

Bio

Andrej Kapcar is a doctoral student in Religious Sciences at the Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. He holds a bachelor's degree in Archaeology, Master's degrees in Economy, Archaeology, and Comparative Religions, and a Ph.D. degree in Archaeology. In his research, he focuses on the topic of Occult Aesthetics – how the audiovisual aspects of occult symbolism within contemporary culture affect the behavior of the artists, as well as the audience.

Title

Pop-spirituality: Representations of Western Esotericism within the East Asian pop-culture

Abstract

Despite the name of Western Esotericism, this phenomenon has been already for several decades not limited only to the Euro-American geographical area. In the same way, the western culture is being strongly inspired by the East Asian spiritual traditions, this process is becoming increasingly reciprocal. One of the aspects of daily life where this influence is most noticeable is their depictions in pop-culture. Several popular animations, graphic novels, or movies are intensively working with topics of alchemy, Christian mysticism, occultism or spiritism, but adapting them for the native audience. Due to the globalized informational exchange, these artistic representations are also reaching the western countries, where they are gaining massive popularity and almost cult following. Series as Jojo's Bizarre Adventure, Fullmetal Alchemist, A Certain Magical Index or Hellsing are combining the unique visual style of depiction with topics related to European occult traditions. This combination is subsequently, through aesthetics, affecting the western audience, where noticeable changes in behavior can be observed. Among these changes could be mentioned therapeutic effects, re-evaluation of personal values, introspective analysis of self, or even increased interest in the practices of Western Esotericism on an almost scholarly level. This presentation will focus on the perception of these "easternized" depictions inspired by Western Esotericism, and the subsequent changes in behavior the audience is or can be experiencing. The chosen methodology for the research is using the framework of Occult Aesthetics, a field that combines the philosophical, psychological, and cognitive focus on the reactions towards audiovisual stimuli, with the anthropological approach of studying pop-cultural behavior.