Magic and Yoga: The Role of Subcultures in Transcultural Exchange

Suzanne Newcombe

Abstract From the perspective of modern yoga studies, magic and witchcraft have largely held the place of disinherited siblings. This chapter will explore how the development and contemporary practice of yoga in Britain overlaps and parallels the practice of magic. It will explore overlapping networks where those interested in the occult, esoteric, and non-institutional Christian religiosity and spirituality interacted, highlighting the role of Watkins Bookstore, Paul Brunton, and The Atlantis Bookstore. It will further explore the significance of literary agent Gerald Yorke who was influential in both the world of magic and that of yoga. The paper will conclude by examining the magical elements of contemporary yoga practice in terms of anti-aging, empowerment, and mythical inspirations. This paper argues that to better understand the historical development of yoga in the twentieth century or the transformative element of modern yoga practice, scholars need to take into account the continuing similarities and differences between the contemporary practice of yoga and magic.

Introduction

Recent research has made it clear that (1) there is something that can be recognized as "modern yoga" and (2) this "modern yoga" was created with a complex exchange between "East" and "West." What is now understood as a distinctly modern form of yoga was created in dialogue with Western culture through several distinct avenues.[1] In Britain alone, for instance, yoga entered the society through philosophical lectures of the Theosophical Society, personal appearances and

[1] For the purposes of modern yoga "Western culture" can be understood to primarily consist of Europe, the United States, and the anglophone Commonwealth nations; although yoga is now

S. Newcombe (✉)
Inform, based at the London School of Economics and Political Science
e-mail: S.Newcombe@lse.ac.uk

B. Hauser (ed.), *Yoga Traveling*, Transcultural Research – Heidelberg Studies on Asia and Europe in a Global Context, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-00315-3_3,

letters of Vivekananda, physical culture clubs like The Women's League of Health and Beauty and bodybuilding classes and publications (e.g. *Health & Strength* magazine), the teaching of international religious gurus, and government-funded evening classes in adult education institutes.[2] Therefore, the importance of transculturality for the creation of modern yoga should be considered not just between cultures as delineated by national borders, but also between the subcultures within a particular national context.[3] Rather than understanding yoga as a distinct tradition which has been transformed and impinged upon by Western esotericism, I would argue that empirical evidence from the twentieth century shows that yoga (i.e. both "historical texts" and techniques with effects towards *citta vrtti nirodha,* i.e. the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind) might be better understood as a "transcultural resource" used by both individuals and groups in a variety of ways. As this chapter highlights, subgroups within Western culture have understood yoga in ways distinct to their own aims and practices. The concept of what yoga "is" and "is not" within Western society has been shaped by these subcultural agendas and dialogues. The aim of the paper is to draw out some of the more esoteric background that has influenced the general assumptions and attitudes towards that which is called "yoga."

I will argue that it is not accurate to view yoga and contemporary esoteric magic as entirely separate phenomena. While most modern yoga practitioners have no knowledge or interest in contemporary magical traditions, practitioners of magic often openly acknowledge drawing from both the Western esoteric tradition and the Indian traditions of yoga and tantra.[4] Methodologically this paper will first present social historical research on the overlap between yoga and magic in the first half of the twentieth century, followed by a brief exploration of yoga and "magic" as understood by contemporary practitioners based on sociological methodology.[5] This chapter will focus on the case of Britain in the twentieth century, but it is likely that the web of associations between magic and yoga, and the dialogue between yoga's use in various subcultures, could be found in other national and transnational contexts. We can gain a more comprehensive understanding of European religiosity and spirituality since the Victorian age—and what yoga "is" in its

spreading in South and Central America and former Soviet states, this could be seen as a later phase of development.

[2] Newcombe (2009).

[3] My understanding of the term "culture" follows largely from the work of Raymond Williams (1981) and (1988) who emphasized the term's complexities, class implications, and changing use over time. In particular I would highlight his explanation that ". . .the steadily extending social and anthropological use of culture and cultural and such formations as sub-culture (the culture of a distinguishable smaller group) has . . . either bypassed or effectively diminished the hostility and its [the English word culture's] associated unease and embarrassment" Williams (1988, 92).

[4] For examples see Bogdan (2006), Evans (2007a, b), and Granholm (2005).

[5] In particular the second half of the paper is based upon my work at Inform (Information Network Focus on Religious Movements) which provides as objective and up-to-date information as possible about a variety of new, alternative, and minority religious and spiritualities. Through this work I have had contact with a wide variety of magical groups.

contemporary global context—by understanding how "mainstream" yoga and magical practices continue to be intimately related.

The Early Twentieth Century: Overlapping Networks

The influence of the "esoteric milieu" on Vivekananda has been explored by Elizabeth De Michelis, yet this connection is only a small part of the mutual influence between the two traditions which, I will argue, continued throughout the twentieth century. Both the yoga and occult milieus had their roots in a diffuse network that was relatively insular in size and composition. Before the 1960s, the milieus in which people explored yoga and magic overlapped greatly; in fact anyone interested in non-Christian religiosity would touch upon the same booksellers and publishers. Yoga was a subject of interest for both those that identified as "yogis" and those that saw themselves as occultists.

The Theosophical Society, founded in 1874 by Helen Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891) and Henry Olcott (1832–1907), became a meeting point for all those interested in non-Christian religiosity. Its name translating as the "wisdom of God," the Theosophical Society was (and continues to be) a complex organization with its own evolving theology.[6] However, it also served as a meeting point for others interested in psychic and spiritual phenomena. For example, Ernest Wood, the future author of the Penguin book *Yoga* (published in 1959), began his interest in yoga by enthusiastically exploring the scientific testing of psychic phenomena at his local branch of the Theosophical Society.[7] A respectful study of world religions was important to the Theosophical Society, although its success in this ideal is debatable. But more influential for the future of yoga than Theosophical theology was the Theosophical networks of people and publishing enterprises. For example, the first official "Hindu missionary," Vivekananda, was sponsored on his trips to Britain by two former members of the Theosophical Society who used their networks to find an audience for Vivekanada's lectures.[8] Likewise, Hari Prashad Shastri, a teacher of what was called Adhyatma Yoga, also was first introduced to students in Britain via lectures at the Theosophical Society in 1933.[9] These kind of interconnections abounded through what has been termed the "occult underground" of fin de siècle Britain.[10]

Central to the network of esoteric spirituality in early twentieth century Britain was Watkins' Bookshop in London. Watkins' had its origins as a Theosophical

[6] For an overview of Theosophical history, see Campbell (1980).

[7] Wood (1936, 78).

[8] Beckerlegge (2000, 143–179).

[9] *Self-Knowledge* formerly *Shanti Sevak,* Vol. 1 No. 1, Autumn 1950, back cover. Shastri taught Advaita Vedānta and his organization, still extant is known as the Shanti Sadan.

