

This article is the first section of a complete primer in occult swordplay being written by Fenwick Rysen. It covers only the basics, leaving out more advanced techniques and topics including enchanted swords, twinned blades, possession, obsession, mind tricks, psychic vampirism through swordplay, energetic imbalance, healing the damage caused by these techniques, and many other topics, and is provided only as a beginning for people anxious to experiment with occult swordplay on their own. As other writings on more advanced topics become available, they will be made public at the House Dreamblade occult swordplay website at <http://www.chaosmatrix.com/dreamblade> Please circulate this document freely.

## Occult Swordplay

by Fenwick Rysen

*In a field lit only by moonlight and the distant glow of the city beyond the horizon, Michael stood and faced his opponent, a master who calmly regarded him as a hunter might regard his prey. The eyes in that face were the same piercing color as the sword he bore at his side, an unforgiving steel grey that pierced by gaze alone. Steel grey. Live steel. A real sword, not the shinai or the bokken, the bamboo and wooden practice swords he had trained with. A real sword. A real battle. His first battle. The master gave a slight bow, which Michael returned. The drawing of blades was silent as silk upon silk, marked only by the reflection of moonlight from twin blades as the battle was enjoined.*

The topic of occult swordplay is one that seems to fill our myths, legends, and fantasies so much so that it has even given rise to the cliché of “sword and sorcery” yet somehow has remained, for the most part, a region unexplored by modern occultism. I have maintained a practice in swordplay almost as long as I have in magick, and have spent years exploring it and learning it through a combination of reasoned thought, informed guesses, developed intuition, and plain old blind luck. I was lucky enough for one year to study under a teacher of occult swordplay, though such teachers are exceedingly rare and often unwilling to teach. More often I have sparred with others who shared my curiosity and we have uncovered new ground together. Never have I come across a single written source of factual occult swordplay, even though nearly one in two occultists I have met have said that they would be immensely interested in the art if it existed. Most of them conclude that the lack of literature means that there is no viable tradition that combines the techniques of western magick with the art of the sword. Yet this is not so.

My own training, coming as it does from many sources, is typical of the occult swordsmen I have met in my journeys. Just as magick is a highly personal path, so too is that of occult swordplay. The techniques can be taught and the principles shown, but ultimately you must make it a part of yourself as a personal expression of the art. No amount of book knowledge will ever substitute for the innovation and insight of true practice. It has been my goal for some time to write a primer for many of the techniques of occult swordplay that I have been taught or uncovered, yet I never wrote because I could not perfect them. One day I realized that they can never be perfected; I will always be learning, there will always be more to do. I have successfully taught them to others, so I must be doing something right. And so I now write down my thoughts so that others might play with what I have learned and uncover more for themselves. I will assume that that student of occult swordplay has invested the time to master both arts independently and instead devote my time to writing of occult swordplay itself. Those who have not gained skill in magick should take up any form of that art that interests them, and those who have not used a sword should either find a medieval historical re-enactment group through a Renaissance Fair guild or the Society for Creative Anachronism, or join a respected dojo that teaches Japanese Kendo and laido. The techniques of occult swordplay are wonderful practice while learning both arts, but cannot be mastered until you have achieved reasonable levels of skill in each art independently.

### Enjoining the Battle

*Those steel grey eyes. The eyes of his teacher, his mentor, his opponent. It seemed impossible that he could have learned enough to defeat this man who had taught him everything he knew. Yet that wasn't so; he had been taught, yes, but taught to find his own path, his own techniques, his own form of the art. He drew in the power of Mars and of Water simultaneously, seemingly dissimilar forces that together in Michael evoked the fiercest yet most fluid action. The invocation filled his being, shaping his body in a deep-seated crab stance with his sword above his head, edge up with point down and toward his opponent's knees, a stance which the master had never seen, never taught. His own path. His own innovation. With wide steps he circled to the right seeking an opening in which to strike, yet something felt odd—his deeper intuition spoke as impressions as he realized the master drew in a force he had not felt before, pressing it by will alone into the blade until his intuition sensed that sword not as steel, but as a glowing and crackling column of force. Grounding out sudden panic in a single breath, Michael pulled back to parry as the swift attacks descended, each one*

