

LUDOMANCY:

GAMES AS OCCULT PRACTICE IN
BETWEEN STATES

Ludomancy: Games as Occult Practice in Between States

Games and the occult are deeply intertwined, from the first knucklebone dice used in both divination and gambling, to the ritualistically encoded ancient Egyptian board game of Senet, to the arcane tarot cards that serve simultaneously as card game and devices for cartomantic fortune telling. The Magician card to whom the Trans-States 3 Conference is consecrated is in French "le bateleur" (juggler or mountebank): a man whose altar doubles as a cardsharp's table. Games exist in a trans-state par excellence: between frivolity and profundity, the material and the digital, this world and the other(s). In this talk, the presenter will explore games as a means of shifting between states of being and consciousness, with particular focus on two case studies, both of which he works on as a designer: Deadhaus Sonata and The Arcana Ritual Theatre. Deadhaus Sonata's Trinary Archetype system allows players to shift between physical, magickal, and essential states. Similarly, Arcana is a ceremonial magick simulator which enables players to perform occult rituals in a magic theatre to summon spirits, perform astral projection, and unlock the mysteries of the multiverse. Similar examples of digital and table top games will reveal play as an occult practice. While the Satanic panic of the 1980's may have been literally false in its claims that Dungeons and Dragons was a route toward Satanism, games can function as imaginative gateways to other planes of existence (whether the Egyptian astrological magic of Nephilim, the Left Hand Path Oliphothic Gnosticism of Kult, the magisterial, multimodal magic of Invisible Sun, or the solitary hermetic magic of Seekers Beyond the Shroud). Through theoretical analysis and practical performance, the presenter will conjure up a vision of ludomancy (the magic of play), suggesting that it can unveil the play at magic's heart and open up playful space within ossified traditions.

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Occult Game Designer. Dr.
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and Gothic themes and
mechanics.**



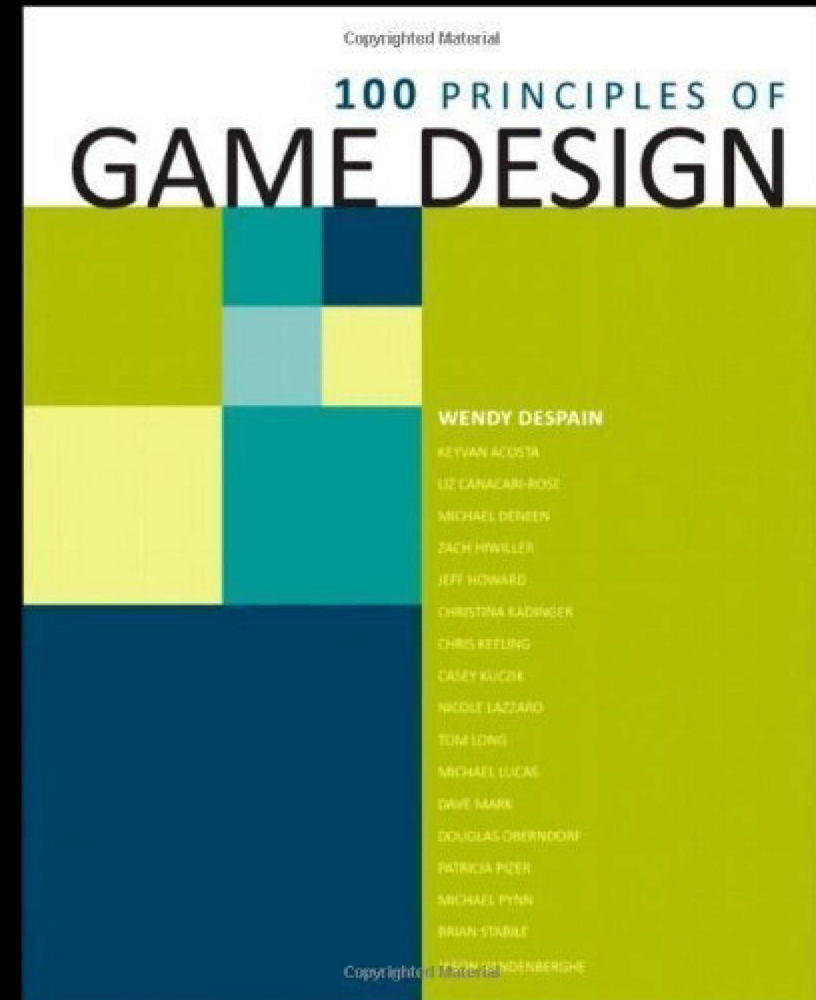
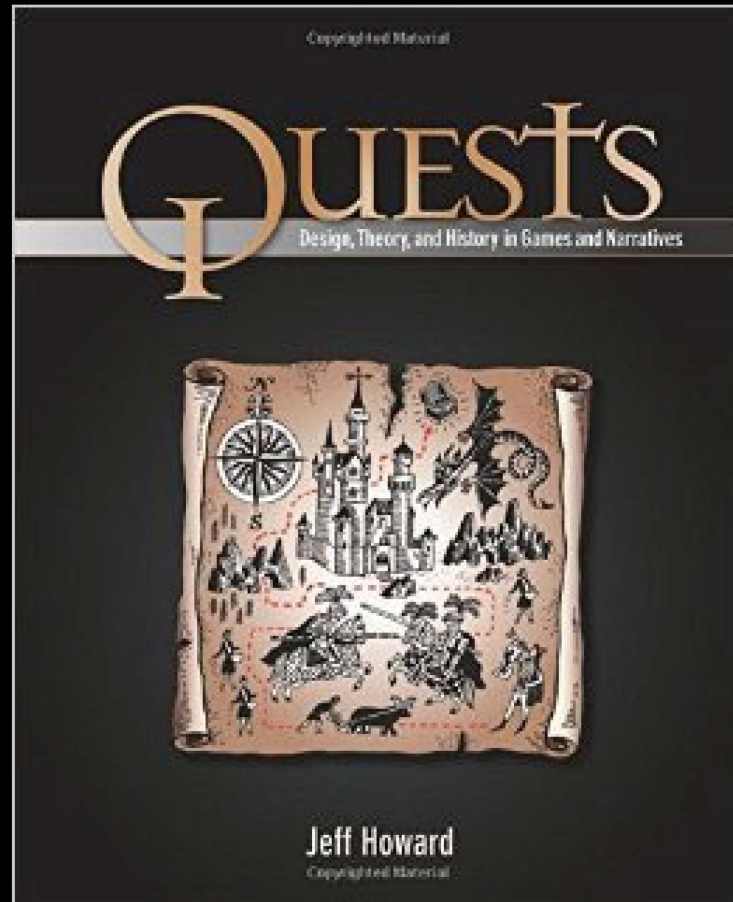
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Jeff Howard

GAME MAGIC

A GAME DESIGNERS GUIDE TO CONSTRUCTING MAGIC SYSTEMS







DEADHAUS SONATA

CORE TEAM MEMBER:
APOCALYPSE STUDIOS, INC.



GAMES AND GAME DESIGN CAN OPERATE AS OCCULT PRACTICE

I. SHIFTING STATES

II. GAMES RITUAL & PERFORMANCE

III. METHOD: VERTIGO GAMES

IV. PURPOSE: SPIRIT CONTACT

V. PLAYFUL GNOSIS

VI. SACRED PLAY



LUDOMANCY

- FROM "LUDARE" (**TO PLAY**) + "MANTEIA" (**DIVINATION AND MAGIC**)
- THE **MAGIC OF PLAY**, ESPECIALLY IN RELATION TO DIVINATION
- PLAYING AND MAKING **GAMES AS OCCULT PRACTICE**



OCCULT:
FROM OCCULTARE—
LATIN FOR “**SECRET**” AND
“**HIDDEN**”





THESIS: GAMES AND GAME DESIGN CAN OPERATE AS OCCULT PRACTICE



GAMES & MAGIC



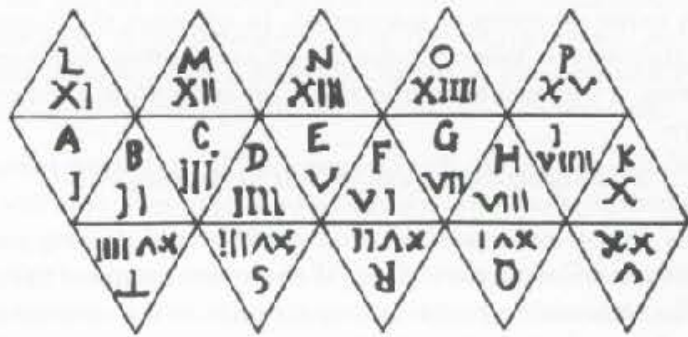




FIG. 13. Louvre icosahedron (Fittà, *Spieler und Spielzeug*, 115 fig. 196)





Articles

Gaming and divination in the Hellenistic Levant: the case study of the astragalus assemblage from Maresha, Israel

Lee Perry-Gal , Ian Stern & Adi Erlich 

Pages 61–79 | Published online: 09 May 2022

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LUDOMANTIC SYNCHRONICITIES

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS: Just harmless fun—or sorcery?

By GUS THOMSON
Staff Writer

In a move that has angered some parents in the area, the role-playing fantasy game Dungeons and Dragons has been introduced as a children's program at Uplands Elementary School by Nanaimo parks and recreation department.

