

The Newsletter of the
European Society for
the Study of Western
Esotericism

ESSWE Newsletter

Summer 2018
Volume 9, Number 1

Words from the Editor

– *Chris Giudice*



Welcome to the Summer 2018 Newsletter: this issue sees the presence of some of the most popular sections, such as scholar interviews and not two, but four member publications. The field of Western esotericism seems to be blooming, not only in regard to the main societies' ESSWE and ASE conferences and publications, but local regional networks' activities, such as CEENASWE and INASWE appear to be on the rise. The EASR in Bern and the CESNUR conference in Taiwan are taking place as I write this editorial:

In this Newsletter

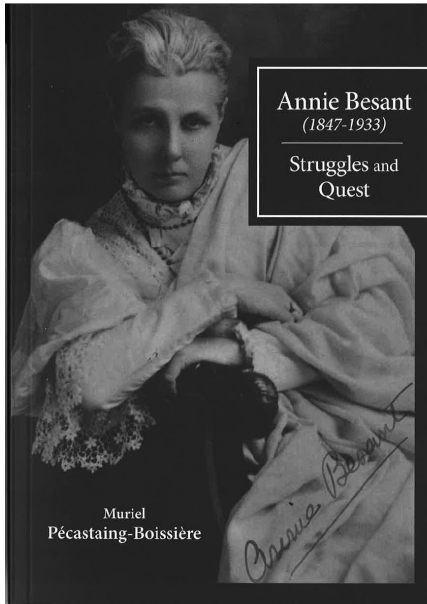
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I would be delighted if any of our members could provide the Newsletter with a brief report of these and other conferences, accompanied, if possible, by pictures related to the events. Member contribution is a vital aspect of the Newsletter, and is highly appreciated for those events that your humble editor will not be able to visit. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you think that something should be added to the next issue or if you are organising an event that could be of interest to the membership of ESSWE. The next issue of the newsletter will be sent out in December. Wishing all ESSWE members a productive and (moderately) stress free summer!

New publications by ESSWE members

Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière

***Annie Besant (1847-1933): Struggles and Quest*
(London: Theosophical Publishing House,
2018)**



As a Senior Lecturer in Victorian studies at Sorbonne University, I have my students work on Annie Besant's socialist fight alongside the match-girls on strike in the East End of London in 1888. Focusing on Victorian women in my seminars, I often dwell on Besant's pioneering struggle in the 1870s for the right to information on birth control. Meanwhile, when preparing classes on

the British Empire, I realized that Besant's election as President of the Indian National Congress in 1917 had been almost completely forgotten in the West.

But my interest in Besant intensified when I refocused my academic research on the underestimated links between the late-Victorian socialist movement, the contemporaneous fight for women's rights and the spiritual and occult revival. I then began to work on understanding Besant's personal evolution. I discovered that in her main two biographies — the first by Arthur Nethercot in 1960-1963, the second by Anne Taylor in 1992 — her conversion to Theosophy was described as yet another fracture in a life these two authors thought to be fragmented to the point of incoherence. Neither managed to establish a link between Besant's freethinking, socialism, feminism, criticism of the Empire, and conversion to Theosophy. To make matters worse, both works suffer from prejudices regarding Theosophy that are so strong as to impair their reflective abilities.

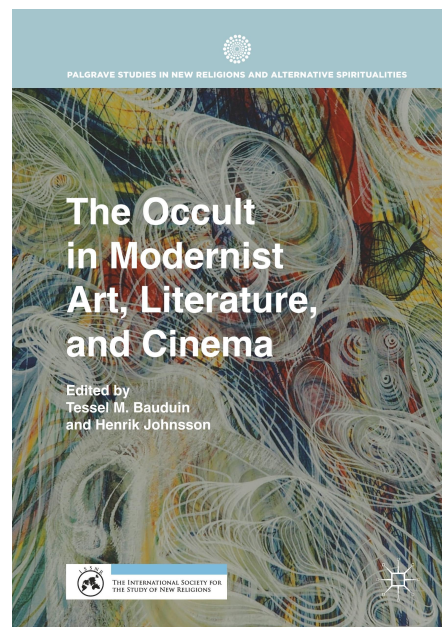
I therefore decided to write a new biography of Besant. My purpose was not to so much to uncover still potentially unexplored archives, but rather to make Besant better understood by the general public. The logic behind her evolution, leading from an early religious crisis to secularism, feminism, socialism, Theosophy, and Indian nationalism, had barely been addressed, so I hoped to demonstrate the underlying continuities in her long life of struggles. To do so, I chose to recall and to explain Besant's choices and actions in their moral, social, and spiritual contexts, while relying primarily on her own writings.

My biography of Besant was first published in French (*Annie Besant : la lutte et la quête*. Paris: Editions Adyar, 2015), then in German (*Annie Besant: Weisheit und Wissenschaft*. Munich: Aquamarine Verlag, 2017). My English translation of the biography was published thanks to the Foundation for Theosophical Studies, who decided to revive the Theosophical Publishing House (London), making this book the first to be released under the new imprint.♦

Tessel M. Bauduin & Henrik Johnsson (eds.)