*blocked perfectly, wide swift steps carrying him backwards as he retreated under the onslaught of the glowing blade. The echo of steel on steel filled the shallow valley of the silent field.*

The fiction of occult swordplay is as far removed from reality as fictional magick is from true occult tradition. Both are very rarely flashy or impressive, and if you didn't know better you'd say nothing had happened at all. Yet after studying it for some time, you begin to see where many of the stories, myths, and legends draw their roots. The stories of intelligent swords that show their owners how to use them from the tradition of awakened blades, of swords that glow with force from the auras that a blade can cast for many reasons, of swords that give vitality to their wielders or take it away from a variety of vampiric enchantments, of men possessed by gods when wielding a weapon from moving invocations. Most of the "sword and sorcery" fiction that you read draws from the exaggeration of a true skill, or can be stripped of its flash to hint at the possibility of a feasible new technique. Likewise, many of the warnings you see in fiction are only exaggerations of the true dangers to the art. With a little bit of common sense, respect for the blade, and a touch of honor, all of the perils can be avoided.

When you start practicing occult swordplay, it's usually a good idea to let your practice opponents know. Some people want an "honest fight" of physical skill against physical skill, which is a valid desire. While most of the techniques of occult swordplay are internal to the self or the sword, some of them are based on the manipulation of the opponent through magick. Many people have moral and philosophical objections to such acts, and it's wiser to let someone know about it early instead of them figuring it out later and get upset at you. Some people are also incapable of defending themselves magickally against some of the invasive techniques, and unless you have copious amounts of experience you can easily cause damage to other person that they are not capable of fixing. For example, ordering a summoned demon against the opponent while you press the attack works wonderfully against a true foe, but might not be the brightest thing to do to a sparring partner who lacks the skill to repair or repulse any damage that might be done. Even if they do have the skill, they may not want to get themselves into the situation where they have to use that skill. Using the more invasive, offensive, and vicious techniques of occult swordplay does give you an edge in combat, but it's also the quickest way to ensure that potential sparring partners refuse to fight you at all. If you want to practice those types of tricks, find other magicians who are also curious and practice using them on each other. Remember that the primary purpose of occult swordplay is the swordplay; the occult aspects are simply tools to give you an advantage in combat, they aren't the be all and end all of the art. A sword will dispatch or defend you more readily than magick will—your swordplay will direct how you use your magick, not vice versa.

Most magick takes time. Even the simplest sigil-casting techniques of magick require the time to create a sigil and empower it. With practice this can be done in under a minute, but the speed of a combat situation will not allow you the luxury of taking your time to create a magickal effect. You must instead learn to speed up your magick, to make it nearly instantaneous. In order to do this, you must already be intimately familiar with how to create a magickal effect using the "slow" traditional means; you must know in great detail exactly how it feels to cause a magickal effect, because it is this feel that you will latch onto, discarding all of the props, and using the effect by itself. The most useful way to speed up these magickal effects is to learn to do them in a single breath. Because most occult swordplay techniques used in combat deal with the moving of energy, you can simplify most effects to a pushing away of energy that you combine with an outward breath, and a drawing in of energy that you combine with an inward breath. Other methods can be used (and will be discussed later), but the action of breathing seems to be a quick, reliable, easily taught, and simple to use anchor for implementing nearly any magickal effect in combat. Meditate on this.