Brian and Valerie Wolf of Uplands Drive say the game, which has been played Tuesday evenings since mid-

A POPULAR PASTIME

Who plays Dungeons and Dragons?

According to a Harbour Park Toys and Wheels toy store spokesman, everyone from seven-year-old children to doctors and lawyers come in for the game or some of paraphernalia that can add to the reality of the fantasy.

The basic game retails for \$18.95 at most stores and an advanced version, described by one player as containing less "hacking and slashing," also sells for \$18.95.

Paraphernalia includes half-inch tall paintable lead figures, dice, pencils,

have \$85 you can spring for the hand-held game. Also being produced is a video version.

The game has taken off in the past two years but its popularity has raised questions within the religious community.

Locally, religious handbills against Dungeons and Dragons have been distributed to toy stores stocking the product and protests have been heard from some Nanaimoites who say they are concerned with the violence in the game and the use or abuse of Christian

where players help each other to their goals — they're not usually fighting against each other," he says. "It's to their advantage to work together."

"The most powerful caste in the game — Paladin — are doers of good works," says Geluk, a first-year science student at Malaspina College.

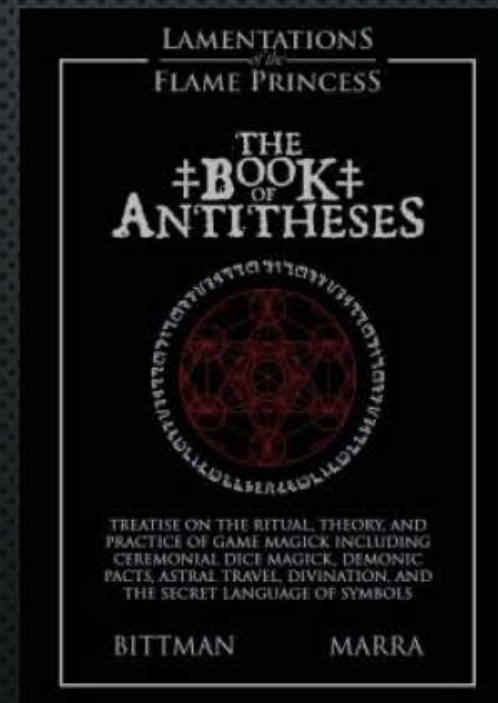
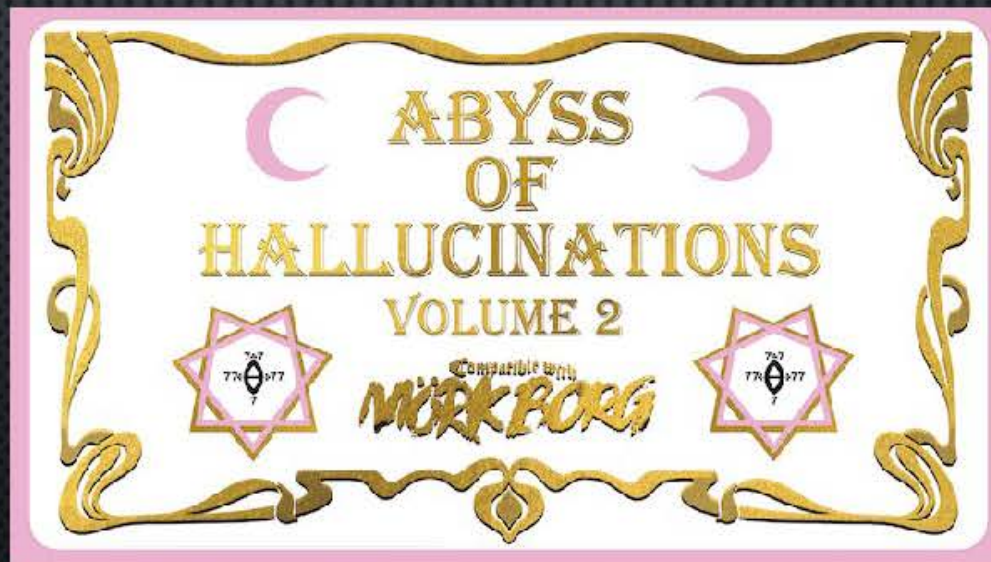
Geluk plays the role of dungeon master at the Tuesday sessions. His job is to design a maze

PROPONENTS OF THE U.S. SATANIC PANIC POSITED THAT PLAYING DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS WAS AN OCCULT ACTIVITY

THE INTENSE OCCULT TRAINING THROUGH D&D PREPARED DEBBIE TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION TO ENTER A WITCHES' COVEN.



- THEY WERE LITERALLY WRONG
- THEY WERE METAPHORICALLY CORRECT

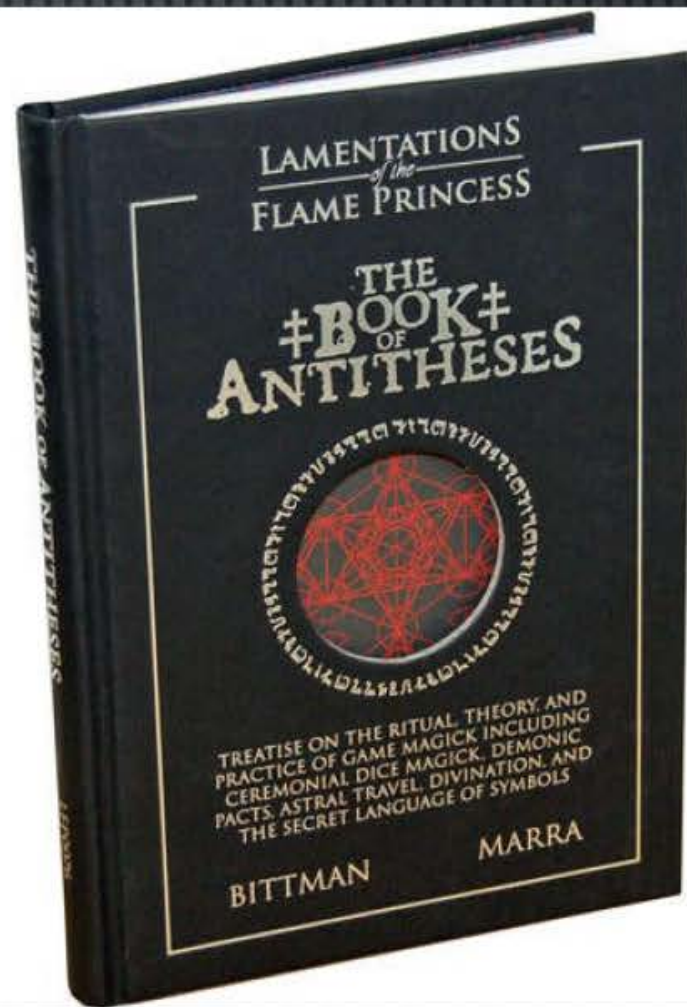


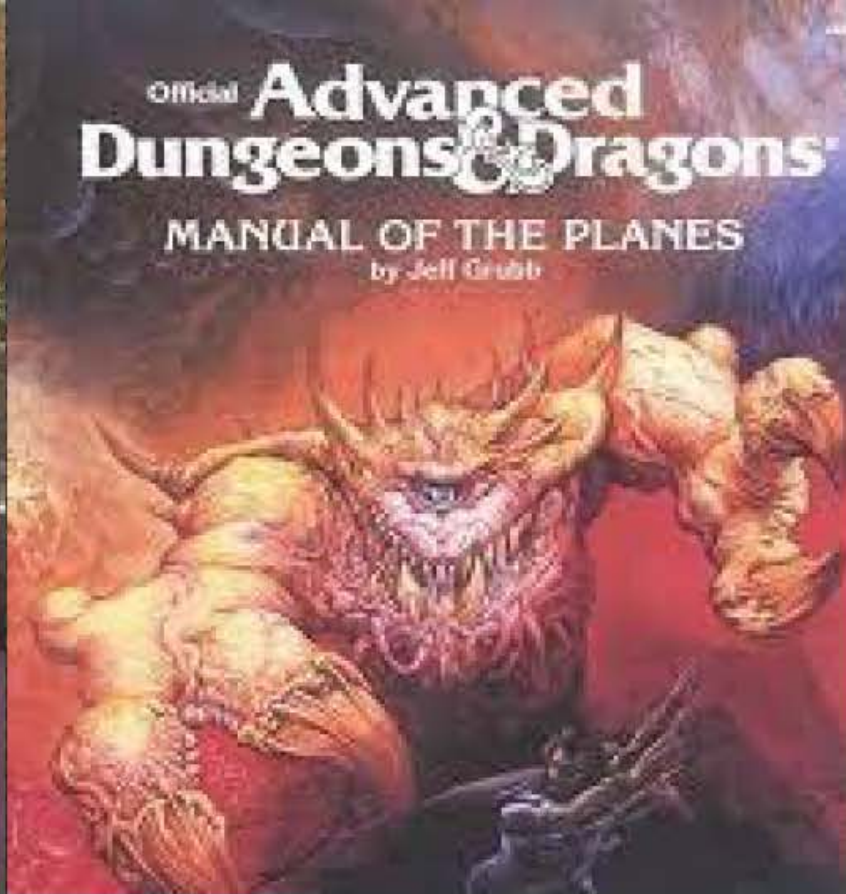


Lamentations of the Flame Princess @LotFP · Aug 19

...