[10] See Webb (1974) for more information about the "occult underground."

distributor; the founder of Watkins' Bookshop, John Maurice Watkins (1862–1947) was a personal friend and secretary to the Theosophical Society founder Blavatsky.[11] John Watkins began distributing Theosophical Society books, largely published at the society's headquarters in India, to subscribers in England from stock lists from 1893. Watkins' Bookshop became independent from the Theosophical Society in 1896 and the list expanded to encompass a wide variety of specialist religious, esoteric, and occult titles. From 1901, Watkins operated from a shopfront in Cecil Court off Charing Cross Road. Its central location and specialist expertise made Watkins' Bookshop a gathering point for those interested in esotericism, unusual religions, and "rejected knowledge." John Watkins fostered an atmosphere of comfortable discussion; in the interwar period he served tea in his office to regular visitors, among who were prominent esoteric and cultural figures such as William Butler Yeats, George William Russell, Aleister Crowley, George Robert Stow Mead, and Arthur Edward Waite.[12]

John Watkins' only son Geoffrey [Nigel] Watkins (1896–1981) took over the running of the bookshop for most of the twentieth century.[13] The popular writer on Buddhism and Eastern spirituality of Buddhism, Alan Watts (1915–1973), described the role of Watkins' Bookshop in his early self-education. According to Watts, Geoffrey Watkins ran

> the most magical bookshop in the world, and is the most unobtrusively enlightened person I have ever known... He sells books on Oriental philosophy, magic, astrology, Masonry, meditation, Christian mysticism, alchemy, herbal medicine, and every occult and far-out subject under the sun. But he himself has, if you will take his own advice, perfect discrimination in what one should read, for he knows that much of this literature is superstitious trash. ... [and he became] my trusted advisor on the various gurus, pandits and psychotherapists then flourishing in [1930s] London.[14]

The importance of Watkins' Bookshop as a hub of esoteric knowledge continued well into the 1970s when the bookshop was sometimes described as an "event" with browsers networking together, sharing information about spiritual teachers and techniques.[15] Thus Watkins' Bookshop was an important location for finding information about Indian teachers and yoga as well as the occult and magical worlds more generally.

The extent of the overlap between the occult and yoga can also be evidenced by the extent to which Aleister Crowley and the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO) used Indian yoga and tantra texts for inspiration.[16] In Germany the OTO was co-founded by Theodor Reuss (1855–1923), a former member of the Theosophical Society who

[11] Personal interview with Jim Pym, 7 July 2005; Pym worked in Watkins' Bookshop in the 1970s and reported this association as common knowledge.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Gilbert (2004) and Raine (1982).

[14] Watts (1972, 107).

[15] Personal interview with Jim Pym.

[16] Djurdjevic (2012).

had a significant interest in Indian tantra, having published the *Lingam-Yoni: Oder die Mysterien des Geschlechts-Kultus* in 1906.[17] The OTO was originally inspired by rituals of freemasonry, with a series of degrees and initiations into "mysteries."[18] This could perhaps be understood as a project of individual growth towards becoming a more fully self-aware being; a symbolic and ritual aid to the unfolding of entelechy.[19] Crowley, who became a member of the OTO, was well aware of Reuss and their work in esoteric magic contains similarities as well as differences. Aleister Crowley's *Book Four* (published in 1913) has been a seminal text for twentieth century magical traditions.[20] The first half of this text was a rendering of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* with some techniques related to *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*. The second half was an introduction to magical rituals from a more Western esoteric perspective (consisting of ritual magic with the use of wands and other props). The required reading list for a first grade "student" in Crowley's system included Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga,* the *Śivasaṃhitā*, the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā,* Taoist teachings by Kwang Tze, as well as Crowley's works to date.[21]

Also in 1913 was the publication of Sir John Woodroffe's *The Serpent Power* (under the pseudonym of Arthur Avalon) which has been noted by both occult and yoga circles as an influential publication. Woodroffe was most probably an initiate of Shiva Chandra Vidyannarva Bhattacharya, a tantric guru popular amongst middle-class Bengalis in Calcutta and the translations were likely collaborative works with other Bengali initiates.[22] Drawing on translations of Indian tantric scriptures for inspiration, the practice of New Age tantra (as it has developed into a tradition in the twentieth century) involves the harnessing of the orgasm for magical purposes.[23] Such purposes can be either for self-transformation or more mundane goals, e.g. Crowley allegedly focused on sexual magic in an attempt to gain wealth.[24] In the 1940s Henrik Bogdan's research has shown that an (as yet unknown) "Indian guru" was involved with OTO tantric rituals in London. Bogdan further argues that it was in the New Isis Lodge of the OTO, active in London between 1955 and 1962, that Indian tantra was systematically connected to Western sexual magical practices.[25] The significance of Indian tantra for contemporary magical groups is underlined by the use of the "left hand" path of magic, a direct

[17] Evans (2007a, b).

[18] King (1973).

[19] Evans (2007a, b).

[20] Singleton (2009), 64–70 discusses an overlap in popular perception of yogis and magicians in publications.

[21] Crowley (1913, 1938). Crowley went on to write a book entitled *Lectures on Yoga* (1939) and a number of articles in *Equinox* explicitly paralleling "magical" and "mystical" systems, e.g. "Uniting with a Deity" or "Bhakti Yoga."

[22] For a biography of Woodroffe see Taylor (2001).

[23] Urban (2003a), 203–281, Love (2010).

[24] Urban (2003b).

[25] Bogdan (2006, 2010).

reference to inspiration from tantric scriptures.[26] This overlap continues in the more mainstream yogic subculture with, for example, pop-star Sting giving "tongue-in-cheek" interviews implying that yoga has improved his sex life, and groups like Tara Yoga in Britain explicitly teaching "yogic techniques" to enhance "sexual continence."[27]

A second central London bookstore, The Atlantis Bookstore, also became significant as a hub for those interested in non-Christian religiosity and "rejected knowledge." The Atlantis was co-founded by Michael Houghton and Paul Brunton (1898–1981); Brunton can be credited with popularizing Ramana Maharshi and Indian spirituality with his book *A Search in Secret India*, published in 1934. This spiritual travelogue, detailing personally transformative meetings with mystics and holy men was reissued many times and is still in print, testifying to its enduring influence. In 1971, the popular UK glossy magazine *Yoga & Health* claimed that Brunton's books have "probably turned more people onto the path of Yoga than any other books of their kind."[28] However, it is also significant that Brunton's background included extensive influence from the occult subcultures of London. During the 1920s, Brunton was writing articles in the journals *Success* and *Occult Review* with the name of Raphael Hurst (a more mystical version of his birth name Ralph Hurst).[29] Hurst/Brunton also wrote a biographical piece on Allen Bennett (1872–1923) whom he claimed to have met. Bennett was very likely the first Englishman to become an ordained Buddhist monk in Burma in 1903.[30] Before taking this decisive step, Bennett learned Hatha Yoga techniques in Sri Lanka and taught these techniques to Aleister Crowley.[31] The name-dropping used by Brunton within the milieu at the time emphasizes how close occult, magical, yogic, and Buddhist interests were to each other during this period.[32]

In 1922 Brunton and Houghton opened a bookshop on Museum Street near the British Museum and Library in London to provide easier access to titles in alternative spirituality. Over time, their bookstore, the Atlantis Bookshop, began to specialize in European magical traditions (e.g. historical alchemy, hermeticism, as well as new paganism). In 1935, The Atlantis had established its own small publishing company, The Neptune Press, to release esoteric and occult titles. Sometime in the 1930s or 1940s, Brunton and Houghton parted company and Houghton retained the ownership of the Museum Street bookshop. After Brunton's departure, the Neptune Press made a turn towards European esotericism more

[26] Evans (2007a, b), 177–188 and Granholm 2005.

[27] See *The Irish Times,* 16 November 1996, *The New York Times Online: News and Features, 2010 (*http://nymag.com/nymetro/nightlife/sex/columns/nakedcity/n_9954/. Accessed 30 May 2010) and personal communications with London Tara Yoga 2010, but see http://www.tarayogacentre.co.uk/. Tara Yoga is a branch of the Movement for Spiritual Integration in Absolute (MSIA) founded by the Romanian Gregorian Bivolaru.