## **The Basics of Occult Swordplay**

*And then he felt it—blade met flesh, and he was left with the slightest of cuts on the thigh he had failed to defend. The control of the master was exact; he could have taken an entire leg had the goal of the battle been to kill. Almost no blood at all came from the wound, but already he felt the energy the master had left behind by the strike; it worked into the muscle, the feel of fatigue, bruise, and stiffness coming on already. With a single breath he banished the energy, yet some remained, an anchor the master could use for further magickal attacks. The master had retreated to observe him, the goal of the first attack met.*

Anyone with minor skill in both magick and swordplay can learn the simplest techniques to this art. These are the most common techniques, the most practical, as well as the most unimpressive. They tend to be subtle, simple techniques whose sole purpose is to provide you with a slight edge in a swordfight and to prevent others from using similar techniques against you. They're non-invasive, usually affecting just yourself and not your opponent, and because of this it's often very hard to tell when someone is using them at all. You can watch an entire bout and not have any clue that the victor won through the subtle use of applied magick; oftentimes even the opponent will have been unaware of the use of magick unless it was specifically turned against him. This

camouflage is perhaps one of the greatest strengths of true occult swordplay. Those of insecure nature tend to go around advertising the fact that they know how to use magick with their sword, thus putting their opponents on guard. The best occult swordsmen have learned the value of the fourth line of the hermetic maxim, "to remain silent", and keep their bag of tricks guarded so as to surprise the opponent in combat. Learn as many of these as you can, master those you find most useful, and always keep the other person guessing as to what you're capable of.

### ***Ground & Center***

This is the simplest of all techniques of occult swordplay, and gives you such an edge over those that cannot master it that it has become an integral part of most sword arts even if they are devoid of any other magick. In the sword arts it is seen as the inner peace, calm, and poise that a swordsman strives towards in combat. From that peaceful place, he is able to control fear, anger, worry, and all other emotions that might otherwise erode his skill in a fight. Magicians often seek this same place through the techniques of grounding and centering, bringing their minds to a calm position in the present that feels fear, anger, worry, and other emotions as impressions that do not alter his thoughts or his actions unless he chooses them to. The occult arts and sword arts alike both familiarize the student with this state through meditation. You should already know the exact mental state of which I speak; if you don't, then you need to work on your magick some more or you'll never have any hope of learning occult swordplay.

It's wise to ground and center before combat, though you may not always have much time. It should be quick and instantaneous—banishing rituals and other rubric used by magicians to achieve the state must be discarded. Banishing rituals, meditation, and deep-breathing exercises will show you the state towards which to strive, but you must be able to instantly enter it once familiar with it; it should become reflex. If you find yourself panicked or disoriented or wildly emotional in combat, you should be able to immediately re-enter that state with a single thought and regain your composure. If you have trouble in grounding and centering, simple breathing exercises can help. As you breath, use your breath to push your energy into the ground, letting any unwanted thoughts and emotions ground out with the act. Once you can successfully do this with a single breath, or better yet with a single thought, you will have mastered this technique. Even though it's simple, and even if you're a good magician, don't be surprised if it takes a while to master this one. You'll have plenty of opportunity to practice.

### ***The Elements***

The style of occult swordplay I was taught drew heavily from the structure of ceremonial magick, and thus placed a great emphasis on the four elements: Fire, Air, Water, and Earth. Each of the elements represents a different style of combat, and though the forces used are the same, their manifestations within each individual is different. You can get a good feel for the style of each element by standing in a neutral position, ready for combat, and invoking the element you wish, letting it control your posture. As you invoke it, where do your hands feel like they should be? How should you hold the sword? How do you stand? How deep is your stance? How much to you turn towards or away from your opponent? How do you place your hips and shoulders? Where are your arms? Once you have this posture, try practice strikes against imaginary foes and see how that element feels. Block or evade imaginary attacks; get a true feel for the motion of the element expressing itself through your swordplay.

Once you have a feel for each element, combine them as primary and secondary. If you like the feel of Fire, try invoking Air of Fire, Earth of Fire, Water of Fire, and lastly Fire of Fire. These combinations create a total of sixteen different styles of combat that work excellently for those who have a fondness for elemental work. If you aren't as fond of elemental magick this may not work for you but still remains an interesting exercise to undertake. Invocation in combat is not quite the same as it is in a temple space—once again, it is quick, instantaneous, reflexive. You should practice elemental magick until you are familiar enough with these states to instantly enter them in a swordfight. You should also remain flexible enough to change between them instantly. When pressing a violent series of attacks as Fire of Fire, it might be useful when the tide turns to switch to a more defensive Water of Fire or perhaps Water of Earth.