The Occult in Modernist Art, Literature and Cinema

(London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)



The editors intend this anthology as a contribution to our understanding of the relationship between occultism and modernism in the arts, a research topic that can best be designated as "occult modernism". A significant number of modernist authors and artists were fascinated by the occult movements of their day, a fascination that helped to inspire the art, film and fiction of such diverse proponents of

modernist and avant-garde aesthetics as W.B. Yeats, Rainer Maria Rilke, André Breton, Piet Mondrian, and August Strindberg, just to name a few. Academic research into the interactions of occultism and modernism that takes both subjects and their interrelation seriously is, however, a relatively recent development, the interactions between occultism and modernism often having been downplayed or ignored altogether by earlier scholarship.

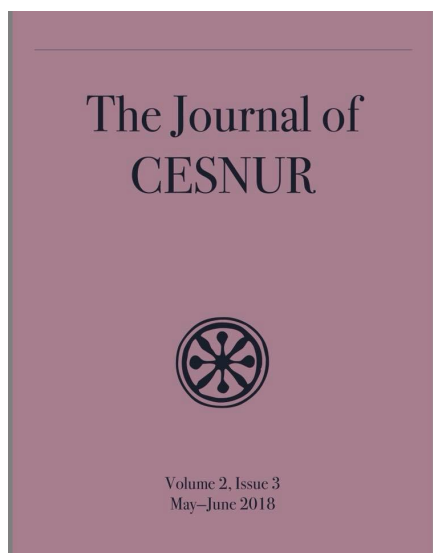
The research topic has specific requirements which have not yet been taken fully into account, and which the anthology seeks to address. The topic is intermedial, reflecting the variety of modernist forms of expression, with occult modernism manifesting in fiction, art and cinema, as predominant art forms. The topic is multilingual, reflecting the pan-European successes of both modernism and occultism. The topic, and specifically its academic study, is and therefore demands to be interdisciplinary, combining the theoretical and methodological foundations of the field of esotericism studies with those of such diverse fields as literary studies, art history, and cinema studies.

This anthology advances the current state of the art in research on occult modernism by assembling chapters that approach the topic from an interdisciplinary perspective, with case studies being drawn from the late nineteenth century until today. The anthology includes contributions from scholars working in the fields of literary studies, art history, cinema studies, and esotericism studies/religious studies. The editors hope that this anthology will be followed by other publications, exploring the topic of occult modernism in other media, languages and historical periods more fully. ♦

Massimo Introvigne (ed.)

The Journal of CESNUR 2:3

(Turin: CESNUR, 2018)



This issue of The Journal of CESNUR is devoted to a Ukrainian movement, the Applied Sciences Association, and its founder, Oleg Maltsev.

Paradoxically, scholars of new religious movements became interested in the Association after anti-cultists started denouncing it as a “cult”. Having studied the Association,

however, they concluded it was not a new religious movement but a group, teaching psychology and martial arts with a scientific and technical rather than a religious approach. On the other hand, Maltsev sees a connection between both

psychology and martial arts, and a notion of God and a view of history that include references to what he calls “European Mysticism”. This introduction refers to the notion of “esoteric paradigm”, which has been illustrated elsewhere with the reference that “religion” and “magic” do not exhaust all possible human relations with the sacred or transcendence. It argues that, although Maltsev himself would deny that his teachings are part of “esotericism”, outside observers may

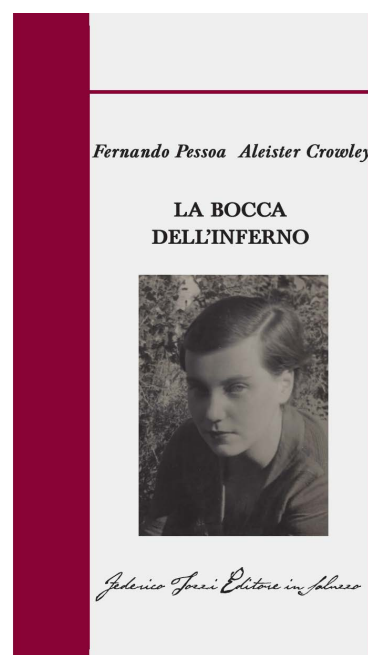
have reasons to conclude that they are included in the larger notion of the “esoteric paradigm”. ♦

Fernando Pessoa & Aleister Crowley

***La Bocca dell’Inferno* - Marco Pasi (ed.)**

(Saluzzo: Federico Tozzi Editore, 2018)

On September 2, 1930, the famous occultist Aleister Crowley and his young lover Hanni Jaeger arrived in Lisbon with the steamer Alcantara. The Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa was waiting for them on the dock. This is how one of the most curious episodes in



the biography of both men began. A few weeks later, Crowley disappeared into thin air after leaving a mysterious farewell letter on a cliff near Cascais, known as the “Boca do Inferno” (the Mouth of Hell). Did Crowley really commit suicide, as the letter seemed to indicate? And what was Pessoa's role in this strange story? This book is an Italian edition of the documents related to the extraordinary encounter between these two

extraordinary men, including the whole of their correspondence and the novel Pessoa wrote about the Crowley’s disappearance. The novel has been discovered only in recent years and includes very interesting elements for understanding the relationship between Crowley and Pessoa, which had an important esoteric dimension. Pessoa’s esoteric oeuvre is still relatively little known outside the circle of connoisseurs, but deserves further scholarly attention both because of the exceptional status that Pessoa has acquired as a towering figure of twentieth-century literature and because of its originality and profundity. ♦

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The Journal of CESNUR

Scholar Interviews

- *Chris Giudice*

In every issue of the *Newsletter* one junior and one senior scholar of Western esotericism are interviewed. They are both asked the same questions.