[28] *Yoga & Health* 1971, 46.

[29] Thurston (1989), 46, 47 and 127.

[30] Brunton (1941).

[31] Crowley (1989), 239–244 and also Crow (2008).

[32] Also see Owen (2006).

apparent when it published Aleister Crowley's works and also put out pagan revivalist Gerald Gardner's practical book *High Magic's Aid* in 1949, which marked the beginning of a public paganism in Britain (and perhaps a "post-Christian" era).[33]

But like Watkins', the Atlantis continued to see the intersection of occult and yoga groups in its cliental through the 1970s and beyond. Geraldine Beskin worked at The Atlantis from 1965 and remembers the books and clientele of the period. Beskin recalls that Yogi Ramacharaka on *prāṇāyāma*[34] and Arthur Avalon's *Serpent Power* sold "endlessly." Like Watkins, the Atlantis served as a meeting place for the new "1960s" subcultures and from the late 1960s. While the Atlantis did not hold meetings itself, it had a notice board upon which people could post messages for friends as well as open invitations to meeting and events.[35] The so-called "dropouts," hippies, and young protesters were choosing lifestyles deliberately different from those of society in general. Beskin remembers that yoga practice was a popular activity for many of her customers in the late 1960s and 1970s: "Many in this group used yoga as a devotional practice, part of being vegetarian, changing your life, contraception loomed large and tantric sex. Yoga became part of people's devotion practice . . . and was a way of saying that I'm an alternative person."[36] The youth culture of the period used yoga in a new way that complemented its experimental lifestyles. Yoga, in turn, became associated with this group of people, a variation in the theme of non-Christian subcultures that had been associated for over a hundred years.

Further Overlaps: Publishers and Gerald Yorke

Someone who should be recognized as a profound influence on the shape modern yoga took within Britain is Gerald Yorke (1901–1983). He was active "behind the scenes" as an advisor on esoteric and Eastern religions for Rider publishers, and later Allen & Unwin. These publishers were largely responsible for respectable publications in the field of non-Christian spirituality in Britain. It was Yorke's recommendations that led in 1944 to the publication of Theos Bernard's *Hatha Yoga* in Britain as well as in 1953 to Yesudian and Haich's *Yoga and Health*. Most significantly for modern yoga, Yorke ensured the publication of Iyengar's *Light on Yoga*.[37] Most likely in the summer of 1962, one of Iyengar's London students

[33] Personal interview with Geraldine Beskin, 12 January 2007. For the idea of a "post-Christian" era see McLeod (2007).

[34] For more on Ramacharaka/Atkinson see Singleton (2007) and a forthcoming biography by Philip Deslippe.

[35] Personal interview with Geraldine Beskin, 12 January 2007.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Regarding the claims of the influence of this book, see, for example, a recent *New York Times* article called Iyengar's *Light on Yoga* the "most widely read book on modern yoga" (http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/25/books/review/Mishra-t.html?pagewanted=2&_r=1&ref=books, accessed

circulated Yorke Iyengar's manuscript for *Light on Yoga* at a Buddhist Society summer event. In the years between seeing the manuscript and *Light on Yoga*'s publication in early 1966, Yorke exerted extensive editorial influence on the manuscript—in particular the introductory section. Many years later, Iyengar (b. 1918) wrote that "Though I was a teacher with 30 years experience, I had never attempted to write even an article on yoga. Also my English in those days was not good."[38] Iyengar went on to say:

> In his admonitions about my style, Mr. Yorke was as forceful as my guru, Sri T. Krishnamacharya, was about my yoga. … His encouragement was my touchstone, spurring me to express my thoughts in as exact and precise a form as possible. Since … [the editing of *Light on Yoga*] I hold him to be my "literary guru." [39]

Yorke's personal story highlights the deeply interlocking milieu of magic and Eastern religiosity in pre-World War II Britain. He received a first in the History Tripos at Trinity College, Cambridge where he expressed a skeptical interest in the supernatural and occult.[40] After leaving university he explored a variety of esoteric and alternative religions flourishing in 1920s London including the Mazdaznan Society and associating with Aleister Crowley, submitting to him copies of a diary of spiritual practices and providing him with financial support. During this time, Yorke took several retreats to practice magic and meditation. He wandered in "native garb" in North Africa for several months in 1930 and in 1931 spent 2 months "practicing yoga" in a Welsh cave. Yorke then broke with Crowley and traveled in China for a few years, experiencing life inside Buddhist monasteries.[41] When Yorke returned to Britain in 1936, he established a respectable lifestyle. He also, however, kept a quiet interest in Crowley, corresponding as a friend but not disciple, collecting and preserving Crowley's work, compiling bibliographies and writing introductions to reprints. Today Gerald Yorke's name is frequently found as a footnote to books on magic in reference to the collection of Crowley's papers that he deposited at the Warburg Institute at the University of London.[42]

Yorke also continued to have a personal interest in yoga, corresponding with Iyengar's guru, Krishnamacharya. He was keen to get Krishnamacharya to write "a spiritual and practical book for the west on *kuṇḍalinī* and the transmutation of the sexual and vital forces."[43] Yorke was keen to "reveal kundalini as a spiritual

15 September 2010). Although, for many worldwide, Swami Vishnu-devananda's *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga* (1959) is a close second in worldwide influence.

[38] Iyengar (1993), xx.

[39] Ibid., xx–xxi.

[40] Verter (1997), 175–198 in his Ph.D. thesis Verter provides a short biography of Gerald J. Yorke based on primary source research.

[41] Verter (1997), 192 and Yorke (1935).

[42] For a more comprehensive presentation of Yorke and his influence see Richmond (2011).

[43] Yorke to Unwin. 24 August 1965 (Allen & Unwin Archives).

science instead of some unintelligible nonsense dealing with Sex [sic], which is the average western [sic] viewpoint."[44] He even went so far as to visit Krishnamacharya in Madras (now Chennai) with a view to writing this book in early 1966.[45] It is likely that Yorke's interest in specific tantric elements of yoga partially stemmed from his experience in Crowley's understanding of "magick," and knowledge of its contemporary occult practices in Britain at that time. His agenda in uniting scientific thinking and *kuṇḍalinī* techniques provides further evidence of Alex Owen's argument that science and religion continued to be intertwined in occult circles in the early twentieth century.[46]

In conclusion, the cultural distinctions between yoga as magic and yoga as physical culture did not become clear until much later than is popularly assumed given the respectable place of yoga practice in the early twenty-first century. The practices of occult magic and modern yoga were clearly largely distinct in some circles by the 1960s in Britain—so much so that yoga was an acceptable leisure activity for middle-class housewives to participate in at local authority, subsidized, adult education evening classes.[47] But what housewives were actually doing with their yoga practice might be closer to contemporary magical practice than they or their husbands imagined.

Yoga as Magic

Although in pre-1950s Britain, there was an acknowledged overlap between yoga, magic, and the occult, the overt overlap between these groups is now very slight. Very few magical practitioners would self-identify with yoga and few, if any, practitioners of modern yoga would identify with the idea of magic for their chosen discipline. Despite the lack of an overlap in self-description between the contemporary practice of yoga and magic, I would like to argue that the contemporary practice of modern postural yoga continues to have significant aspects in common with the practice of magic.