If you watch anyone fighting (whether they are an occult swordsman or not), you can easily classify the style of fighting they are using into one of these sixteen forms, which can be useful information in deciding a form to use to counter it. Fire tends to be quick, agile, and aggressive with several rapid strikes coming in a flurry. It can change direction at a moment's notice, and very rarely remains still. Fire is unpredictable, rash, and violent. Air is more graceful, the strokes of the sword often seeming to drift from one stroke to the next in fluid arcs. It can blow forward or back with equal ease, and tends to either parry blows as you retreat or simply not be there when the opponent's sword strikes. The footwork is almost like a dance. Air is thoughtful, intellectual, and observant. Water can only be described as fluid. It is heavy, flowing as it strikes, yet it does not flow as lightly as Air, being heavier and more firm in its blows, like the crashing of waves. It is pensive, calm, and compassionate. Earth is simply solid. It makes use of force over finesse, often overpowering an opponent or meeting them with equal force. It rarely retreats, but it also rarely advances, being firm-rooted and heavily defensive. When it moves, it is with firm and

calculated steps. Most traditional sword-art schools (especially those of the West) teach "earthy" techniques first. Earth is firm, defensive, and forceful.

All of these can be combined, so that while taking the heavily defensive position of Earth you use Fire of Earth to deliver rapid, pummeling attacks to keep the opponent at bay as opposed to the slower, stronger strokes that Earth of Earth would use. Earth of Fire, on the other hand, tends to press an attack relentlessly with strong, forceful blows that seek to overwhelm and overpower the opponent. Fire of Air (my personal favorite) tends to dance away from the opponent as he attacks, then presses inward without warning to deliver several rapid attacks before retreating again. Water of Air and Air of Water look almost like kata as the practitioner flows from motion to motion without effort. All sixteen combinations are viable, and well worth exploring. Elementalism in occult swordplay isn't so much an actual occult technique as it is an occult mechanism that allows you to teach yourself a diverse repertoire of offensive and defensive strategies, especially if you can successfully invoke the forces to see how they work through you. You will probably find that you tend to favor a handful of them, but familiarity with the others will serve you well under changing battle conditions.

### ***The Blade as Bodily Extension***

If you have progressed enough in your occult skills to at least sense if not actually see auras, you may notice something odd when a person bears a sword in their hands that they intend to use—the aura of that person actually begins to extend up the blade. This is not as pronounced in those who do not intend to or know how to use a sword, is more pronounced if the person is bearing their own blade (regardless of whether it's just a bamboo shinai or live steel), and is always stronger if the person is exceedingly well-skilled in his occult or sword skills to a point approaching mastery. This phenomenon gives rise to some interesting mechanics in occult swordplay, for with the aura of the blade involved, the combat may take place not only on a physical level but on an aethyric one as well. The aura of a blade in the hands of a skilled magician forms the basis for most techniques of occult swordplay; when your blade strikes the opponent's sword or the opponent himself, that contact point can be used to initiate dozens of different magickal techniques. The blade becomes an extension of the body and the cunning magician will realize that he can utilize it as he would any other part of his body. Through breathing exercises, force of will, and other occult techniques energy of any sort can be run into a sword, drawn out of it, circulated through it, transmitted from it, or forced into it.

Oftentimes in occult ritual, bodily contact with the person to be affected can help the magician to be more effective in the achievement of his goals; for example, a healing ritual consisting of "channeling energy" through themselves and into another person, or of passing an invocation to another person by having them breathe in the air that you breathe out. Everyone has a different explanation for the mechanism that makes such contact useful in magick, suffice it to say that it often does. This contact is often extended in magick through the use of a ritual wand or staff, or other occult tools. There is absolutely no reason why the sword cannot be used in the same manner during combat.

This dynamic in occult swordplay forms the core around which most of the basic techniques actually work. Careful thought on this will yield many possible applications, the most practical of which is the ability to impress energy into an opponent's aura when you strike him.