SO YEAH THERE'S THIS THING CALLED THE BOOK OF ANTITHESES AND IT'S ALL ABOUT HOW RPGS ARE MAGIC AND HOW ALL THE CRITICS OF D&D WERE RIGHT AND THE SATANIC PANIC WAS TOTALLY JUSTIFIED BUT IT'S ALSO AN IN-GAME ARTIFACT THAT YOUR PLAYERS CAN FIND AND IT HAS A GLORY HOLE FOR A COVER

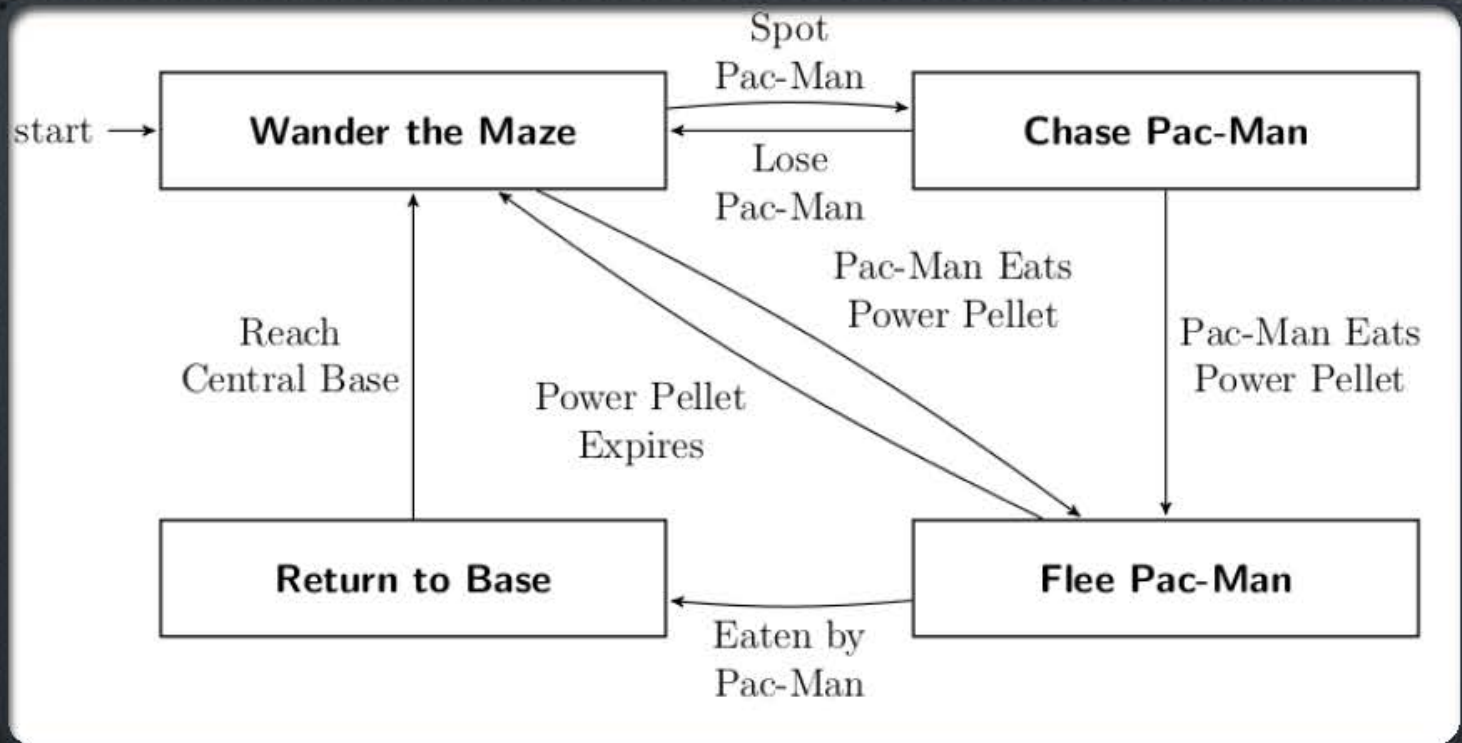


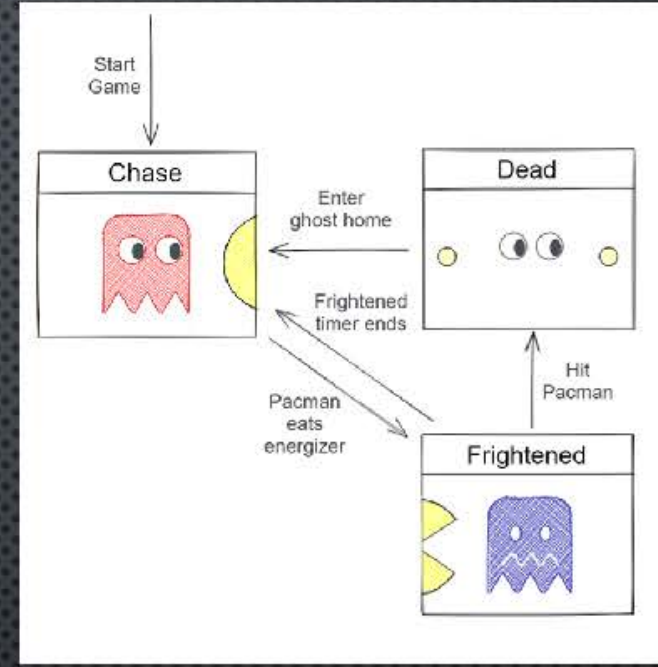


STATE CHANGE AS ASTRAL PROJECTION AND PLANAR TRAVEL

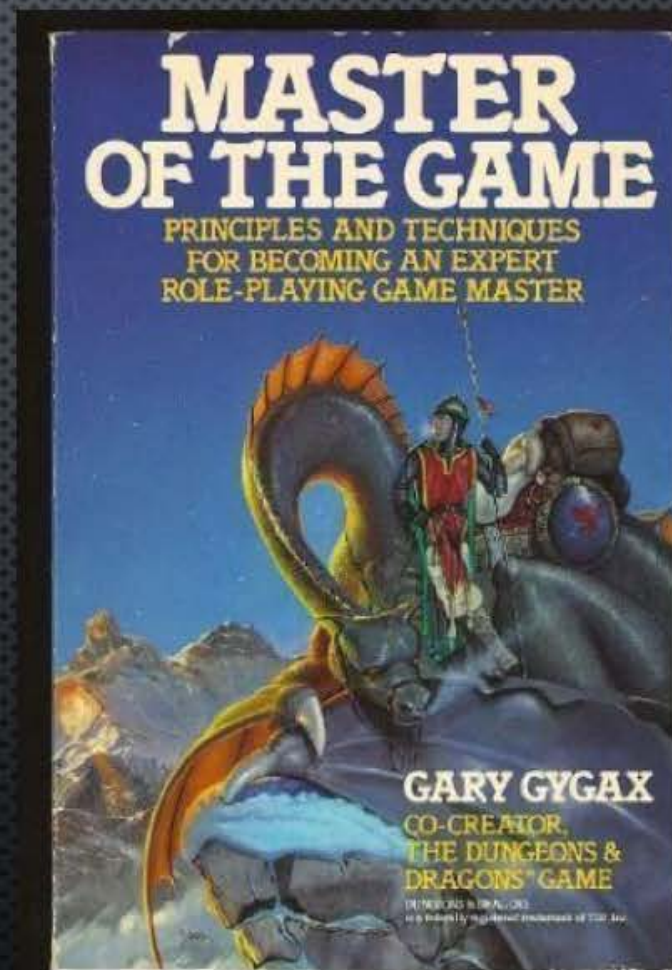
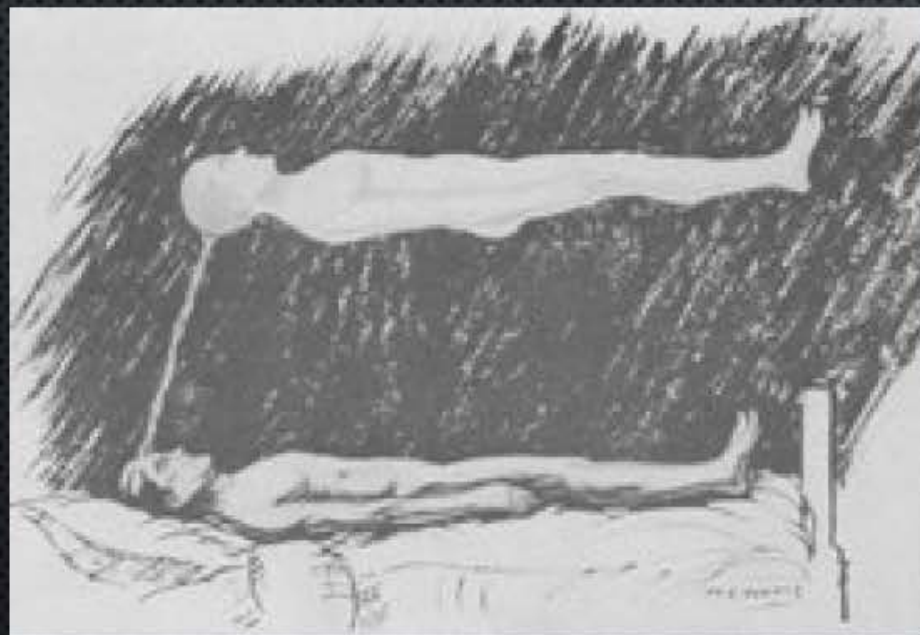