Professor Carole M. Cusack
Studies in Religion Department
University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

How did you come to be interested in Western Esotericism?

I began studying for a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Sydney in 1981. At that time Western Esotericism as a specific field did not exist in academia, and in fact I completed Biblical Studies in First Year as Religious Studies (which was introduced into the curriculum at Sydney in 1977) did not even offer a First Year unit. My interest in topics that might be termed “esoteric” was facilitated in several ways. First, as a compulsive reader I’d devoured some classic fantasy literature (J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, Michael Moorcock) and a limited amount of science fiction (Robert A. Heinlein, Andre Norton, Louise Lawrence, Isaac Asimov, and Roger Zelazny. A number of Japanese cartoons were shown on Australian television and I spent every Saturday morning watching “Astro Boy,” “The Amazing Three,” “Princess Knight,” “Space Ace,” “Prince Planet” and many others. So, my pop culture exposure to topics like other worlds, paranormal powers, futurology, secret knowledge, and battles to the death between good and evil was extensive and impeccable.



Second, as an undergraduate I was taught by Professor Eric J. Sharpe (who later supervised my Honours and PhD theses) and he was interested in Celtic and Norse mythology, new religious movements (especially TM), and in the 1980s everyone read a lot of Mircea Eliade. He fell from favour almost immediately after his death in 1986 and the publication of the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Macmillan 1987) of which he was general editor. But I recall giving a seminar presentation in 1983 on *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (1954) and being totally gripped by it. Another teacher was Garry W. Trompf (now Professor Emeritus in the department) and he was more openly interested in esoteric phenomena (Jacob Boehme, Joachim of Fiore, millenarian and eschatological groups). Both Sharpe and Trompf loved the writings of mystics and visionaries (Sharpe was interested in Emanuel Swedenborg and medieval texts like *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Julian of Norwich’s *Revelations of Divine Love*, where Trompf tended more to apophaticism, Meister Eckhardt and Orthodox mystics and theologians).

Third and finally, I was born at the right time (1962) to see the retreat of institutional Christianity up close and the gradual mainstreaming of “esoteric” or “occult” ideas. When I got a job in 1996 the first teaching I was given (despite my PhD being on medieval mission) were three units, one on new religions, one on mysticism, and one on contemporary religious trends. By the time my position (originally a 5-year contract) was made permanent in 1998 these topics had become my field, and I was interacting with amazing students who took me further from the “core” of Religious Studies (at that point still the World Religions) than I had dreamed would be possible.

What do you feel are the major challenges for our field at present and in the future?

There are a number of ways to answer this question. The Humanities and Social Sciences have been losing purchase in terms of public funding and student preference for at least fifteen, perhaps twenty, years. Religious Studies departments in Australia and New Zealand are embattled and barely surviving. Scholars researching in Western Esotericism have only a few named departments and programmes, and students desiring to study in the field either craft their own programmes within other departments (Religious Studies, Sociology, History and Literature departments are often well-resourced for esoteric coursework students. Even large Humanities disciplines like Philosophy, Literature and History have dropped in student

estimation, as the neoliberal emphasis on readiness for employment persuades parents and potential students towards accounting, business administration, marketing, internet and communication technologies etc. Student debt has reached unfeasible levels in Anglophone countries (I don't know how often I tell students that if tertiary education can be free for all in certain European countries, it could be in Australia (as it was when I started university), the only reason it isn't is there is no political will (i.e., there is a sector of the voting public that doesn't want students to get free degrees, and governments of all political stripes think it is worth courting the votes of such people ...). This answer is not precisely about Western Esotericism, but pressure to cut Humanities departments and push curricula online affect all study areas.

What is your most fun memory so far from your time in the field?

There are so many great memories, but I'd like to give credit to my friend and colleague Associate Professor Helen Farley (University of Southern Queensland), who developed the series of conferences called "Alternative Expressions of the Numinous" at University of Queensland when she was still a postgraduate student. These created an academic forum for the investigation of the weird and the fringe. It was at the third such gathering in 2008 that I gave my first paper on Discordianism, which was well-received and directly led to the book proposal for *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith* (Ashgate

2010) which is certainly my most fun publication to date (that is, the one that I enjoyed writing the most).

What are your interests apart from Western Esotericism?

I work in new religious movements, invented religions, medieval religion (Christianity and Paganism), methodology (definitions and models of religion), popular culture, pilgrimage and tourism, and my most sustained esoteric interest has been G. I. Gurdjieff (I'm also interested in Rudolf Steiner but have published only one chapter on Anthroposophy to date). Steiner is something for the future, I hope I'll have the time. But Gurdjieff is pretty compelling and I keep finding reasons to work further on him and the Work tradition.

What are the worst things about having this as your speciality?

A senior colleague once said to me, "You squander your intellectual substance on shit."

What are the best things about having this as your speciality?