### ***Impressing and Removing a Strike***

When you are struck with a sword, the strike occurs not only on a physical level, but on an aethyric level as well. Because the sword is an extension of your opponents body and of his will, a successful strike will transfer energy from the sword into the wound. This foreign energy can cause greater bruising, muscle fatigue, and other effects. This occurs even with people who are untrained and unaware of the occult arts. The magician can amplify this effect, "impressing" energy into his opponent with the strike to cause greater pain, fatigue, bruising, etc. He may also remove this energy when struck himself to prevent these effects.

Different occult arts teach different methods of manipulating or moving "energies", so you should use whatever method you are familiar with to assist in this technique. Once again, swordplay will not allow you the luxury of time to prepare elaborate visualizations or power words, so combining the intent with your breathing is one of the simplest and most effective methods of both impressing and removing a strike. Whenever you strike with the sword, it should be with an outward breath. With practice, you can use this outward breath to push energy down your sword and into your opponent's aura. If you have ever witnessed master martial artist use a Chi strike that seemed to have little physical effect but left a person in great pain with massive bruising and muscle damage, you have witnessed a similar effect to what we are aiming to achieve with the sword. Once you are good enough, you can even use the energy left behind as a sympathetic link to create further magickal effects, though exactly what effects those are will be best left to your own skill level and ingenuity.

The ability to remove a strike is the logical counterpart to the ability to impress a strike—there's no point in knowing how to use a technique unless you know how to reverse it. The magickal axiom of "Don't call up what you can't put down" can be readily applied to this situation. Because you'll probably be practicing with others and learning as you go, it would be nice to remove a strike from yourself and from your friends so as to prevent the full effect of an impressed strike, which can last for days or weeks when executed properly. In combat, this can be done by pushing the energy away from you or grounding it out with an exhale. Push your own energy back into the place where the strike occurred, thus forcing the other energy out of the wound. If combat has ended and you suffered any particularly hard blows, I have been rather fond of energetic bodywork techniques to remove leftover energy. The simplest of these is to sweep over the wound with your hand, "scooping up" or "sweeping away" or "pulling out" the foreign energy as you inhale—transfer the foreign energy from the wound to your hand—and with a violent exhale, shake the energy off of your hand and away from you, as if you were trying to flick off water. Repeat this as many times as you feel necessary.

You will find that even doing this to wounds that weren't purposely impressed will cut down on the amount of bruising, muscle fatigue, and pain you receive from blows with practice swords. If you have been unfortunate enough to receive a blow with a real sword, it can speed the time it takes the wound to heal.

### ***Pain Control***

This technique is not so much an actual magickal skill as it is a trained physical one, but the techniques of occult training can help in developing it. Pain is an unavoidable aspect of swordplay, for no matter how good you are, sooner or later you're going to get hit. Even if it's just with bamboo practice swords, a solid hit to the knuckles or an accidental jab to the neck really hurts.

Pain comes in two types—the initial sharp pain that lets you know you have been hurt, and then the dull pain that continues to remind you that you are hurt. It takes a great deal of practice to learn to overcome sharp pain, but since it lasts only a moment the beginning occult swordsman can accept it for now and move on towards overcoming the dull secondary pain, which is his true enemy. A great majority of people have a hypochondriacal reaction to pain, clutching the wounded area and making a bigger deal out of it than it really is. Usually this is because of a trained psychological dysfunction that acting wounded will gain attention from those around you, the degree to which it is acted out depending upon the individual. Another reaction one often sees is that when hurt someone will draw inward, shunning contact from others. Neither of these reactions are appropriate during swordplay—giving in to pain will give your opponent an advantage you don't need to give him. Your reaction to pain needs to become one of acknowledgment and self-confidence: admit to yourself that you have been hurt, but remind yourself that you are strong enough to go on. There's not really that much you can do to stop the pain at the moment anyway—there will be time to lick your wounds later, when combat is over.

This can play to your advantage as psychological warfare during combat. An opponent that strikes you and sees you react to great pain will gain confidence and use any advantage he sees in your diminished reaction. However, if he strikes you hard only to find that he apparently hasn't hurt you, he may lose confidence and realize that he is fighting an opponent that will be difficult to defeat. And truth be told, once you can develop this reaction to pain, you *will* be harder to defeat.