The most common typology for understanding the diversity of groups teaching yoga in the contemporary world is that proposed by De Michelis.[48] While she delineates groups with distinct emphasis on postural, doctrinal, and meditational aspects of yoga, it is also the case that, when considering a particular manifestation of modern yoga, there is often an overlap between these categorizations; for example Sivananda Yoga centers have a strong emphasis on both doctrine and

[44] Yorke to Krishnamacharya. 25 August 1965 (Allen & Unwin Archives), punctuation, and capitalization as in the original.

[45] Yorke to Unwin. 9 January 1966 (Allen & Unwin Archives).

[46] Owen (2004).

[47] Newcombe (2007).

[48] De Michelis (2004, 188).

postural practice. The modern yoga discussed in this paper is assumed to have a focus on postural aspects; but within this group, I would argue that there is a spectrum of involvement in modern postural yoga from the "purely physical" to the intensely religious. The degree to which the practice of modern yoga could be understood to overlap with the practice of magic also spans a spectrum.

Even more than the contemporary practice of yoga, the contemporary practice of magic is characterized by its diversity. The huge variety of beliefs and practices encompassed within the magical spectrum includes solitary "hedge witches" which use folklore, divination, and a relationship with nature to solve personal and communal problems for themselves and their clients; to organized pagan groups like Wiccan covens, druids, and Odinists[49]; and to occult groups like the OTO which are based on Masonic rituals.[50] This chapter is not the place to provide adequate descriptions of any of these groups, however short aspects of their practices will be described in comparative context where appropriate.

Before we explore how modern yoga might continue to be seen as a magical discipline, we need a working definition of magic. "Magic" is a word as hard to define as "ritual" or "religion." Most academic understandings of magic emphasize continuity with the Western esoteric traditions of alchemy and the Italian Renaissance. Aleister Crowley has been very influential for anglophile practitioners' understanding of magic (although Crowley is not directly acknowledged by all traditions) so it might be wise to start with his definition of magic. Crowley defined "magick" as "the art and science of causing change in accordance with your will." In spelling magic with a "k" on the end, for both esoteric and exoteric reasons, Crowley sought to define his interest as something different than stage magic, miracles, or claims to be able to change the laws of nature. The central tenet of his magical system, called Thelma, is the injunction to "Do what thy wilt"; not understood to mean "do whatever you like." Rather, the concept of will is more to do with a Nietzsche's Zarathustra who proclaimed "become who you are" and the idea that there is an essential core of being to some extent outside of social restrictions and received morality. Thelma, and the contemporary practice of "magick," offers those that follow its path, the "Great Work" of "self-realization."[51]

The founder of much of modern conceptions of witchcraft, Gerald Gardner, had some personal contact with Crowley; the Wiccan use of magic has both similarities and differences to that of Thelma. Typically, both solitary witches and coven-based Wiccans combine the injunction towards self-development with something similar to the yogic concept of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), into the directive "An it harm none, do what ye will."[52] Through the interpretation of this maxim (called a *Rede* by pagans) there is an emphasis on taking responsibility for the results of one's actions within many of the pagan traditions. However, many heathen/Odinist and druid

[49] For more information on these groups see Hutton (1999, 2007).

[50] See King (1973).

[51] Crowley (1929) is a good summary of Crowley's system.

[52] This saying, but not its sentiment, appears to have developed after Gardner.

groups find this Wiccan *Rede* too simplistic in its presentation of harm and apparent acceptance of conventional morality. Most of those who work from the pagan tradition also use magic as a path towards realization of a "higher self."

As Arthur Versluis explains "Magic and alchemy encompass all the lesser disciplines towards a higher goal: the realization of one's inherent divinity."[53] In his *History of British Magic After Crowley*, Dave Evans provides a definition that emphasizes the self-understanding of magical practitioners:

> Volitional acts of a ritual nature with an intent of somehow changing the perceived universe and/or the internal consciousness of the operator [or witness(es) or "target(s)"] through means not entirely understood by modern science, and acts not performed primarily to an audience for entertainment and/or financial reward.[54]

With this definition we can see some overlap with the practice of magic and that of yoga in contemporary Britain. Modern yoga practice typically has a ritual element. Some popular systems, e.g. Bikram Yoga or "Mysore style" practice as taught by Pattabhi Jois and his students,[55] involve exactly the same sequence of *āsana* being performed at each session. Others, such as Hatha Yoga or Iyengar Yoga tend to have a more flexible but still a systematic arrangement of *āsana* within a session. Many modern yoga practitioners are interested in effecting a change in their "internal consciousness." For some this might be articulated within a spiritual framework, while others would be more likely to describe the change of consciousness more simply as "relaxation" or a reduction in "stress."[56]

The idea of uniting the self with the infinite or divine is also the central theology of yoga emphasized by those who seek to highlight the "ultimate" or "true" purpose of the discipline. Norman Sjoman describes some "righteous and enthusiastic" contemporary yoga practitioners as treating their *āsana*-based practice as "a symbolic-magic complex under a pseudo-scientific garb."[57] He further defines the "symbolic-magic complex" of modern yoga practitioners as "a means of exploration of the conscious and the unconscious" and the use of the practice as a "vehicle of transcendence."[58] Furthermore, Stuart Starbacker emphasizes continuity of concepts throughout the yoga traditions into contemporary practice, noting in particular what he terms the logic of the "cessative" and the "numinous"; the cessative being an area where the "removal of either physical or metaphysical illness figures quite prominently, given the fact that it offers a spectrum of possibilities that range from physiologically rooted problems (such as diabetes) to ultimate questions of teleology (such as suffering and liberation from it)."[59]

---

[53] Versluis (1986). With thanks to Ken Reece for highlighting this source.

[54] Evans (2007b), 17.

[55] See Nevrin (2008) and Smith (2004, 2007, 2008) for a more detailed exploration of Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga of Pattabhi Jois.

[56] Hasselle-Newcombe (2005).

[57] Sjoman (1999, 47).

[58] Ibid., 48.

[59] Starbacker (2008, 165–166).

Starbacker also suggests continuity between the cessative goals of yoga and rituals of exorcism. In terms of the numinous aspect of modern yoga practice, Starbacker sees a continuity with the more overtly magical *siddhi* attainments mentioned in yogic texts with the virtuoso mastering of the "elemental forces that are determinative of his or her psychophysical existence" and the emphasis on the "transformative or purifying nature of developing heat" within several *āsana*-focused modern yoga traditions.[60]

In Britain, this "ultimate goal" of yoga has found two different kinds of expression in the two main organizations that promoted yoga in the adult education instructions, namely the British Wheel of Yoga and the students of Iyengar. From its founding, the British Wheel of Yoga emphasized both the ultimate goal of union with the divine as well as the myriad of ways individuals in Britain approached yoga. The Wheel in Britain maintained a tireless campaign throughout the 1970s to ensure the spiritual aim of yoga continued to be explicitly taught in the local education authority, preferably under the philosophy rather than physical education department.[61] The Wheel's 1973 *Yoga Handbook* for its teachers stated unambiguously that yoga means "union" and that "this unity is nothing less than that of the Individual Spirit with the Divine Source of Life, that is to say, the unity of the finite with the infinite."[62] The pages of its members' journal were also littered with language of microcosm and macrocosm that typifies the Western esoteric/magical traditions.[63]

While Iyengar Yoga in Britain became a mainstay of physical education departments in the 1970s, seemingly separating the magical from the mundane physical benefits, in Iyengar's mind there was no such distinction. Although the practical approach was different, Iyengar also saw physical postures as means of achieving the ultimate goal of yoga, as *mokṣa* or absorption with the Universal Self.[64] As one British practitioner described Iyengar's approach of creating an experience of *mokṣa* within the physical practice of *āsana*:

> He never warned us or prepared us for special experiences. He simply led us, all unawares, into an altered state of consciousness and then called our attention to it *when we were already there*. . . . my mind had been like a deep pool, unruffled by random thoughts and fancies. If I had the slightest expectation that he was going to lead us into that sort of experience, I would have been so greedy for it that I would have missed it altogether.[65]

Since the 1960s, Iyengar's personal understanding that yoga is a spiritual discipline focused on uniting with the divine has become more explicit.[66] However,

[60] Ibid., 174.