I get to read almost exclusively for pleasure and to attend some of the most fringe conferences and symposia, at which my mind is always stretched in every direction, and it's actually my job. How good is that? ♦

***Bernd-Christian Otto, PD Dr. habil.
Max Weber Centre for Cultural and Social
Studies, Erfurt University, Germany***



How did you come to be interested in Western esotericism?

The first esoteric-related memory that comes to my mind is being absolutely thrilled after having read Otfried Preußler's

Krabat in fourth grade, at the age of 10. The out-of-body experiences described therein, as well as the animal transformations at the end of the book (and, of course, the love story) fascinated me and allured the young boy's 'magical thinking' into believing that all this may not be entirely unrealistic. Inspired by this literary initiation into the unusual, and over the course of becoming a young adult, I was (intellectually) attracted to all sorts of extraordinary things, from UFOs to telepathy to telekinesis to yogic flying through transcendental meditation to remote viewing to astrology to chakras to Carlos Castaneda. I also engaged in various meditation and imagination techniques and tried out other mind-related stuff (no magic, though). Yet, all this faded over the course of my progressing adulthood and as soon as my professional career as a scholar of magic began (from my late twenties onwards), I even forgot about many of my earlier esoteric dabblings and fascinations until fairly recently.

What do you feel are the major challenges for our field at present and in the future?

In my view, one of the major challenges is the necessity to institutionalise our field beyond the dependence on third-party money givers or patrons. Even though a significant number of ESSWE-related scholars today have permanent positions in European universities, there are still only few (if any) positions dedicated to our field as such financed by public (i.e. university) funding. Even though our label remains problematic, I do believe that it would be an attractive scenario to have more permanent positions where Western esotericism is recognised as a distinct

field of research that would actually be worth mentioning in the denomination of a position (i.e. where it is not brushed under the carpet of religious studies, history, sociology or any other established discipline). This would not only heighten our scientific credibility (which is still by no means self-evident to many scholars outside of our community), and also slightly improve job perspectives; it would also be an important signal that the study of Western esotericism has advanced to a state where it is recognised as a field of its own by powerful outsiders such as university deciders.

This is not to say that I opt for enhancing the disciplinary formation (and isolation) of our field by creating arbitrary borders to other fields or by trying to be more interesting or special. To the contrary: we should continue to be as multi-disciplinary as possible and aim for all sorts of intellectual and methodological cooperations with scholars from other fields. Yet, there are still many prejudices and stereotypes to overcome, and this may be particularly true when it comes to Germany or German-speaking academia in general, where the battle is not even half-fought, mockeries in the media are still daily fare, and headwinds in academic circles remain common. Thus, I believe that publicly funded permanent positions that promote an interdisciplinary, critical yet unbiased and decidedly non-polemical view on Western esotericism would be an important step forward for our field.

What is your most fun memory so far from your time in the field?

Of course, I like the gatherings of the community, and I have met and made friends with wonderful people who work in our field. I also met a few practising magicians (i.e. informants) with whom I have had fascinating conversations. Yet, I am blessed with research material that is almost always extraordinary, thrilling or in some way fantastic. Thus, I would say that having read through thousands of recipes of 'learned magic' from the last two millennia was the most fun part of my work. Ritual scripts with grandiloquent, preposterous or simply fantastic promises (i.e., ritual goals) continue to amaze me.

What are your interests aside from Western esotericism?

Currently, I am very much into Bikram Yoga, Fitness, and my small daughter (who is four years old). I also like hiking, swimming and good wine. Intellectually, there is not room for much else, even though I am generally interested in things related to the history of religion. For instance, I currently use my "free" time to read (and watch documentaries) about these multitudinous gurus from the 20th and 21st centuries who have often failed so dramatically.

What are the worst things about having this as your speciality?

The worst thing is that I am highly specialised in the sense that hardly anyone outside of our field has the slightest idea of what I am doing, and even if I talk to them for some time, they might still not understand – or only accept that such things are paid for by tax money. Apart from that, I feel quite incompetent in most other, more mundane facets of everyday life and the devotion of one's precious working time to seemingly trivial or marginal things can create quite arduous feelings from time to time.

What are the best things about having this as your speciality?

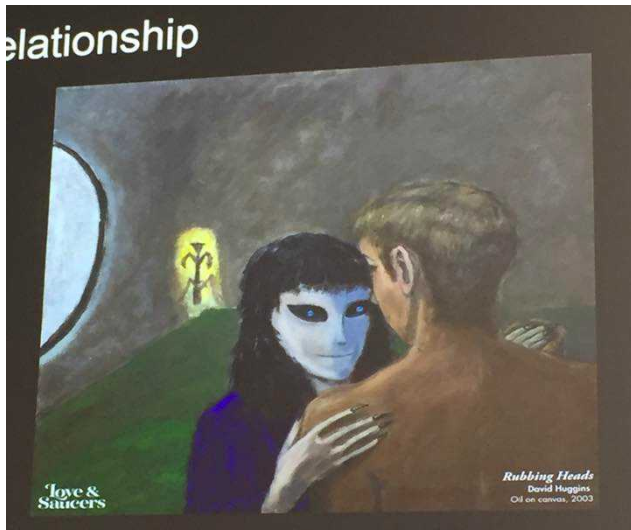
The best thing is that I can do what I love, investigate weird things and make a living out of it. ♦