Meditation on the nature of pain and taking careful note of your reaction to it are the best ways to develop the proper metal attitude. As to actually controlling pain itself, breathing is once again a very useful technique. Using slow, firm, deep breaths will often cause pain to subside, even without using occult techniques. By using the skills you are learning to move energy through your body and sword, you can either breath the pain out or ground it out. With more practice and greater skill, you can actually transmit that pain to your opponent through contact between swords, through a successful attack, through the use of servitors, or through force of will alone—but we'll get to all of that soon enough.

### ***Grounding the Opponent's Sword***

This is one of those tricks that is so subtle that most people don't realize that it's being used, yet can be so efficient that used alone it can be the deciding factor in the outcome of a battle. It does, however, require slightly more skill on the part of the swordsman, as it is not a thing that you simply do and then forget about it, but a task that must be continually concentrated upon throughout the course of battle.

Remember when we mentioned that most people will project their aura up the blade of a sword, and that this can be used as the basis of several techniques? Most of those techniques involve transmitting energy through the blade, though logically you should be able to do the opposite as well—enter the ability to ground out your opponent's sword. Instead of projecting energy into your sword, you draw energy into it from the contact point you have with your opponent's blade. This will only work if your opponent fights at a range and with a style that

either allows constant or frequent contact between swords. This might make it a little more difficult, because you will need to be concentrating upon this technique at the same time that you are rapidly attacking and parrying.

Most opponents will continue to send energy into their blade when it is being drained off. If they continue to let this happen (and perhaps 75% of the people you fight will) it will become tiresome after a while, and they will slow down, losing reaction time, strength, and agility. His mind sometimes begins to slow as well, and he makes more mistakes. This won't work on all people—some people, either through intuition, high willpower, or magickal training, seem to sense that their blade is being drained, and will not continue to invest their energy in the blade. It also usually won't work if the opponent knows you're trying to do it, even if they have no magickal training. This technique works best when your opponent doesn't know your doing anything at all.

When you do this, some people get the bright idea that they can become a psychic vampire and use that energy for themselves. While I have seen this done by a few skilled individuals, most people are so unskilled in psychic vampirism that all they do is get a headache. I've also seen people unable to process that energy after drawing it in pick up the mannerisms, speech patterns, and habits of the person they drew from. Leave psychic vampirism to those who've dedicated the time to it that it takes to master it—after all, with this technique we're talking about drawing off the better portion of your opponent's energy, not simply a small light psychic snack. It is usually easier to just take the energy from the opponent and ground it out, as this requires no real skill in energy manipulation on your part, lets you ground out massive amounts of energy at little expenditure, and you never have to worry about the earth becoming satiated and refusing to take the energy because it has a full stomach.

Some people may object to the morals of this technique, and I leave it up to the individual to decide any such ethics for themself. I certainly don't think you should drain an unsuspecting practice partner dry, but that's partly because drained sparring partners aren't much fun to practice with after you've successfully completed this technique. I highly recommend learning the techniques from the "Licking your Wounds" section so that you can patch up any damage to friends or self in practice with this one.

### ***Projecting into the Opponent's Sword***

Not only can you ground out the opponent's sword, you can also project energy into it. This is a bit riskier, as you are giving the opponent energy of your own, and may end up draining yourself unless you have a source to draw from (walking invocations discussed later on work excellently for this). By projecting your own energy into the opponent's sword, you can do several things. The easiest of these to do is to cause your opponent to tense up, which is often the first thing that will happen when you successfully are able to project energy into his sword. because his aura interacts with his sword, the energy you project into the sword almost always begins to interact with his own aura. This foreign energy will often cause an opponent to tense up, and a person who fights when tensed instead of relaxed tends to make more mistakes, thus creating more openings in which you can successfully strike him.