GAMES THAT HELP PLAYERS AND DESIGNERS SHIFT STATE





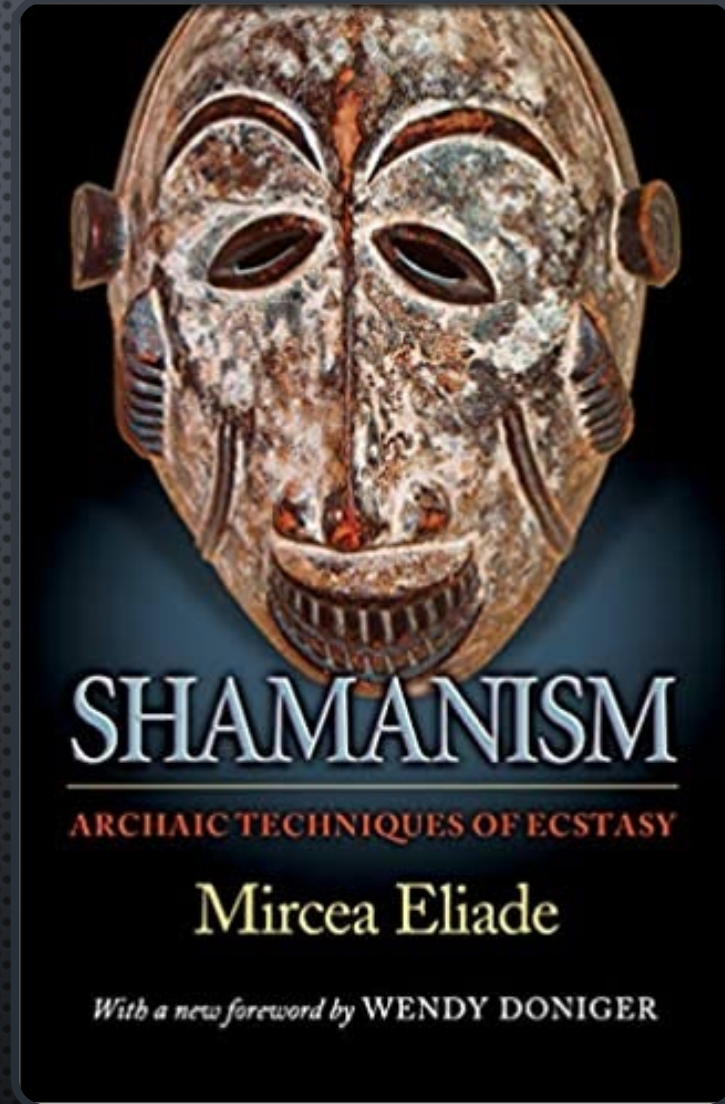
PAC-MAN STATE MACHINE & STATE CHANGE





SHIFTING STATES MEANS VISITING OTHER
WORLDS (AND OTHER REALMS OF THE MIND)

- THE SHAMAN SHIFTS STATES.
- THE SHAMAN EXPERIENCES TECHNIQUES OF ECSTASY (I.E. MENTAL STATES) AND IS THEREFORE A "WALKER BETWEEN WORLDS" (I.E. ONTOLOGICAL STATES)