Conference Reviews

A.S.E. 7 Conference: Eros, Sexuality and Embodiment in Esoteric Traditions Report - by Michele Olzi

This year, the annual conference of American Association for the Study of Esotericism (ASE) took place on 24-27 May, in Houston (TX), at Rice University. Masterfully organized by Prof. Claire Fanger, the conference was a unique event, because both of its topic and participants: ASE's initiative represented the opportunity to gather some of the main experts/specialists of sex magical groups, sexual mysticism, or those investigating the intersection of gender studies and occultism at one main event. Appealing and intriguing insights on several other topics (like on

the Swedenborgian dimension of Angelic love, or an analysis of the literature considering extraterrestrial love) have been offered/delivered during the conference. Day 1, immediately after registration, started with first keynote speaker, Amy Hollywood. Hollywood's lecture offered a magnificent overview of direct and indirect influence of Swedenborgian ideas on the work of American author Henry James. Another character (along with his father, Henry James Sr.) who played a major role in this transmission/influence of the ideas of Swedish philosopher was French writer, Honoré de Balzac and his peculiar novella *Séraphita*.



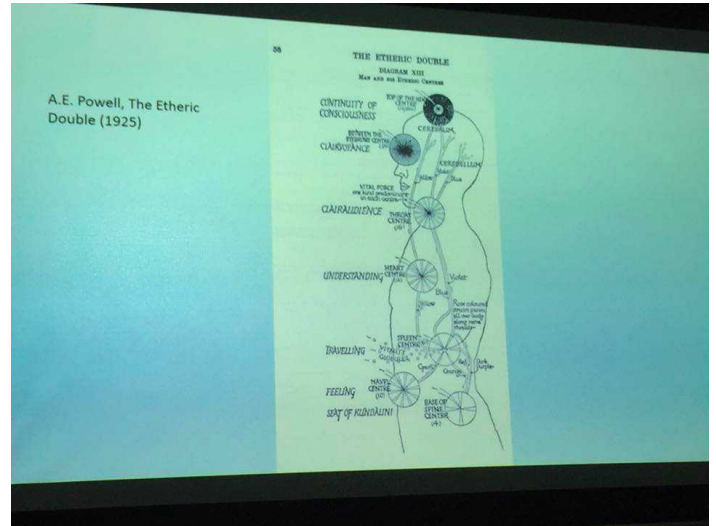
Among many parallel sessions, day 2 introduced the panel on “Extraterrestrial Love, Sex, and Desire” Cathy Gutierrez inaugurated the session by introducing an amazing cross section of American UFO millenarian group, Heaven’s Gate and their beliefs about castration, followed by Christa Shusko who showed how planet Mars and specific romantic and erotic aspects of so-called “Martian encounters” were object of religious interest by several writers (Théodore Flournoy included) and mediums, ending with Elizabeth Lowry and her convincing analysis of contactees’ discursive strategy/alternative storytelling involving (consensual and non-consensual) sexual intercourse with extraterrestrial beings.

Second round of sessions included the panel on “Women, Magic, Power”. This session hosted the historical analysis of specific aspects of Chinese divination and how women’s involvement led to its suppression (along with many other practices, labeled as “irregular worship”) by Confucian system by Geoffrey Redmond, followed by Michele Olzi’s excursus on female role in the doctrine of Russian poet and self-proclaimed Satanist, Maria de Naglowska, and last, but not the least, Gordan Djurdjevic presented a paper on the work independent artist and scholar, renown for its performances and works involving a specific dimension of Thelema and sex magic, Amodali.

Afternoon session provided the local audience at Rice University with one dedicated to “Yoga, Eros, Embodiment”. First presenter was Ben Joffe, whose intervention on contemporary transmission of alleged Karamudra (or sexual yoga practice) techniques attracted and amused the audience, then Keith Kanthu offered a solid reconstruction of how specific “Eastern concepts” were introduced in Western Esotericism through the idea of “Mystic Anatomy” proposed by O.T.O.’s founder, Theodor

Reuss in many publications, in the end, Massimo Introvigne presented an accurate analysis of genesis, creed, and activities of yogic Oneness Center, located in Manhattan, New York. The day ended with the keynote lecture by Massimo Introvigne. Introvigne’s lecture started by retracing back the historical origins of sex magic, by focusing on specific groups and characters. Among the lesser-known esotericists involved, to some extent, with sex magical teachings, the Italian writer Giuliano Kremmerz (pseud. of Ciro Formisano), founder of Fratellanza Terapeutico Magica di Miriam (Therapeutic-Magical

Brotherhood of Miriam). After this introduction, Introvigne focused most his keynote presentation on the contemporary yogic group of MISA. He showed the main historical events characterizing this movement from its foundation, thanks to former plumber Gregorian Bivolaru in Romania till recent developments.



Day 3 started with a cornucopia of sessions and topics hard to follow simultaneously, from gnostic/neo-gnostic themed papers to Esoteric vampirism and Contemporary sex-occult myth. Among the most intriguing and peculiar: Shannon Grimes intervened on the enigmatic female figure of Theosebia in the writings of Third century alchemist, Zosimos of Panopolis; Amy Hale offered a revealing paper on the contemporary witchcraft folklore festival and initiatives in Cornwall; Amodali herself presented on an alternative and innovative approach to Crowley’s Babalon as an artistic, initiatory, and philosophical mean. Della Campion proposed an interesting cross section and powerful insights on The Oneida Community and its sexual politics.