[61] Newcombe (2008, 55–80).

[62] British Wheel of Yoga, *Yoga Handbook* 1973, 2 (unpublished manuscript in the personal collection of Vi Neal-Smith, used for teacher-training in the early 1970s).

[63] Hanegraaff (1999).

[64] Iyengar (1988), 47–49.

[65] Jackson (1978), 145.

[66] Iyengar et al. (2005).

this "ultimate" unity is not necessarily the focus of either modern magical practitioners or modern yoga practitioners and the primary practice remains one of *āsana*. And modern magical practitioners prefer rituals to "somatic meditation" as a method for accessing the divine.

Despite the frequent appeals to medical science to elucidate the mechanisms of exactly how *āsana* practice might improve mental and physical wellbeing,[67] many *āsana* practitioners would also affirm that there is something to the transformative experience of yoga practice that cannot be reduced to biomedical "scientific" mechanisms. If we understand "magic as a practice that tries to effect change based on an individual's will" (and "will" being taken to mean "higher will" related to an individual's feeling of greater meaning and purpose to life) then there are a number of ways that the contemporary practice of yoga can be considered to be magical, even without the practitioners self-identifying their practice as such. Taking a few case studies of a "magical" purpose to modern yoga we will explore the practice of yoga as an elixir of youth, as a method of healing, and for psychological empowerment.

The Elixir of Youth

The practice of sun salutation (*sūryanamaskār*) has become a popular feature in modern yoga practice. Most recently, this has been particularly due to the popularization of Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga as taught by Pattabhi Jois.[68] How sun salutation became associated with yoga is a tangled historical web,[69] but the practice was first popularized in Europe during 1936 in a series of articles written by Louise Morgan and based on interviews with the Rajah of Aundh. The Rajah had been popularizing the exercises in his home state since the early 1920s to encourage a healthy and fit population. Elliott Goldberg argues that Morgan's presentation of sun salutation in her series of *News Chronicle* (London) articles and in her ghostwriting of *The Ten-Point Way to Health* (published 1938 in the name of the Rajah of Aundh) places Morgan amongst the most significant influences on the formation of the contemporary modern yoga tradition.[70] Headlines ran: "'Surya Namaskars'—the Secret of Health" and "Rajah's Way to Banish Age and Illness." According to Goldberg, Morgan essentially re-packaged sun salutation as an elixir of youth and beauty for the modern woman. If by simply following these exercises for 15 min a day, "Mothers Look Younger Than Daughters" (another headline), one could be forgiven for thinking something magical was involved. Morgan claims no less than

[67] Alter (2004).

[68] Burger (2006).

[69] See Singleton (2009), 204–206, Goldberg (2006) and Popov forthcoming.

[70] Aundh (1938) and Goldberg (2009).

a transformation of both inner psyche and outer material body in accordance with a woman's will to maintain her youth and beauty.

Morgan's legacy, which placed yoga as particularly a women's elixir of youth and beauty, continued to be a theme in the presentation of yoga to women throughout the twentieth century. Stefanie Syman argues that Indra Devi picked up the theme of youth and beauty above spiritual enlightenment in her presentation of Hatha Yoga to the women of the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. Devi was able to muster Hollywood glamour in the faces of Greta Garbo and Gloria Swanson to endorse her *Forever Young, Forever Healthy* (published in 1953).[71] While this presentation might appear to be superficial marketing or a "repackaging" of what was once a spiritual tradition, the qualities of youth and beauty can be understood as more profound than aspirations to look like a film star. The qualities of health, youth, and beauty are also states of mind and ways of being in the world, and in these respects the practice of yoga *āsana* can be seen as a magical aid to inner and outer transformation.

In Britain, women were focused on yoga as the key to youth, beauty, and "peace of mind," as yoga entered the local educational authority evening classes.[72] In numerous interviews given to local newspapers during the 1960s and 1970s, female yoga practitioners reinforced middle-class ideas of femininity by claiming that yoga provided a woman with increased vitality, beauty, serenity, and implicitly better health. For example, in 1969 the British author Joan Gold promised that through Hatha Yoga exercises:

> You will radiate good health,
> Your eyes will sparkle,
> Your complexion will glow,
> Your step will regain its youthful spring,
> Your arteries will become elasticized and healthy,
> Your system will be regulated and constipation will disappear,
> Your figure will improve, and your body will become supple,
> You will be able to relax.[73]

Here, traditional marks of a women's beauty are combined with medicalized language of idealized "elasticized arteries" and a regulated and unconstipated system. If these claims were not enough to convince the reader, Gold goes on to explain that "yoga will open the door to the secret of eternal youth—it will reverse the ageing forces of nature."

It is significant also that the idea of yoga as an elixir of immortality is an integral part of the Indian scriptural cannon, with yogic powers allowing for everlasting life.[74] The symbolic language of self-sacrifice, death, and rebirth surrounding the Nath Yoga tradition has parallels to the initiation rituals of Western magic found in

[71] Syman (2010), 179–197.

[72] Newcombe (2007).

[73] Gold (1969), 3.

[74] White (2009), 17–18.

Freemasonry and many other magical traditions.[75] Rather than simply superficial marketing, language of modern postural yoga could be seen as tapping into this archetypal narrative log associated with both Western magic and Indian yoga traditions.

Healing

Healing is a motif that many commentators on contemporary religion have found to be a central theme. Without directly claiming the same efficacy as biomedicine, many significant popularizers of yoga including Selvarajan Yesudian (1916–1998), B. K. S. Iyengar and his daughter Geeta (b. 1944), attribute their life and continued health to the practice of yoga.[76] The life stories of these influential teachers have created a kind of archetypal interaction with the yoga space as a type of profoundly healing space, separate from the typical healing expected in the offices of a biomedical physician. While the ability of modern yoga *āsana* to heal in biomedical terms is part of its (modern) foundational myth, a subject also explored by Joseph Alter, some of the effects of yoga experienced as "miraculous healing" also involve a transformation of consciousness towards an experiential transcendence of suffering.[77] All of the 200 *āsanas* described in Iyengar's *Light on Yoga* are accompanied by descriptions of claims for health benefits. Highly influential in its approach, Iyengar's teaching focuses largely on physical instructions; nevertheless, his students testified to profoundly transforming effects on both mind and body. A Franco-British Cambridge resident and student of Iyengar, Janet Downs Tourniere wondered, "How could physical stretches and postures alter the personality as well as the body?"[78]

Many of those who were first attracted to yoga during the 1960s found hope in yoga when conventional biomedical doctors had told them they must learn to live with their pain. For example, yoga teacher Ernest Coates began yoga in part to deal with stress from work and a resulting duodenal ulcer that he did not want operated upon.[79] Likewise, Beatrice Harthan came to yoga partially due to a spinal injury. In 1961, she was photographed doing a forward bend in a swimsuit and was quoted as saying "I've got a damaged spine . . . at the hospital they told me I must just learn to live with it and that I mustn't bend forward. Now I find I can bend any way I like. The pain has lightened and I feel much freer."[80] In the May 1973 issue of *Yoga &*

[75] White (2009).