SHIFTING STATES IS
DIFFICULT AND
REQUIRES RITUAL
OR OTHER
OCCULT
TECHNIQUES



LUDOMANTIC
METHOD 1 =
RITUAL

THE MAGIC CIRCLE

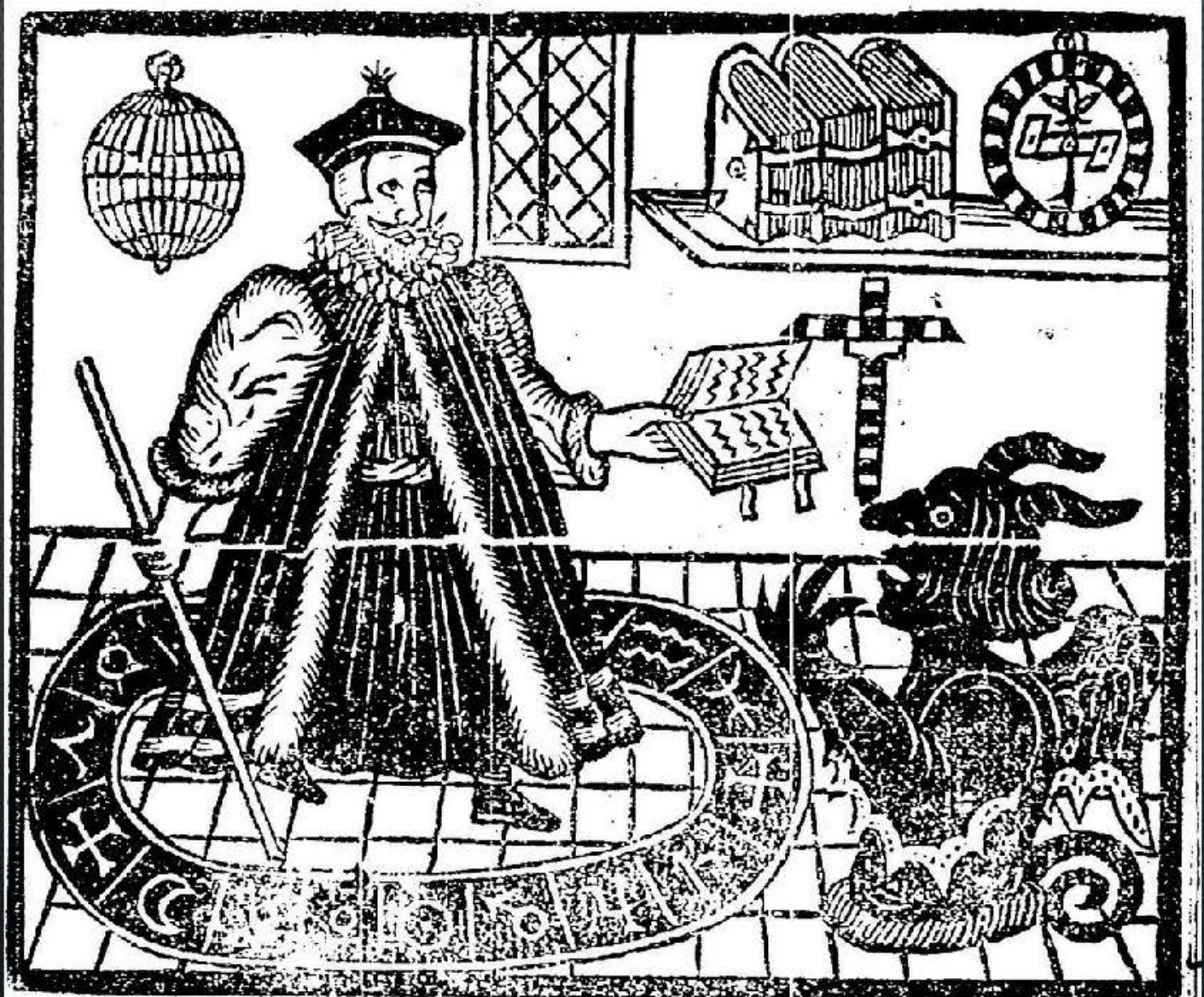
Scoring a goal

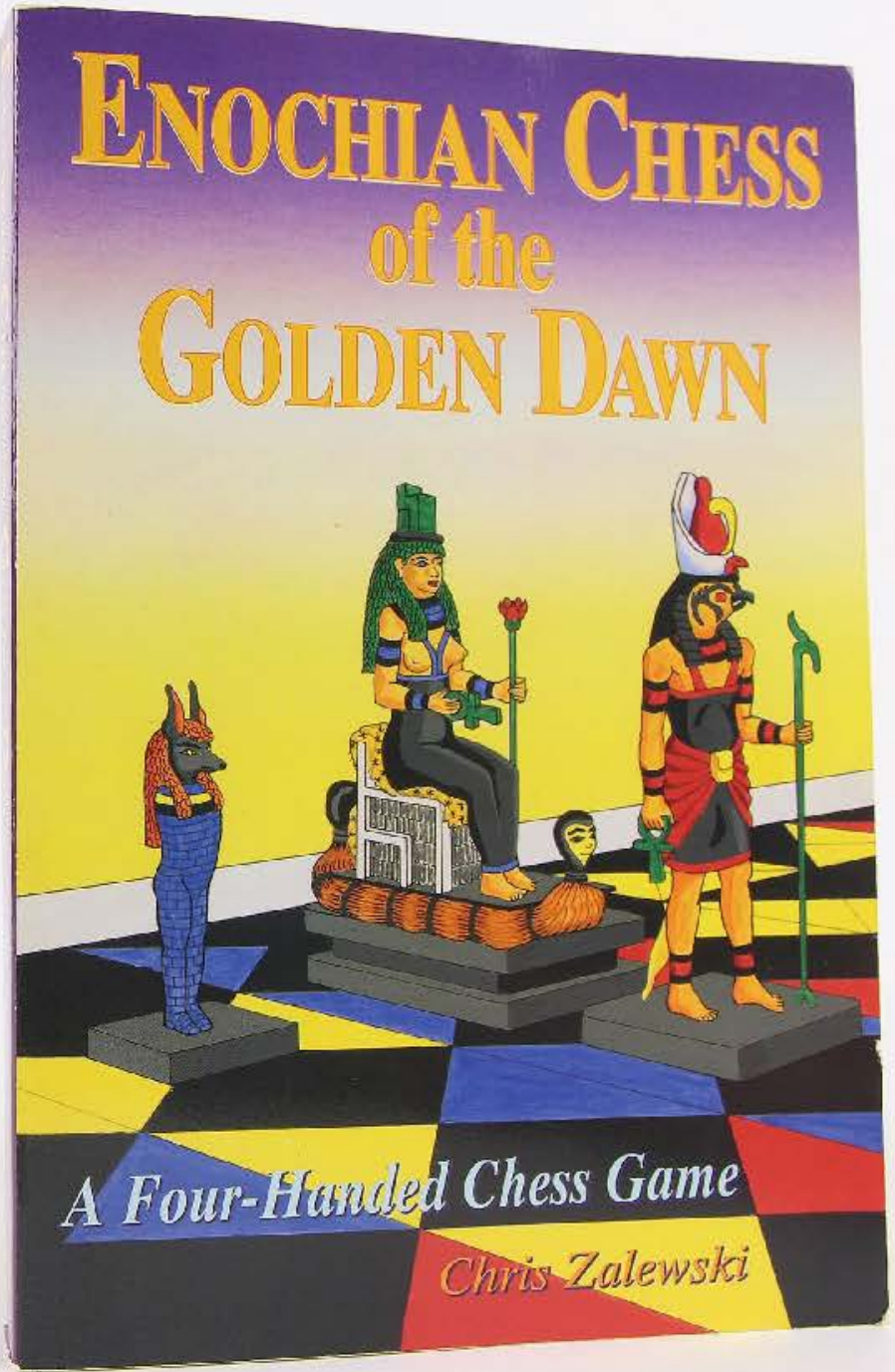


THE REAL WORLD

Kicking a ball into a net





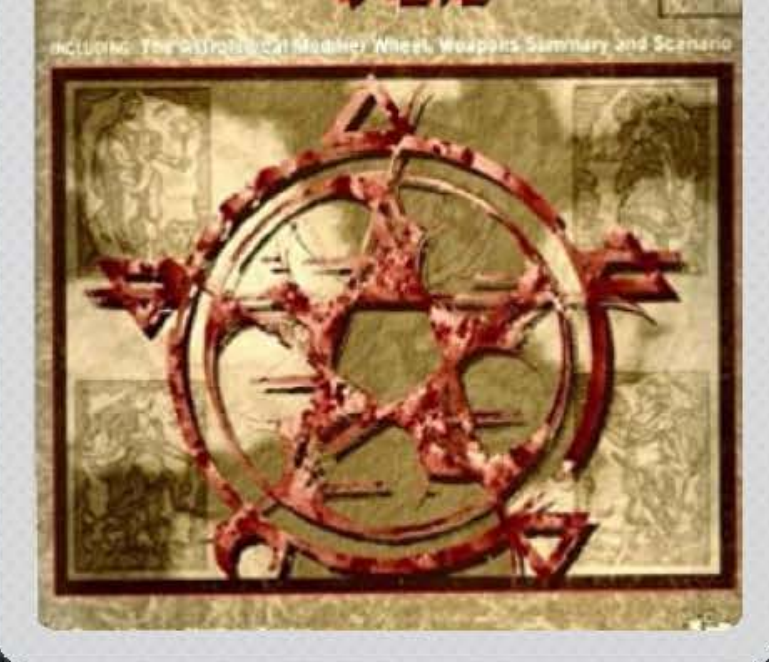
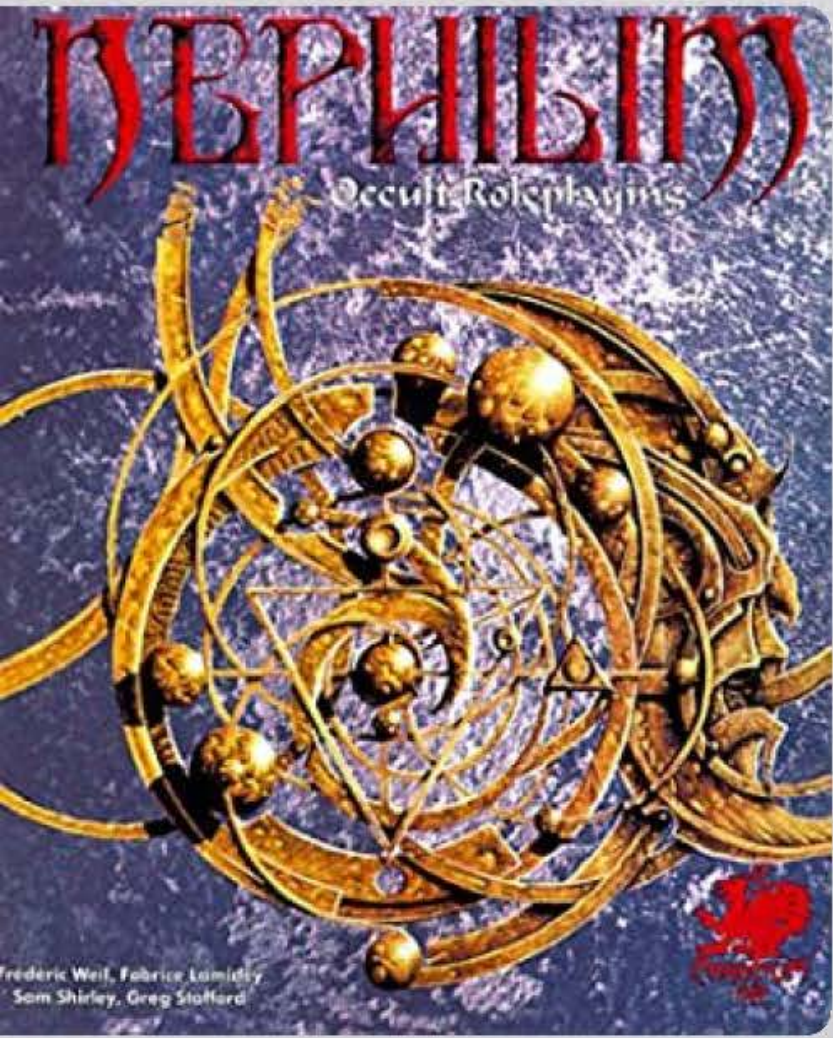


A Four-Handed Chess Game

Chris Zalewski



GAMES CAN FACILITATE STATE CHANGE THROUGH RITUAL
(WHAT PETE CARROLL WOULD CALL "THEURGY," I.E.
ELABORATE CEREMONIAL MAGICK)



NEPHILIM: OCCULT ROLEPLAYING



ASSOCIATIONS

Planet	Day of the Week	Metal	Gemstone	Color	Incense
Moon	Monday	Silver	Pearl	White	Camphor & Sandalwood
Mars	Tuesday	Iron	Red Coral	Red	Pine & Coriander
Mercury	Wednesday	Brass & Bronze	Emerald	Orange	Lavender & Fennel
Jupiter	Thursday	Tin	Yellow Sapphire	Blue	Cedar & Hyssop
Venus	Friday	Copper	Diamond	Green	Rose & Violet
Saturn	Saturday	Lead	Blue Sapphire	Purple & Black	Myrrh & Cypress
Sun	Sunday	Gold	Ruby	Yellow	Cinnamon & Saffron

	IX The Sword and the Serpent	X Mystic Numbers of the Sephiroth	XI* Elements (with their Planetary Rulers)	XII* The Tree of Life
1	The Flaming Sword follows the downward course of the Sephiroth, and is compared to the Lightning Flash. Its tip is in Kether and its point in Malkuth.	1	Root of	1 st Plane, Middle Pillar
2		2	Root of	2 nd Plane, Right Pillar
3		3	Root of	2 nd Plane, Left Pillar
4		10		3 rd Plane, Right Pillar
5		15		3 rd Plane, Left Pillar
6		21		4 th Plane, Middle Pillar
7		26		5 th Plane, Right Pillar
8		35		5 th Plane, Left Pillar
9		45		6 th Plane, Middle Pillar
10		55		7 th Plane, Middle Pillar
11	The Serpent of Wisdom follows the course of the paths or letters upwards, its head being thus in K, its tail in T, W, D, and P are the Mother letters, referring to the Elements; Z, L, N, B, M, and F, the Double letters, to the Planets; the rest, Single letters, to the Zodiac.	66	Hot and Moist	Path joins 1-2
12		78		" 1-3
13		92		" 1-6
14		108		" 1-3
15		126		" 1-6
16		146		" 1-4
17		168		" 1-6
18		192		" 1-4
19		218		" 1-6
20		246		" 1-4
21		276		" 1-6
22		308		" 1-4
23	342		" 1-6	
24	378		" 1-4	
25	416		" 1-6	
26	456		" 1-4	
27	498		" 1-6	
28	542		" 1-4	
29	588		" 1-6	
30	636		" 1-4	
31	686		" 1-6	
32 bis	738		" 1-4	
33 bis	792		" 1-6	
			Hot and dry	" 8-10
			Cold and dry	" 9-10

SORCERER



An Intense Roleplaying Game
Ron Edwards

LUDOMANTIC
METHOD 2 =
SORCERY



GAMES CAN ALSO INDUCE TRANCE STATE (I.E. GNOSIS)

ANY SUFFICIENTLY ADVANCED AND ENSOULED SIMULATION OF MAGIC IS INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM OCCULT PRACTICE.