Afternoon’s schedule included a panel on “Esotericism and Health” during which John MacMurphy, proposed a concise and convincing presentation of the notion of “embodiment” in different kabbalistic practices (derived from the writings of both Abraham Abulafia and Isaac Luria) Holly Folk explored American Rosicrucian milieu through the centuries in order to delineate the genesis of the spiritual physiology (not excluding literary production of Paschal Beverly Randolph and the enigmatic American writer Arthur E. Powell).

The day ended with keynote lecture of Arthur Versluis. Versluis in his lecture stressed the importance ‘outside’ its field of study. According to Versluis, the chance to debate about the notion

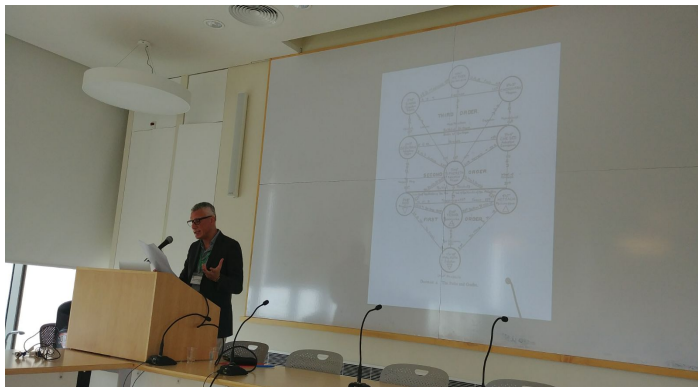
Eros in such circumstances (i.e. at Rice University, exemplary institution in the studies in Esotericism and Parapsychology), should not only represent the opportunity to discuss about the future of the Esotericism in a limited context, but also to grant access to younger scholars to different new realities connected to scholarly field: one for all, non-profit organizations.

Day 4 was focused on the pedagogical aspect linked to Western Esotericism. Nell Champoux and Jeffrey Kripal reported their personal accounts and experiences concerning “teaching

Esotericism” in different milieus and realities. They also accounted and offered insights on the issues every scholar could face by teaching specific topics at the University and which kind of relationships and strategies one should adopt in order to face such_issues. ♦

8th INASWE Conference: **“Western Esotericism and the Concepts of God(s).”- by Boaz Huss**

The 8th annual meeting of INASWE, the Israeli Network for the Study of Western Esotericism, took place on May 30, 2018 at the Scholion Mandel Research Center at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.



The topic of this year's conference, which was organized by Judith Weiss, was “Western Esotericism and the Concepts of

God(s).” The meeting included lectures by INASWE members from Israeli Universities, as well as by guests from Sweden, France, Belgium and Germany.

The meeting started with a keynote lecture, delivered by the secretary of ESSWE, Henrik Bogdan, on: “Deus est Homo: The Concept of God in the Magical Writings of The Beast 666 (Aleister Crowley)”.



The second session of the one-day conference was dedicated to Christian and Jewish Kabbalistic notions of the Godhead in the 16th-17th centuries. It included Emma Abate lecture on: “Notes on the Divine: Giles of Viterbo Studying Kabbalistic Manuscripts”, Assaf Tamari on: “Yesod de-Nukba: Galenic Isomorphism, the One-Sex Body, and Gender Fluidity in Lurianic Kabbalah” and Anna Maria Vilenko on: “Knorr's Messiah Puer: Between Western Esotericism and the Study of Religions”.

The third session of the conference discussed God and Gods in the Florentine Tradition. Gal Sofer spoke about “Exaudi Israel Dio, Dio Nostro: Appealing to God in Clavicula Salomonis” and Guido Neger on “Cum sigilio hermetis: The Many Different Masks of the ‘Hermetic’ Gods”.

In the final session, Peter Lanchidi gave a lecture on “The Divine Order, Kabbalah, and Freemasonry” and Alexander van der Haven spoke about “Immanent Gods”, and Shai Ferraro spoke about “The Fourfold Goddess Construct among Western Goddess Women and Feminist Witches”. ♦

Upcoming Conferences and Call for Papers

Call for Papers: Science and Spiritualism, 1750-1930 (Leeds, Trinity University, 30-31 May 2019) ***Science and Spiritualism, 1750-1930***

The Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies is pleased to announce a two-day conference, to take place at Leeds Trinity University on 30 and 31 May 2019. We are delighted to have Professor Christine Ferguson (University of Stirling), and Professor Roger Luckhurst (Birkbeck, University of London) as our keynote speakers.

Since the emergence of modern mediumship in the middle of the nineteenth century, science and spiritualism have been interwoven. Skeptics and believers alike have investigated spirit

and psychic phenomena to determine its legitimacy. This two-day interdisciplinary conference will explore the history of the intersection of science and spiritualism during the long nineteenth century.