[76] Iyengar (1987), 3–4 and Yesudian and Haich (1953), 15–18.

[77] Alter (2004).

[78] Tourniere (2002), 129.

[79] Personal interview with Ernst Coates (chairperson of the Friends of Yoga Society International (FRYOG)), 19 December 2004.

[80] Following the Indian newspaper *Today,* 19 August 1961.

Health, an article reported that Swami Satyananda (a disciple of Sivananda) cured "people who have been suffering from drug addiction, depression, and many other mental afflictions" with what he called Kriya Yoga.[81] Instead of accepting a surgical supporting belt for spondylolisthesis, another person turned to yoga and claimed that yoga kept her back "free from pain."[82] For those experiencing release from pain where biomedical authority had prophesized a lifetime of suffering, many perceived a 'magical' quality in yoga's efficacy.

The significance of healing that many practitioners attribute to yoga also can have a magical quality. Following the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep's typology, Elizabeth De Michelis has described a prototypical structure of a yoga class as a "healing ritual" in three stages: (1) a period of arrival and quieting (preliminal), (2) postural and breathing practice (liminal state), and (3) final relaxation (incorporation or postliminal).[83] Verena Schnäbele likewise emphasizes that modern yoga classes are "very much ritualized" and create "room for experiences within a fixed sequence of actions repeated many times."[84] Exactly what this healing space may entail is further elucidated by the self-reflections of Catherine Garrett who commented that although practicing yoga did not reduce her pain due to a medical condition, it did reduce the suffering that the pain caused. Garrett spoke of the ability of yoga (as well as Reiki and Transcendental Meditation) to evoke a self-transformation, where pain perhaps is not avoided, but suffering transcended.[85] Garrett goes on to argue that yoga, Reiki, and Transcendental Meditation all contain "magical elements" within their use of ritual frameworks for healing. She defines magic as "the art of creating effects thought to be beyond natural human power."[86]

Healing is also important to the magical and pagan traditions. Vivienne Crowley describes Wiccan healing as taking place through four main practices: Western herbalism and psychotherapy (which she asserts are non-magical) and the practices of manipulating "etheric energy" and spell craft.[87] Theories of etheric energy might owe something to the subtle bodies of the Indian descriptions of physical and subtle aspects of the body, the *pañca kośa* which are actively discussed in some yoga traditions, e.g. Sivananda-based yoga traditions, but de-emphasized in many others.[88] The Wiccan practice of spell craft involves concentration, visualization, and meditation. Like with modern yoga, some of the healing effects of these methods perhaps could be justified by modern science. Yet it remains the case

[81] *Yoga & Health*, 16 May 1973. For more on Satyananda's tradition see Satyananda (2008).
[82] *Yoga Biomedical Trust Newsletter*, May 1991.
[83] De Michelis (2004), 248–260.
[84] Schnäbele (2010), 113.
[85] Garrett (2001).
[86] Garrett (2001), 335.
[87] Crowley (2003), 152.
[88] Strauss (2002, 2005).

that most forms of contemporary postural yoga are much more focused on healing the physical body than many magical traditions.[89]

Empowerment

Ethnographic work by Klas Nevrin and Benjamin Richard Smith emphasize the role of self-transformation and practitioner empowerment as a motivation for the contemporary practice of Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga. Smith claims that through daily practice mental, psychological, and spiritual transformations are effected.[90] Likewise Nevrin has delineated the various ways that an Asthanga Vinyasa Yoga can cause the practitioner to feel existentially and socially empowered, feeling more "whole," "alive" and self-confident.[91] When yoga entered the British local educational authority evening class structure in the 1960s, it can be argued that its appeal to women partially stemmed from how it valued women's embodied subjective experiences, in a similar way to that discussed by Nevrin and Smith. I have argued elsewhere how this made yoga a complement to the "natural birth movement" and aspects of second wave feminism in the 1970s.[92] Additionally, many responses to a 2002 survey of Iyengar Yoga practitioners in Britain revealed that the largely physical practice of yoga was "adding a sense of meaning to life" for 85 % of respondents. Elaborations on this theme described yoga as "grounding" and bringing "purpose" and "sanity"; this could be rephrased as empowerment to "cope with the ups and downs of life."[93] This feeling of empowerment is a transformation of the "internal consciousness" of the operator, according to our working understanding of magic. Its effects are powerful and can lead to real changes in the external world as experienced by a practitioner.

It might be accurate to say that most of those in the contemporary occult and magical milieus give little attention to physical fitness,[94] yet the ability to transcend the body and focus the mind remains a central element of their practices. In this, modern magicians are repeating the original descriptions found within Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* in seeking absolute concentration without the distractions of pain and discomfort within the physical body. Some members of the OTO do practice modern yoga as a personal lifestyle choice and there is a recent book encouraging magickal practitioners to take up the practice as an aid to magickal efficacy, i.e. Nancy Wasserman's *Yoga for Magic: Build Physical and Mental Strength for*

[89] Wasserman (2007), 12.
[90] Smith (2004), 8.
[91] Nevrin (2008).
[92] Newcombe (2007).
[93] Hasselle-Newcombe (2005), 311–312.
[94] Wasserman (2007), 12.

your Practice.[95] Many of those in magical orders influenced by Crowley are well versed in his literature relating to yoga and interested in the effects on energy that various yoga positions hold. In these aspects, yoga is used as a tool to further magickal empowerments, both personal and super-personal.[96] While the subtle body is de-emphasized in most modern postural practice, an understanding of manipulating somatic energy remains central to the teaching of Iyengar Yoga and underlies many other traditions; the Sivananda lineages tend to discuss the various subtle bodies directly. For those in the modern yoga milieus (perhaps more than those in magickal orders), "self-empowerment" also has its limits. Nevrin also discusses the limitations of "how yoga can change a person," largely through the absence of discussion on social and ethical constraints in the power structures and living conditions of the modern world.[97]

Conclusion

In modern yoga the focus on the physical body, its health, and wellbeing, is a far cry from more typical associations with magic, and contemporary yoga practitioners are very unlikely to consider their practice to be "magical." Nevertheless, in the twentieth century there were significant overlaps between the social networks of Western magicians and what has become the modern yoga tradition. Additionally, I have argued that the spectrum of yoga practitioners and ways of practicing contain a self-transformative element that is similar in both modern yoga and contemporary magical practice. To some extent, the magic of yoga could be understood as an everyday sort of magic. The means of yoga are quite mundane—they don't require magic wands, circles, extensive use of symbolism, or being "sky-clad" (naked) for a symbolic rebirth. Although not normally associated with "magic," the modern yoga practitioner often has a "ritual space" that is cleared from clutter, a yoga mat, and perhaps some other "props" like blankets or blocks to assist their practice. Both yoga and ritual magic traditions use structures of time and space to effect change within an individual. Both traditions have a focus on attaining greater mental control and powers of concentration. Practitioners of both traditions report that their practice "works" in bringing about positive and desired changes to their lives, both in finding it easier to "cope" with life in general, and in offering specific examples of change or healing in their personal lives. Both practices are actively used for a kind of cultivation of (a higher) self (largely as defined by the individual practitioner). At the level of ultimate meaning, both traditions aim for an experience of the underlying nature of reality. For both yoga and magical practitioners, an

[95] Wasserman (2007).