TWO EXAMPLES OF STATE-SHIFTING LUDOMANTIC GAMES





DEADHAUS SONATA



TRINARY ARCHETYPE SYSTEM:
SHIFTING BETWEEN STATES

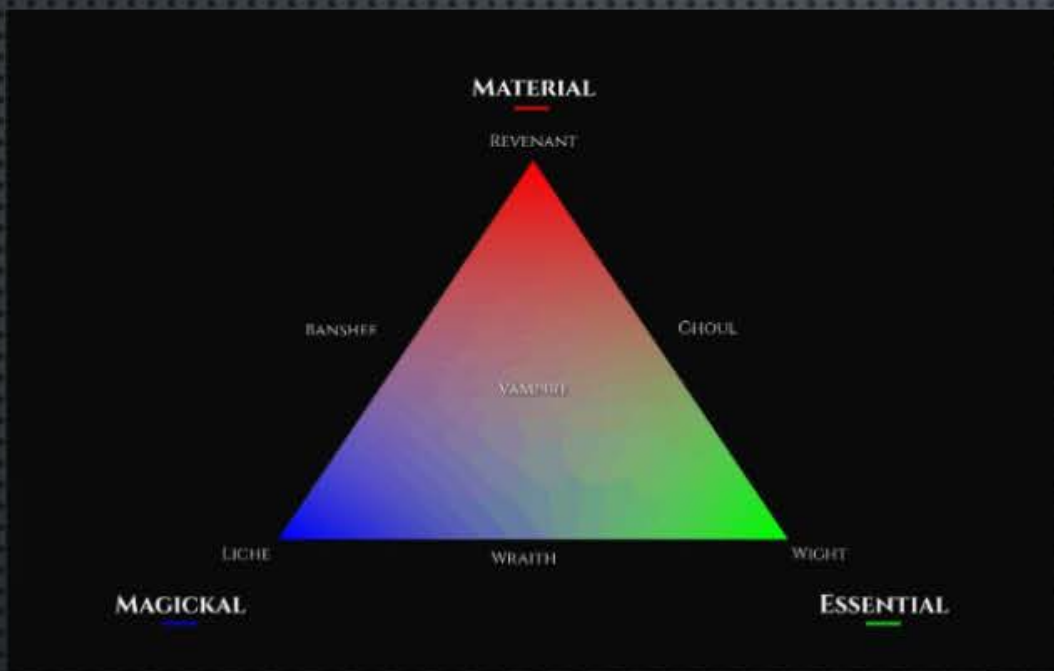


REVENANT OF THE ASHEN RING

DEATH AS THE UNDEAD

Our Death System is designed to be philosophically aligned with occult literature. One cannot simply kill a spirit without proper exorcism rituals. Modern examples of this standard can be seen in excellent shows like *Supernatural*, where the remains of a ghost need to be burned or destroyed to completely remove the entity from the realm of the living, or in *Dungeons and Dragons*, where the phylactery of a Liche needs to be destroyed before it can truly be put to rest.

A long-held belief of necromancy posits that death and life are not binary states, but rather a smooth and permeable continuum along which many beings can wander. The liminal nature of death has deep roots in the occult, such as the stories of St. Cyprian, patron saint of necromancers, and the Ghuede of Vodoun (the loa of death and fertility), like Baron Samedi. These principles are applied consistently for all classes of undead in *Deadhaus Sonata*.



FOUNDATIONAL OVERVIEW

When in a particular state, the Undead takes damage to the corresponding resource bar. When the corresponding resource bar is depleted, the Undead cannot exist in that state any longer.

While the Undead has anyone resource remaining, they can potentially continue to exist by moving into the corresponding state.

MATERIAL

REVENANT

BANSHEE

CHOUL

VAMPIRE

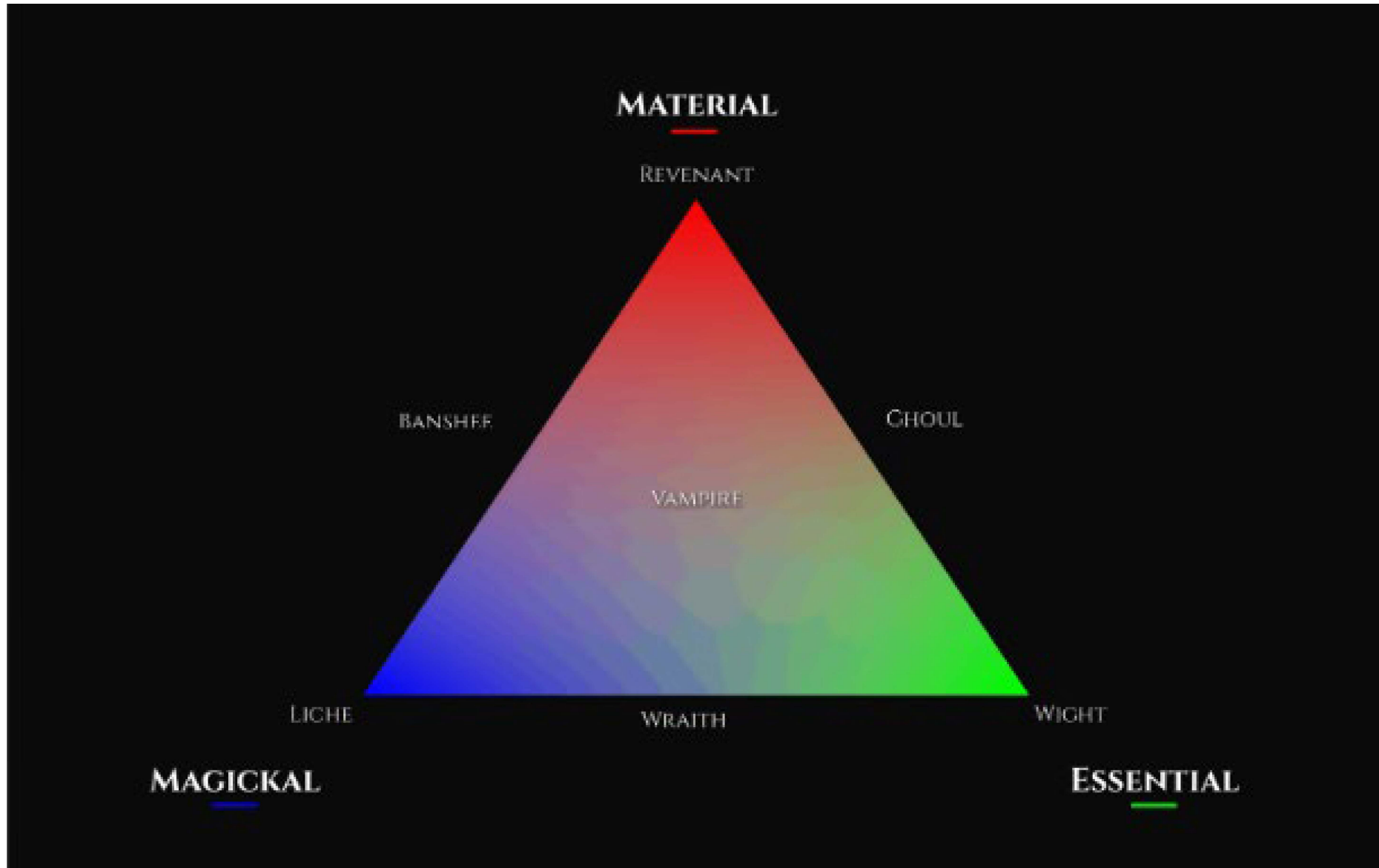
LICHE

WRATH

WIGHT

MAGICKAL

ESSENTIAL





THE ARCANA RITUAL THEATER

Movie Title:
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Feb 2011

SOLLIDE WITH
PARTNER

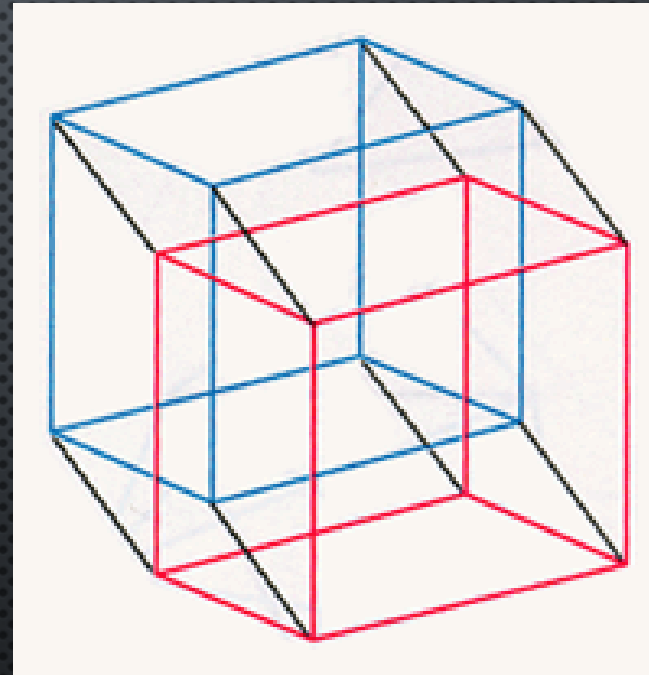





ARCANA AND ONTOLOGY

- “THE SYSTEMS OF MAGIC ARE FRAMEWORKS FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF RITUAL, UNDERSTOOD AS A SET OF SYMBOLIC ACTIONS DESIGNED TO ALTER REALITY OR TRANSFORM CONSCIOUSNESS” (HOWARD GAME MAGIC XXVII).