Key scholarship includes:

- Ferguson, Christine, *Determined Spirits: Eugenics, Heredity and Racial Regeneration in Anglo-American Spiritualist Writings 1848-1930*, Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
- Lamont, Peter, *Extraordinary Beliefs: A Historical Approach to a Psychological Problem*, Cambridge University Press, 2013
- Luckhurst, Roger, *The Invention of Telepathy, 1870-1901*, Oxford University Press, 2002
- McCorristine, Shane, *Spectres of the Self: Thinking about*

Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England, 1750-1920, Cambridge University Press, 2010

- Oppenheim, Janet, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914*, Cambridge University Press, 1985
- Owen, Alex, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and*

Spiritualism in Late Victorian England, University of Chicago Press, 2004

We welcome proposals from any discipline, covering any geographic region.



Possible topics include:

- Scientific investigations at séances
- Scientific literature on spirit and psychic phenomena
- Technology and spiritualism (such as photography, telegraphy, telephony)
- Medicine and spiritualism (such as studies in physiology and psychology)
- Shamanism, animism and spiritualism in anthropology
- Science, spiritualism and the periodical press
- Cultures of science and religion and its connection to spiritualism
- Spiritualism and material culture (such as haunted objects or locations)
- Contesting cultural authority in spiritualism cases
- Scientific experiments on spiritualism
- Crisis of evidence in spirit and psychic investigations
- Magicians and spiritualism (such as exposing fraud through

replicating tricks)

- Science and spiritualism in literature (such as Browning's 'Mr Sludge')
- Scientists as spiritualists and spiritualists as scientists

Please send a 250-word abstract, along with contact information to e.sera-shriar@leedstrinity.ac.uk. The Deadline for submission is 15 November 2018.

Some small travel bursaries will be available to postgraduate and early career scholars. If you would like to be considered for one, please include a short expression of interest detailing your research, and how this conference will be of benefit to you. ♦

Call for Papers: 7th Biannual Conference of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE)

Western Esotericism and Consciousness: Visions, Voices, Altered States

University of Amsterdam, 2-4 July 2019

The history of Western esotericism from antiquity to the present is filled with reports of unusual and sometimes spectacular experiences that are claimed to convey higher, deeper, or even absolute knowledge about the true nature of reality. Some typical examples are the many references to direct supra-rational gnosis, ecstatic experiences, and states of divine mania (madness or frenzy) or possession from antiquity to the present; visionary travels to other places, other worlds, or other levels of reality, as well as to past or future periods and events; visionary encounters with intermediary beings (for instance angels, demons, spirits, elementals, ascended masters, divinities); the hearing of inner voices, receiving or "channeling" of spiritual messages, and communication with disembodied entities; and ineffable experiences (for instance apophatic unity) that are difficult or impossible to express through normal discursive language. Common to all such reports is that they fall within the general phenomenology of human consciousness and seem to require some kind of modification or alteration of the normal or average mental states that allow us to negotiate consensus reality. All this makes the experiential dimension of Western esotericism (in both its historical and its contemporary social manifestations) extremely relevant to academic disciplines such as cognitive studies, consciousness research, psychology, or psychiatry. ESSWE7 will be the first major international conference to bring these perspectives in conversation with one another in the context of the study of Western esotericism.

On the level of the humanities and the social sciences, we hope that the conference will provide participants with an ideal opportunity for learning about the phenomenology of unusual experiences across the entire historical spectrum of Western esotericism from antiquity to the present. Here the emphasis will be on empirical research and specialist knowledge about specific historical and contemporary cases. Furthermore, on the level of

the study of consciousness, we hope to explore larger and more theoretical questions concerning such topics as the taxonomy and etiology of altered states, their neurobiological foundations, or their relevance to wider concerns such as cognitive functioning or mental health. Here the emphasis will be on how such approaches may help us understand and even explain the rich record of historical and empirical materials central to Western esotericism and, conversely, how these can serve as case studies for the study of consciousness more in general.

ESSWE7 will also be an occasion to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Center for History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents (HHP) at the University of Amsterdam.

Keynote lectures

- Prof. Yulia Ustinova (Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel)
- Prof. Karl Baier (University of Vienna, Austria)
- Prof. Sonu Shamdasani (University College London, United Kingdom)

Call for Papers / Sessions

The academic ambitions for this conference are high. While we are aiming for a large and inclusive conference, paper and session proposals will go through a careful selection procedure so as to make sure that the final program will have a sharp focus on the conference theme. We encourage creative and innovative thinking across disciplines combined with deep analysis of specific contexts, materials, sources, or topics. As the ESSWE wants to provide a podium for intensive contact and exchange between scholars on all levels of the academy, graduate and post-graduate students as well as more experienced or established scholars are all encouraged to participate and submit proposals for papers. We are confident that ESSWE7 will be a foundational event for a budding new field of research that has considerable potential for the future.

- Each conference session will have a length of 120 minutes, providing room for 4 papers.
- Paper presentations should have a length of 20 minutes, leaving 10 minutes room for discussion.
- Conference language: English.
- Please send your paper or session proposal to esswe7-fgw@uva.nl
- Before doing so, please have a look at the [submission guidelines](#).

Important dates

- Deadline for submission of paper and session proposals: 1 October 2018
- Notification of acceptance and beginning of registration: 15 January 2019
- Early bird conference fee: 15 January 2019
- Normal conference fee: 1 April to 25 June 2019

Conference bursaries

The ESSWE provides a limited number of travel bursaries for participants from economically disadvantaged countries. For further information, see <http://www.esswe.org/Bursaries>

Organizational team

Peter J. Forshaw, Wouter J. Hanegraaff, John MacMurphy, Mriganka Mukhopadhyay, Marco Pasi. Secretarial assistance: Nadine Faber / Antoinette Rutten.

