, he acts out one of the most predictable scripts of cross-cultural encounter. Christophine's magic is warped and ultimately defeated by the rival power of colonial witchcraft. When he discovers Granbois for instance, "Rochester" clearly enters uncharted territory: it was a beautiful place – wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret. I'd find myself thinking, "What I see is nothing – I want what it *hides* – that is not nothing"(54). In these lines, the hidden secret is what the colonizer covets, but it is also what is yet to be mapped out, what is yet to be named. In his decision to take Antoinette away from Jamaica, Rochester bitterly thinks to himself, "No more false heavens. No more damned magic." The Windward Islands, where Granbois is located, are home to the magical, syncretic religions of their black inhabitants. Christophine's unique powers, which command respect from her peers, derive from her expertise in obeah practices and her knowledge in casting spells. Antoinette incorporates Christophine's superstitious beliefs, leading her to read signs and symbols in the natural world. On the night of the fire, for instance, Antoinette shrinks in horror when she sees her mother's parrot burn alive, believing it is bad luck to kill a parrot or watch one die. This knowledge of magic is Antoinette's one source of power and independence.

In another episode in which she openly challenges "Rochester" in "her judge's voice" (98), Christophine makes one last attempt at transforming the world through discursive magic or persuasion this time. She delineates alternative scripts, escape routes which may emancipate the couple from the future the Empire has charted for them, and her words seem to find their way into "Rochester's" mind; they are echoed in his head, as if he was hypnotized by Christophine's verbal magic. "Coming from the darkness" (101), from unknown territories, her voice effects a kind of spirit-theft, until the word "money" breaks the spell (102), simultaneously di-spelling Christophine's sensible solutions. The balance of power shifts, a shift signalled in the text by the return of "Rochester's" narratorial agency; what Christophine is saying is now mediated by his enunciation: "Why, she wanted to know, could I not return half of Antoinette's dowry and leave the island" (102). The subaltern's voice is absorbed into the master's discourse and loses its resonance. Defeated by the threat

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of Imperial Law, against which, Christophine knows, she does not stand a chance, she is simply written out of the story, her exit sealing the fate of Antoinette and bringing dissent to an end. In this scene, the wondrous might of the Empire's Law, re-asserted in the letter of Mr Fraser, the Spanish Town magistrate (103), wipes Christophine and her potentially magic narratives out of existence. This exemplifies the link, brought into relief by Edward Said, between power and narrative: "the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them" (Said, xiii). It is clearly because "Rochester" senses the unhinging potential of Christophine's counter-narrative that he blocks it, in the same way as he suppresses his wife's narrative urge when she tries to articulate the alternative version to the story told by Daniel Cosway: "But why not tell me tomorrow, in the daylight?" (82).

The dominant idiom is therefore invested with a magic, baleful power, an uncanny capacity to effect metamorphoses (i.e. the magic involved in the process of naming). This discursive witchcraft may be seen as an exacerbation of what Deleuze and Guattari identify as the primary function of language, the transmission of order-words. For example, Daniel Cosway's letter illustrates this definition of language as the transmission of *mots d'ordre.* It is a speech-act in the sense that it makes a decisive contribution to Antoinette's transformation into the cultural construct of the other, and the metamorphosis is almost instantaneous: in the scene following "Rochester's" perusal of the letter, she is seen to have deviant behaviour by "Rochester's" European standards; she slaps Amelie (62) and tears a "sheet in half, then each half into strips" (63), a clear echo of the tearing of the wedding veil in *Jane Eyre.* Such behaviour is presented not so much as a confirmation of Daniel's allegations as a direct consequence of them. The letter is also an order-word in that it emanates from and relays "collective assemblages", English norms and knowledges. Although Daniel belongs to the world of the subaltern, he assumes, in order to win his point - he is trying to get some money out of "Rochester" – or because, being "half-way house" (59), he is stuck in the no man's land of mimicry, the ideological assumptions of the metropolis. Logically enough then, most of his statements are derived from – "next thing I hear from Jamaica", (60) – and he encourages "Rochester" to turn to hearsay for confirmation of his own order-word: "Ask the older people sir about his disgusting goings-on, some will remember" (60). Or more likely, some will tell "Rochester" what others told them. With its manipulative intent, its entreaties, its imperative forms, its indirect discourse and with the transformations it generates, the letter is a dramatization of the power of language and of language aspower, while Antoinette's othering is exhibited as the product of "collective assemblages", those coercive ghosts which haunt and compel any individual enunciation and are reverberated in order-words.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the esotericism is not the socially unacceptable, but what European knowledge systems cannot account for. "Rochester's" only groundbreaking discovery is that the secret will always elude him. The only wish Antoinette can nurse is to die, and like her mother, she dies more than once: 'There are always two deaths, the real one and the one people know about' (106). 'Say die and I will die' she says to her husband; in response he declares to the reader that ' I watched her die many times. In my way,