If you can continue to project massive amounts of energy into him, it will sometimes confuse his senses. Practice opponents on which I have tried this have reported a buzzing in the ears, a slight blurring of vision, distortion in their hearing, slight disorientation, and an unpleasant tingling of the skin. To achieve effects of this level, though, you must both be able to get past any magickal defenses the person may have erected, and to project far more energy that you yourself can muster—which means using it in concert with energetic bodywork or walking invocations discussed elsewhere.

I have also witnessed a few people who have been able to project energy into an opponent's sword in an attempt to control his sword through binding it to their own. I am still uncertain as to the true effectiveness of this technique, and as to how it works, but have witnessed its effectiveness in those who have taken the time to practice it. Usually it's just enough of a control over the other sword to slow it so that you can parry in time, or to move it just the fraction of an inch needed to create an opening. This technique seems to give sporadic results, depending on many factors including the mental state and magickal skill of the two combatants, any magickal defenses the opponent may have, whether or not the swords being used are awakened swords (discussed later), the skill of the combatants both with the sword and with magick, and plain old blind luck. Feel free to practice this one, but I don't recommend that you rely on it.

### ***Magickal Shielding***

The savvy occult swordsman will have realized at this point that though most opponents will not be skilled in occult arts, it can still be useful to defend oneself magickally. The masters of traditional swordplay will exhibit magickal effects without consciously thinking of them, and even the skilled neophyte of traditional sword arts can surprise you with his magickal skill when he successfully executes an unconscious magickal attack of his own. The importance of magickally shielding against other occult swordsmen need not even be discussed.

How you choose to “shield” yourself will depend upon your personal preference and the techniques of the tradition(s) of magick that you have chosen to study. Most of these techniques are quite satisfactory, but when applied to occult swordplay there are a few things that must be kept in mind.

Firstly, we must consider the goals of our magickal defense. Not only do we wish to protect our physical and spiritual bodies, we must also give consideration to our mental state, for many magickal attacks aim solely to confuse the opponent’s faculties. Therefore we will be defending ourselves on three levels. Of the physical level, it is best to simply rely on your sword, and on the ability to remove energy from a successful strike.

The spiritual level is the closest to the standard magickal shielding that you will be familiar with: simply seek to protect yourself from harm by psychic attack, malicious spirits, and similar nasties you’ve probably heard warnings about when you were taught your occult skills. The only alteration that we may wish to make is in what we define as the border of our shielding. Most people in western cultures define or picture the “borders” of their magickal shield as being anywhere between one to three feet out from their skin, typically an egg or cocoon shape. Because swordplay requires this distance to be crossed constantly, you may wish to retrain yourself to see, picture, or project your shields much closer to the skin, like a tight-fitting suit of armor. You can also use this to your advantage when you fight an opponent whose magickal shield is extended from his body—use your sword as an extension, and with it inside your opponent’s shield you can bypass his magickal defense to launch myriad magickal attacks.

Lastly, you must give consideration to your mental defenses. Because many magickal attacks in occult swordplay are meant to confuse you, you may wish to also erect a separate magickal shield around your mind alone, whose sole purpose is to defend against things that would otherwise confuse, dull, or slow your senses and thus your reaction time. Place this shield around the part of your body you consider the seat of your mental faculties, which, for most people of western culture, will be the brain.

Your best practice will be allow a sparring partner to execute a magickal attack both when you have your shield “down” and then when you have them “up”. This will give you the advantage of knowing whether or not your shields are effective at all, and if so to what level they help you. If you find them unsatisfactory, try a different magickal technique and see if it works better. If they still fall short, put more practice in—likely you have had little use for magickal shielding, and simply need practice at it. You’ll get plenty of practice in occult swordplay.

### ***Moving Invocations***

The ability to invoke the force of your choice while swordfighting is one of the most useful, effective, and devastating abilities that the occult swordsman can learn to utilize. As with all other magickal skills applied to swordplay, you must spend enough time practicing invocation for it to become habitual, something that you can execute in a single moment with a single breath. This takes much practice, but once you can accomplish it consistently and effectively, an entirely new world of possibilities opens up before you. By using invocation, the occult swordsman is able to supplement his skills and powers where they are lacking.