Scientific Committee

Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Egil Asprem, Christine Ferguson, Peter J. Forshaw, Julian Strube.

Location

ESSWE7 will take place in the old center of Amsterdam. All parallel sessions will be in the Bushuis/Oost-Indisch Huis, Kloveniersburgwal 48, 1012 CX Amsterdam. Keynote lectures will be in the Trippenhuis (Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences), Kloveniersburgwal 29, 1011 JV Amsterdam.

Accommodation

Amsterdam is a very busy tourist city, so it is advisable to book your hotel as early as possible. A list of suggestions concerning hotels, hostels, and private rooms will be provided on the ESSWE7 website and facebook page.

Contact

All question and inquiries should be directed to esswe7-fgw@uva.nl ♦

***Call for Papers: CEENASWE III:
Esotericism- Inspired Artistic Visions in Central and
Eastern Europe
16-17 November 2018, University of Szeged, Szeged,
Hungary***

The Central and Eastern European Network for the Academic Study of Western Esotericism, associated with ESSWE (The European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism) calls for papers for its third international colloquium:

ESOTERICISM-INSPIRED ARTISTIC VISIONS IN
CENTRAL- AND EASTERN-EUROPE

The event will be hosted by The Faculty of Arts at the University of Szeged (The Research Group for Cultural Iconology and Semiography in cooperation with the Departments of Religious Studies, Comparative Literature, and Visual Studies).

Papers (30 minutes' slots including discussion) are expected to investigate the inspiration of Western Esotericism on the artistic cultural representations (literature, visual arts, theatre, film) of the Central- and Eastern European regions throughout the centuries.

The conference will be taking place on November 16-17, 2018 (Friday-Saturday, arrival the previous night, departure the next day).

Paper proposals (author's name and affiliation, proposed title and a 300 word abstract) should be sent to Dr. Róbert Péter <<CEENASWE2018@gmail.com>> by September 1, 2018.

For ESSWE members there is no registration fee, for non-ESSWE members registration is 40 Euros. ♦

News from the Ritman Library and Embassy of the Free Mind

Embassy of the Free Mind

The Embassy of the Free Mind is a museum library and a platform for Free Thinking.

Free thinking is the ability to formulate your own thoughts and ideas, on your own, unlimited and unconstrained and regardless of your religion, culture or age.

Free thinking is of all ages and connects our past with the present.

The Embassy of the Free Mind invites you to test the wisdom of the past against the wisdom of the present.



We focus on the European culture of free thinking of the past 2,000 years, and especially on Hermetic wisdom as a source of inspiration: the insight that there is an inseparable connection between God, cosmos and humankind. This connection is reflected in the Hermetic, alchemical, Rosicrucian, magical, mystical and kabbalistic texts and images in our collection. 200 beautiful reproductions of images taken from manuscripts and books printed before 1900, a select choice of the originals and a number of unique works of art are at the heart of the museum experience we are offering.

Esther senses an increased interest in free thinking. 'Free minds have always been and still are essential. No matter who you are, do not dwell on circumstances, remain loyal to your own sense of direction without being unfair to others. When you follow this principle and tap an inner reality that is larger than yourself, you are a free mind.'

Digitization of the collection

The collection of the Embassy of the Free Mind, the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica (perhaps better known as The Ritman Library after its founder Joost R. Ritman) has digitized the major part of its early printed books and manuscripts thanks to a generous donation by the American bestseller author Dan Brown and a contribution by the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds. In all, some 2,300 titles have been digitized, amounting to a total of nearly 500,000 scans. Picturae, the well-known Dutch firm with proven expertise in this field (<https://picturae.com/en>) was responsible for the digitization project. The final stage of



uploading the scans to the website of the Embassy of the Free Mind is now almost completed, and all scans of the books can be viewed and downloaded on the website: <http://embassyofthefreemind.com/nl/collectie/online-catalogus/?mode=gallery&view=horizontal&sort=random%7B1528881499330%7D%20asc>

One of the items from the collection that can now be consulted online is a manuscript from the first half of the eighteenth century: 'Zoriaster [sic] des Juden und Rabbi Clavis Artis' (M 318), which was acquired in 1975. Although no extensive bibliographical research appears to have been carried out so far, it would seem to be a very rare German text (two copies in Italy, one in Prague, another one, unillustrated, in Weimar). The text

originated in circles of the Gold- und Rosenkreuzer, as the allegedly ancient manuscript was translated into German by 'S.V. F.R. et A.C.' (Frater Roseae et Aureae Crucis).

The manuscript in the BPH collection of the Embassy of the Free Mind ties in with the Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer project, a research and education project of Dr Peter Forshaw, head of the Ritman Research Institute.

References

- 1 Dennis Duveen, *Bibliotheca Alchemica et Chemica*, 1949, p. 2.
 - 2 Carl Priesner, 'Legends about Legends: Abraham Eleazar's Adaptation of Nicolas Flamel', *Ambix* 2016-63, pp. 1-27.
 - 3 Michael Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathustra. Zoroaster und die Europäische Religionsgeschichte der frühen Neuzeit*. New York 1998, pp. 948-954
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