[96] Personal correspondence with Ken Rees, 20 November 2009.

[97] Nevrin (2008).

experience of lesser separation between individual "microcosm" and the rest of the universe "macrocosm" could be considered an experiential goal.

However, when exploring these parallels it is also important to reflect upon the vast diversity of both the contemporary magical milieu and the practice of modern yoga. Pagan and yoga groups have various levels in their degree of openness and access to esoteric knowledge. Some groups present their entire ritual practice to all, while others open esoteric rituals only to those who have participated in certain initiation ceremonies (or teacher-training qualifications in the case of yoga practitioners).

The practice of contemporary magic in esoteric or pagan circles looks very different from modern yoga practice, but the aims and methods do betray a Wittgensteinian family resemblance, even if magic could be described as yoga's disinherited family member. The contemporary pagan scene has had active engagement with critical historiographies and open practitioner scholars for slightly longer than has been the case in the modern yoga milieu. One of the effects of this engagement has been a significant acceptance of the extent to which the occult, and particularly Wicca, can be considered an "invented tradition."[98] In particular Gerald Gardner, the founder of Wicca, claimed to have been initiated into a secret order of witches which had continuity with the middle ages. In a seminal work *The Triumph of the Moon* the historian Ronald Hutton has shown that there is little, if any, evidence for a continuity of tradition before Gardner.[99] The effect this has had upon modern pagans has been called by Helen Cornish the "Huttonisation" of paganism, noting that there have been a wide variety of responses and reactions to the challenges Hutton posed to the historical foundations of Wicca. Some practitioners feel frustrated and undermined by the authority of historical, textual based research in their justification for practice, and feel under pressure to maintain a "coherent and plausible narrative." However, the emphasis for many contemporary practitioners of witchcraft is on "what works" and draws on a variety of psychologically potent myths, dreams, archetypes, intuitions and experiences, as well as the natural landscape and occult ritual.[100] From this perspective, the mythical origins of magic are equally as effective as myths, without needing to be understood as historical fact.

The revision of the history of yoga has only more recently been underway, with seminal works including those by Alter, De Michelis, and Singleton as well as a number of other scholars.[101] While the majority of yoga practitioners might justify their yoga practice by the similarly pragmatic "it works," it is still easy to find references in popular culture and amongst practitioners of yoga as being part of a

[98] Hobsbawm (1983).
[99] Hutton (1999).
[100] Cornish (2009).
[101] Newcombe (2009).

continuous "5,000 year old" (or more!) tradition.[102] It will be interesting to observe to what extent the academic study of yoga affects the self-understanding of contemporary yoga practitioners. This may place some modern yoga practitioners in an awkward position between the revealed "truth" of a living guru and the historical "truths" presented by scholarship. This dissonance could cause the "magical" yoga's powers of healing and empowerment to become less effective for some practitioners. But the continuing strength of modern paganism and persistence of occult practices has shown that magic does not necessarily need a historically true creation myth in order to be effective, and that powerful transformations can be effected even with a critical self-awareness of the tradition's history. Although it is interesting to speculate on such matters, it is most likely that the majority of yoga practitioners will continue their weekly classes without much awareness of either ancient truth claims or the more modern origins of their practices. Nevertheless, yoga practitioners will return to their mats week after week for the same reasons they have for the last 50 years; the experience makes them feel better, although they might not be quite sure what exactly causes this effect. Is it magic?

References

Alter, Joseph. 2004. *Yoga in modern India: The body between science and philosophy*. Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Aundh, Rajah. 1938. *The ten-point way to health*. London: Dent and Sons.

Beckerlegge, Gwilym. 2000. Sowing the seeds of vedanta in Britain: Surprising shoots or disappointing harvest? In *The Ramakrishna mission: The making of a modern hindu movement*, ed. Gwilym Beckerlegge, 143–179. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bernard, Theos. 1944. *Hatha yoga*. London: Rider.

Bogdan, Henrik. 2006. Challenging the morals of western society: The use of ritualized sex in contemporary occultism. *The Pomegranate* 8: 211–246.

Bogdan, Henrik (ed.). 2010. *Brother curwen, brother crowley: A correspondence*. York Beach: Teitan Press.

Brunton, Paul. 1934. *A search in secret India*. London: Rider & Co.

Brunton, Paul. 1941. A pioneer Western Buddhist. *Ceylon daily news*, Vesak Number. May. http://www.bps.lk/other_library/pioneerwesternbuddhist.pdf. Accessed 30 May 2010.

Burger, Maya. 2006. What price salvation? The exchange of salvation goods between India and the West. *Social Compass* 53: 81–95.

Campbell, Bruce. 1980. *Ancient wisdom revived: A history of the theosophical movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cornish, Helen. 2009. Spelling out history: Transforming witchcraft past and present. *The Pomegranate* 11: 14–28.

Crow, John. 2008. The Bhikkhu and the Magus: Exploring Allan Bennett's influence on Aleister Crowley. A paper presented at the 2008 CESNUR/Inform International Conference.

[102] For example, Prince of Wales Foundation for Integrated Health 2010. Yoga Therapy. http://www.fih.org.uk/information_library/complementary_healthcare_a_guide/overview_of_the_main_complementary_therapies/yoga_therapy.html. Accessed 30 May 2010.