EMERGENT RITUAL
EFFECTS BASED ON
PHYSICS
CALCULATIONS
WITHIN AN
N-DIMENSIONAL
SPACE

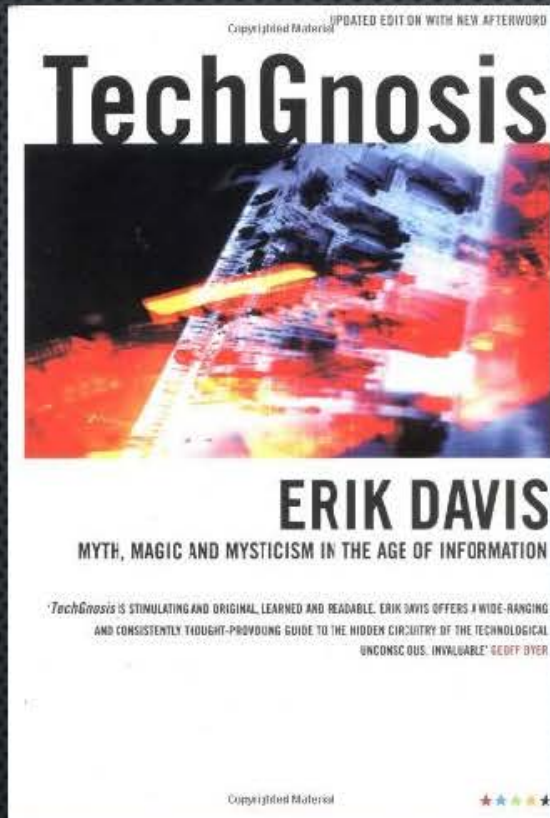






ARCANA IS
ABOUT
MOVING PAST
THE BARRIERS
SET BY THE
ARCHONS IN
ORDER TO
ESCAPE THEIR
COSMIC
PRISON

- ITS EPIGRAPH IS FROM THE NAASSENE PSALM: "**ALL THE WORLDS SHALL I JOURNEY THROUGH, ALL THE MYSTERIES UNLOCK.**"



Perhaps what we are building in the name of escapist entertainment are the shared symbols and archetypal landscapes of a tawdry technological *mundus imaginalis*. The boss characters and evil creatures who must be conquered to advance levels are the faint echoes of the threshold-dwellers and Keepers of the Gates that shamans and Gnostics had to conquer in their mystic peregrinations of the other worlds. Though it's dangerous to add another drop of hype to an industry that rivals Hollywood for commercial crassness and creative sloth, the game designer Brian Moriarty may not have been entirely fatuous when he told a Computer Game Developers Conference that "spiritual experiences are, in fact, our business."²¹ For all the kick-fighters, F-16s, and football gridirons you find, anyone can see that the digital imaginary is chock-full of images drawn from the depths of myth, cult, and popular religion.

ERIK DAVIS, TECHGNOSIS

AT ITS CORE, ARCANA IS ABOUT
USING RITUAL TO NAVIGATE AN
INVISIBLE MULTIVERSAL
LABYRINTH

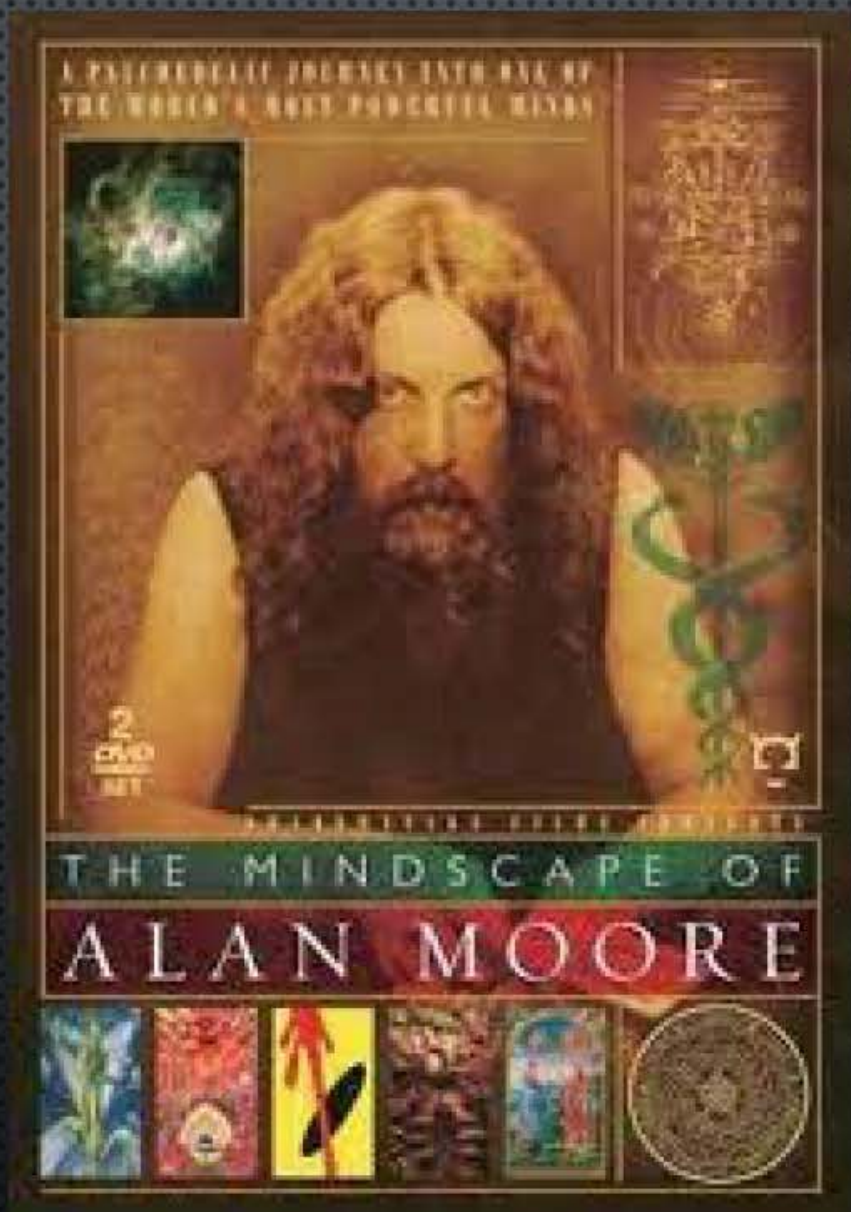


THE THRESHOLD



MONTE COOK

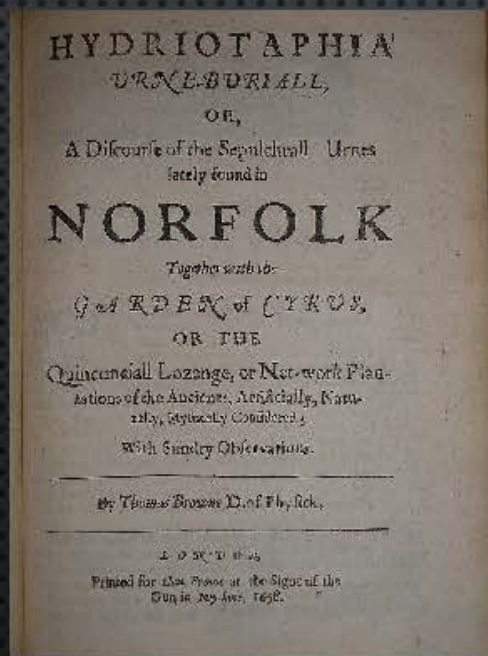




INVISIBLE SUN



**“LIFE IS A PURE FLAME AND WE LIVE BY AN
INVISIBLE SUN WITHIN US” - THOMAS BROWNE**



THE INVISIBLE SUN AND THE LANTERN ARE
LUDOMANTIC GNOSIS



THE PURPOSE OF SHIFTING STATES IS SPIRIT CONTACT, I.E. CONTACT WITH THE ENTITIES OF ANOTHER WORLD



THE METHOD OF SHIFTING STATES IS ILINX (VERTIGO GAMES)

- BUT IT'S A VERY SPECIFIC TYPE OF DISORIENTATION
- IT'S A SYSTEMIC DISORIENTATION, I.E. THE DISORIENTATION OF EXTREMELY DEEP SYSTEMS HIDING UNDERNEATH SEEMINGLY SIMPLE SURFACES (HOWARD'S LAW OF OCCULT DESIGN, PUBLISHED IN *101 GAME DESIGN PRINCIPLES*)