Those trained in ceremonial magick may find great use for the planetary forces: I cannot count the number of Mars invocations I have witnessed, closely followed by Solar, Lunar, Mercurial, and Saturnine invocations. Gods can be quite useful, as they represent a philosophy of life as well as certain courses of action. These invocations can act as a source of courage when defeat seems imminent, a source of inspiration in the creation of new techniques, and as a familiar ally in times of strife. Developing a relationship with the god or gods of your choice in your everyday life often means a stronger and more useful invocation during battle, hence the tendency of many occult swordsmen to adopt some sort of patron deity such as Aries, Thor, Cernunnos, Marduk, or something similarly martial that represents the philosophies and courses-of-action that the swordsman holds dear.

One of its greatest uses of this skill is the invocation of a “raw force” that you see as the source of power in the universe: Chaos, Order, Eternity, Void, Life force, etc. This can be a source of power to fuel magickal effects that are normally beyond your ken. Your body can only provide so much energy by itself; for certain magicks, you must open yourself as a conduit for these energies, allowing them to flow through you as you shape them.

This skill will be most effective to you if you can learn to invoke multiple forces simultaneously. We saw this earlier with the elemental model where you invoke two elements with one more dominant with the other, and dual invocation is not so great a step from this. In this way, you can have the benefit of the power of an element, the courage (or other attribute) of a god, the approach of a planet, and the sheer power of a raw force available to you simultaneously. It also allows you to temper an invocation in a certain direction. Invoking Water and Mars, for example, will yield a much less violent but equally aggressive force as invoking Fire and Mars. Experiment to find the best combinations for yourself.

### ***Banishing***

Banishing is so basic to magickal practice that not much need be said of it. Its use in occult swordplay is the same as it is in magick: to cast away unwanted influences in your environment. In occult swordplay, its most prominent use is as an active defense against malicious entities sent your direction. It can also be used to dissolve other magickal attacks whose aim is to penetrate your magickal defenses in order to affect you.

Because very few occult swordsmen possess the skill to utilize such attacks at a skill level that will threaten your normal defenses, banishing is often just a supplementary skill that you will rarely need to use in combat. Its main use often comes in *after* the fight has been finished: if there were any magickal attacks that were triggered during combat, they may still be waiting for an opening, and when you relax your magickal defenses after the fight they often find the opening they needed. Just as with most magickal practices, it's often a wise idea to habitually execute a simple banishing after a fight.

In order to utilize banishing during actual combat, you must learn to adapt it to combat situations as you have other magickal skills. Any good magician should have progressed far enough and be familiar enough with the feel of a banishing to be able to discard the ritual trappings of and simply will it to happen with a thought or a breath. If you haven't progressed that far in your magick, now is the time to learn how. Chances are you won't need to banish during combat often, but when you do need it, you'll be very glad that you took the time to practice.

### **He May Teach, But He May Make Severe Trials**

I practice what I preach. Every technique I have written about is something with which I have great amounts of personal experience, and have successfully been able to utilize in actual combat. This guide can only begin to show the depth contained within the tradition of occult swordplay, and will always fall short of personal experience or actual time spent practicing with a person who has spent years using these skills. I do openly teach occult swordplay, but it is with the warning that I am a master neither of swordplay nor of magick; I am forever learning. I teach anyone willing to travel to see me, whether just once or on a regular basis, as long as I feel that the teaching is fruitful—basically, I ask that you don't waste my time. I strive to constantly be active in an informal freeform group that meets weekly in some public park near where I live. I tend to prefer Northern California as my home of choice, traveling between the Wine Country, the Sacramento Valley, and the East Bay regularly. Feel free to contact me via e-mail as [fenwick@chaosmatrix.com](mailto:fenwick@chaosmatrix.com) if you are interested in a meeting of blades. Unfortunately I do not have the time, patience, or skill to teach via e-mail, but I do try to answer any questions that I may have raised and am always interested in hearing about new techniques that you may know or have uncovered in your own work. Those interested in more information or further resources should visit the House Dreamblade occult swordplay website at <http://www.chaosmatrix.com/dreamblade/>