16–19 April. London School of Economics. http://www.cesnur.org/2008/london_crow.pdf. Accessed 30 May 2010.
Crowley, Aleister. 1913. *Book four. By Frater Perdurabo and Soror Virakam (Mary D'este Sturges)*. London: Wieland & Co.
Crowley, Aleister. 1938. *Eight lectures on yoga by Mahatma Guru Sri Parahamsa Shivaji, etc. [With a portrait.]*. London: OTO.
Crowley, Vivianne. 2003. *Wicca: A comprehensive guide to the old religion in the modern world*. London: Element.
Crowley, Aleister. 1929. *Magick: In theory and practice. By the Master Therion, A. Crowley*. Paris: published for subscribers only.
Crowley, Aleister. 1989. In *The confessions of Aleister Crowley: An autobiography*, eds. John Symonds and Kenneth Grant. London: Penguin.
De Michelis, Elizabeth. 2004. *A history of modern yoga: Patañjali and western esotericism*. London: Continuum.
Djurdjevic, Gordan. 2012. The great beast as a tantric hero: The role of yoga and tantra in Aleister Crowley's magick. In *Aleister Crowley and western esotericism*. Oxford: OUP.
Evans, Dave. 2007a. *Aleister Crowley and the 20th century synthesis of magick*, 2nd ed. Harpenden: Hidden Publishing.
Evans, Dave. 2007b. *The history of British magic after Crowley: Kenneth Grant, Amado Crowley, Chaos magic, satanism, lovecraft, the left hand path, blasphemy and magical morality*. Harpenden: Hidden Publishing.
Gardner, Gerald Brosseau. 1949. *High magic's aid*. London: Michael Houghton.
Garrett, Catherine. 2001. Transcendental meditation, Reiki and Yoga: Suffering, ritual and self-transformation. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 16: 229–342.
Gilbert, R. A. 2004. Watkins, Geoffrey Maurice (1896–1981). *Oxford dictionary of national biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/53853.
Gold, Joan. 1969. *Yoga for health and beauty*. London: Thorsons.
Goldberg, Elliott. 2006. Worshiping the sun indoors: The beginnings of Modern Surya Namaskar in Muscle Cult. Paper presented at a workshop organized at the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, Cambridge. 22–23 April.
Goldberg, Elliott. 2009. "Transforming *Surya Namaskar* into an elixir for women—the critical role of Louise Morgan in the Formation of Modern Hatha Yoga." Conference presentation at the Yoga Consultation/Mysticism group session held during the American Academy of Religion conference in Montreal, Canada. 13 November.
Granholm, Kennet. 2005. *Embracing the dark: The magic order of dragon rouge: Its practice in dark magic and meaning making*. Åbo, Finland: Åbo Akademi University Press.
Hanegraaff, Wouter. 1999. New age spiritualities as secular religion. *Social Compass* 46(2): 145–160.
Hasselle-Newcombe, Suzanne. 2005. Spirituality and 'Mystical Religion' in contemporary society: A case study of British practitioners of the Iyengar method of yoga. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 20(3): 305–321.
Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger (eds.). 1983. *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Hugh, Urban. 2003. Unleashing the beast: Aleister Crowley, tantra and sex magic in late Victorian England. *Esoterica* 5: 138–192.
Hutton, Ronald. 1999. *The triumph of the moon: A history of modern pagan witchcraft*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Hutton, Ronald. 2007. *The druids*. London: Hambledon Continuum.
Iyengar, Geeta. 1987. *Yoga: A gem for women*. New Delhi: Allied.
Iyengar, Bellur Krishnamachar Sundaraja. 1993. *Light on the yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*. London: Aquarius Books.
Iyengar, Bellur Krishnamachar Sundaraja. 1988. In *Yoga Vṛkṣa. Tree of yoga*, ed. Daniel Rivers-Moore. Oxford: Fine Line Books.

Iyengar, Bellur Krishnamachar Sundaraja, John J. Evans, and Abrams Douglas. 2005. *Light on life: The yoga journey to wholeness, inner peace, and ultimate freedom*. London: Rodale Books.
Jackson, Ian. 1978. Running. In *Body the shrine, yoga thy light*, ed. BKS Iyengar 60th Birthday Celebration Committee, 136–146. Bombay: B.I. Taraporewala.
King, Francis. 1973. *The secret rituals of the O.T.O*. New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc.
Love, Robert. 2010. *The great Oom: The improbable birth of yoga in America*. New York: Viking.
McLeod, Hugh. 2007. *The religious crisis of the 1960s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Nevrin, Klas. 2008. Empowerment and using the body in modern postural yoga. In *Yoga in the modern world: Contemporary perspectives*, ed. Mark Singleton and Jean Byrne, 119–139. London: Routledge.
Newcombe, Suzanne. 2007. Stretching for health and well-being: Yoga and women in Britain, 1960–1980. *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity* 3: 37–63.
Newcombe, Suzanne. 2009. The development of modern yoga: A survey of the field. *Religion Compass* 3: 986–1002. doi:10.1111/j.1749-8171.2009.00171.x.
Newcombe, Suzanne. 2008. A social history of yoga and ayurveda in Britain, 1950–1995. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, submitted at the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge.
Owen, Alex. 2004. *The place of enchantment: British occultism and the culture of the modern*. London: University of Chicago Press.
Owen, Alex. 2006. The religious sense in a post-war secular age. *Past and Present* 1(Supplement 1): 159–177.
Popov, Max. 2014. Forthcoming. *Radiant bodies*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press.
Raine, Kathleen. 1982. Obituary: Geoffrey Watkins. *Temenos* 2: 272.
Richmond, Keith (ed.). 2011. *Aleister Crowley, the Golden Dawn and Buddhism: Reminiscences and writings of Gerald Yorke*. York Beach: The Teitan Press.
Satyānanda, Saraswati Svāmī. 2008. *Āsana Prāṇāyāma Mudra Bandha*. Munger: Yoga Publications Trust.
Schnäbele, Verena. 2010. *Yoga in modern society*. Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač.
Singleton, Mark. 2007. Suggestive therapeutics: New thought's relationship to modern yoga. *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity* 3(1): 64–84.
Singleton, Mark. 2009. *Yoga body: The origins of modern posture practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Sjoman, Norman. 1999. *The yoga tradition of the Mysore Palace*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications.
Smith, Benjamin R. 2007. Body, mind and spirit? Towards an analysis of the practice of yoga. *Body and Society* 13(2): 25–46.
Smith, Benjamin R. 2008. With heat even iron will bend: Discipline and authority in Ashtanga Yoga. In *Yoga in the modern world: Contemporary perspectives*, ed. Singleton Mark and Byrne Jean, 140–160. London: Routledge.
Smith, Benjamin R. 2004. Adjusting the quotidian: Ashtanga Yoga as everyday practice. *The online proceedings from everyday transformations; the 2004 annual conference of the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia*. http//www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/cfel/docs/Smith_FV.pdf. Accessed 12 Apr 2009.
Starbacker, Stuart Ray. 2008. The numinous and cessative in modern yoga. In *Yoga in the modern world: Contemporary perspectives*, ed. Mark Singleton and Jean Byrne, 161–183. London: Routledge.
Strauss, Sarah. 2002. Adapt, adjust, accommodate: The production of yoga in a transnational world. *History and Anthropology* 13: 231–251.
Strauss, Sarah. 2005. *Positioning yoga: Balancing acts across cultures*. Oxford: Berg.
Syman, Stefanie. 2010. *The subtle body: The story of yoga in America*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
Taylor, Kathleen. 2001. *Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra and Bengal: An Indian soul in a European body?* Richmond: Curzon Press.

Thurston, Kenneth. 1989. *Paul Brunton: A personal view*. Burdett: Larson.
Tourniere, Janet D. 2002. *Eating fox: A break through to India*. Cambridge: Self published.
Urban, Hugh. 2003. *Tantra: Sex, secrecy, politics and power in the study of religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Versluis, Arthur. 1986. *The philosophy of magic*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Verter, Bradford. 1997. *Dark star rising: The emergence of modern occultism, 1800–1950*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted at Princeton University, Princeton.
Vishnu-devananda, Swami. 1959. *The complete illustrated book of yoga*. London: Souvenir Press.
Wasserman, Nancy. 2007. *Yoga for magick: Build physical and mental strength for your practice*. New York: Weiser.
Watts, Alan. 1972. *In my own way: An autobiography 1915–1965*. London: Jonathan Cape.
Webb, James. 1974. *The occult underground*. Chicago: Open Court.
White, David G. 2009. *Sinister yogis*. London: University of Chicago Press.
Williams, Raymond. 1981 (1958). *Culture*. London: Fontana Press.
Williams, Raymond. 1988 (1976). *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. London: Fontana Press.
Wood, Ernest. 1936. *Is this theosophy?* London: Rider & Co.
Wood, Ernest. 1959. *An explanation of the practices and philosophy of Indian yoga, and how they can be applied in the west today*. London: Pelican Books.
Yesudian, Selvarajan, and Elizabeth Haich. 1953. *Yoga and health*. London: Allen & Unwin.
Yorke, Gerald. 1935. *China changes*. London: Jonathan Cape.