*Man,
Play
and
Games*

*Translated by
Meyer Barash*

CAILLOIS' FOUR TYPES OF GAMES:

- 1) AGON (CONFLICT)
- 2) ALEA (CHANCE)
- 3) MIMESIS (IMITATION OR MAKE-BELIEVE)
- 4) ILINX (VERTIGO)

ILINX = VERTIGO GAME (LITERALLY WHIRLPOOL)







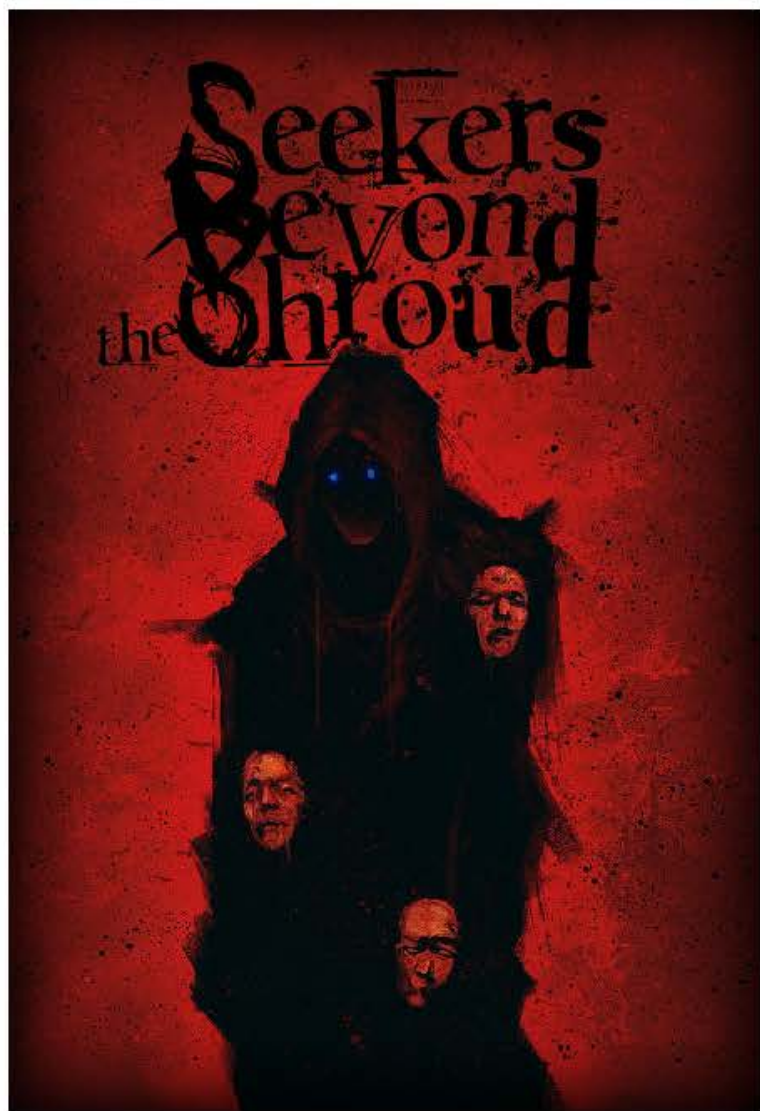


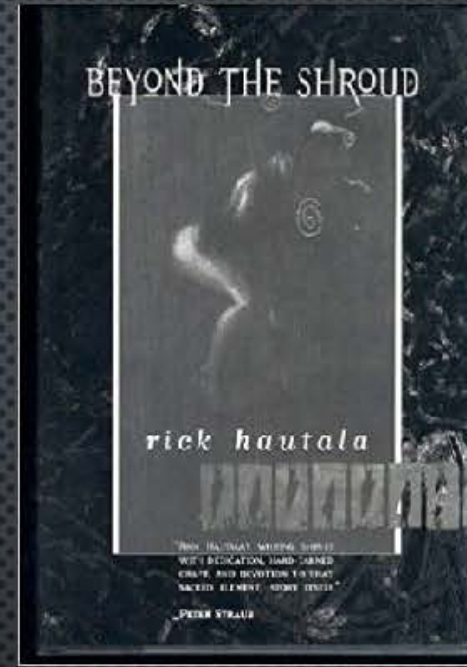
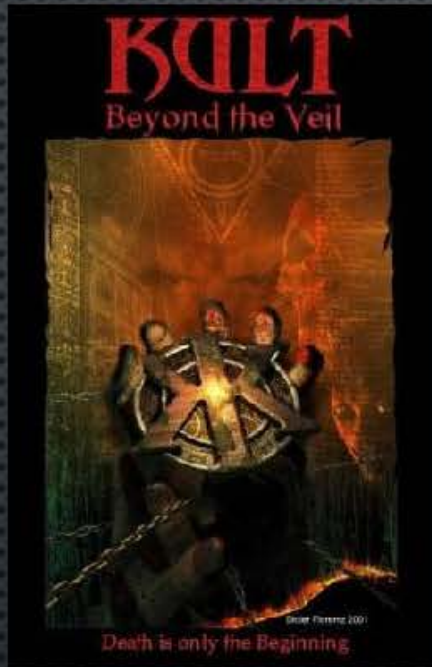
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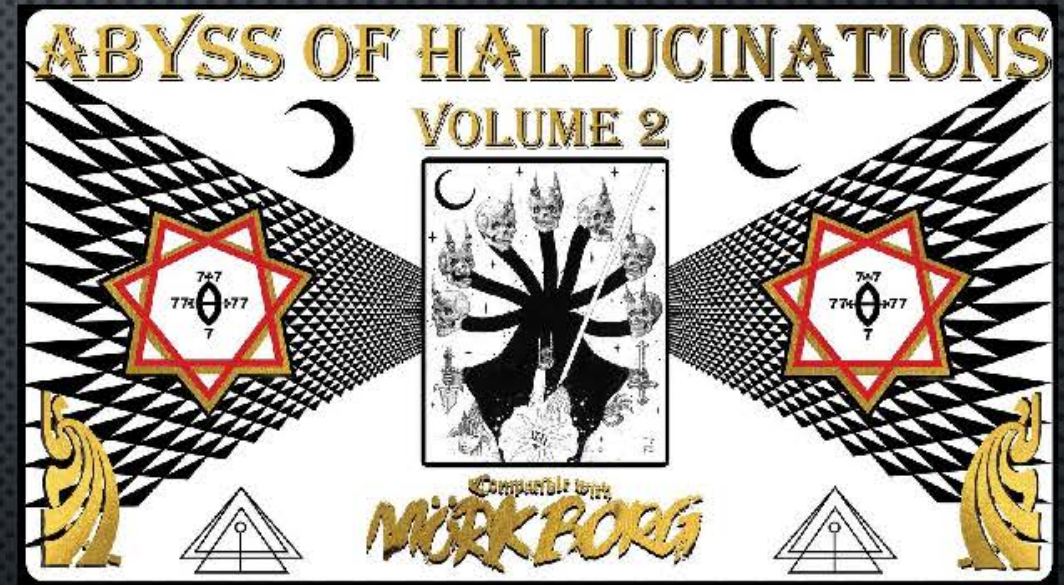
GAMES OF RENDING VEIL AND SHROUD

HERMETIC.COM



TRUTH!
TRUTH!
TRUTH!

CRIETH THE
LORD
OF THE
ABYSS
OF
HALLUCINATIONS





“AION IS A CHILD AT PLAY, PLAYING DRAUGHTS”
HERACLITUS, FRAGMENT 52

There is an old Sanskrit word, lila, which means play. Richer than our word, it means divine play, the play of creation, destruction, and re-creation, the folding and unfolding of the cosmos. Lila, free and deep, is both the delight and enjoyment of this moment, and the play of God. It also means love. Lila may be the simplest thing there is—spontaneous, childish, disarming.

- Stephen Nachmanovitch, *Free Play*





THE TOYS OF DIONYSUS

GAMES AND GAME DESIGN CAN OPERATE AS OCCULT PRACTICE

- BECAUSE GAMES **ALLOW US TO SHIFT STATES** IMAGINATIVELY, EMOTIONALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY
- **ANY SUFFICIENTLY RICH SIMULATION OF MAGIC IS INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM ACTUAL MAGIC**
- AND, THE MORE WE DEEPLY WE ENGAGE WITH SUCH A SYSTEM, THE MORE IT LOOKS AND FEELS LIKE WE ARE PERFORMING AN ACTUAL RITUAL (BECAUSE, AT SOME LEVEL, WE ARE)
- THE **CHIEF METHODOLOGY OF LUDOMANCY IS DELIBERATE DISORIENTATION THROUGH “ILINX” OR VERTIGO GAMES**
- THE PRINCIPLE PURPOSE OF LUDOMANCY IS **CONTACT WITH REALMS AND ENTITIES BEYOND THIS ONE**
- LUDOMANCY PROVOKES **PLAYFUL GNOSIS (DIRECT, EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE OF TRANSCENDENCE)**
- PLAYING AT MAGIC CAN YIELD THE REWARDS OF MAGIC, BOTH OPERATIVE AND RITUAL

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