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not hers' (77). What Rhys identifies here is man's practice of voodoo or obeah upon woman: the plural deaths women are made to suffer at the hands of men who acquire power over them. At the end of his narrative, Rochester spitefully admits that he hates Antoinette: "Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and the loveliness. She had left me thirsty and all my life would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it". Nevertheless, the more rational he attempts to be, the more incomplete his view of the reality is: "everything I had imagined to be truth was false[…] Only the magic and the dream are true – all the rest's a lie" (Rhys, 138). Incapable of deciphering the secret, "Rochester" appropriates it as he appropriates Antoinette and takes the cryptic, locked-in treasure to England where, he expects, new and equally distorting textualizations will arise, new constructions of otherness will emerge.

Conclusions

There is an interesting issue regarding otherness that deserves mention before closing, in part because it reinforces the alignments of esotericism that I have drawn in this paper. Beyond the question of how we are to situate the other in relation to the one, lies a deeper and, I suspect, more difficult question of how the other is to be figured in itself. What or who is the other? What or who is it that this notion of 'other' ought to represent? Many contemporary esotericists wish to leave aside the question of whether the voice that they are seek to capture in their study of esotericism is that of man or that of God – that is, whether this is an anthropology or a theology. The questions facing esotericism and feminism are structurally related: is it God itself that is the object of analysis or is it 'God', i.e., the way in which our culture represents God? Again, is it women themselves that are the object of analysis or is it 'woman', i.e., the way in which our culture represents women? Like other discourses of alterity, esotericism and feminism are plagued by such questions, even as they try to position themselves as meta-discourses, as second-order analyses of culture.

At this point, I have suggested that the reason why esotericism stands as a clear example of discourses of alterity is because of the way that it is situated relative to the exoteric traditions. It is this, I have suggested, that gives them the character of secrecy and mystery. Indeed, it is highly worthwhile to treat esotericism, not as some arcane field within history, but as an exemplary contemporary field of study, and thus aligned not merely temporally but also thematically to other contemporary fields within the humanities.

Notes

[1] A. Faivre and I. Needleman (eds), *Modern Esoteric Spirituality.* New York: Crossroad, 1995.

[2] Faivre and Needleman, *op. cit.,*

[3] *Ibid,* p. xii.

[4] A. Faivre (ed.), *Access to Western* Esotericism. Albany: SUNY Press, 1994, p. 10.

[5] J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974, pp. 157-8.

[6] The use ofthe notion ofthe unconscious to illuminate aspects ofculture is widespread in contemporary social theory: see, for example, James Donald (ed.), *Psychoanalysis and Cultural Theory: Thresholds*. London: Macmillan, 1991 and Slavoj Zizek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular* Culture. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991.

[7] See John D. Caputo. *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: religion without religion*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

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[8] See Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/Theology,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984, and Mark C. Taylor, *Alterity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. See also Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy,* trans. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, who argues that the question of othemess remains the motivating theme behind contemporary French philosophy, and so the work of Derrida, Levinas, Foucault and Deleuze.

[9] Edward A. Tiryakian, 'Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture'. *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 78, No. 3, 1972.

[10] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* trans. H. M. Parshley, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965.

[11] Val Plumwood, 'Centrism and the Logic of Alterity', in Marjorie Haas and Rachel Joffe Falmagne (eds), *Feminist Approaches to Logic,* Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.

[12] For example, the claim to be writing from the margin or limit appears in the title of Drucilla Comell, *The Philosophy ofthe Limit*. New York: Routledge, 1992 and Fred R. Dallmayr, *Margins o/Political Discourse*. Albany: SUNY Press, Albany, 1989. The trend was very much strengthened by J. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982.

[13] *Obeah* is a metonym for African religion.

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