

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

# ESSWE Newsletter

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## Words from the editor

–Per Faxneld



For the fourth time since I started editing the Newsletter, it is that time of year again: Christmas. Family, gifts, an opulent selection of food – and for many of us an opportunity to catch up on putting the finishing touches to articles that we have been forced to put aside during the term when lecturing and grading have overwhelmed us.

Work during the holidays may seem a less appealing prospective, even if it is research we are talking about. Yet, for many ESSWE members I think it

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is rather something we look forward to. Most scholars of esotericism tend to be passionate about their work; otherwise we would not have chosen a quirky specialization like this. If we were in it for the steady paycheck (hah!), we would have gone for something more opportunistic.

A risk with this passionate attitude is however that we become so caught up with some (to be quite honest) obscure and peripheral esoteric teaching that we neglect trying to connect it to a wider picture. Many of us are good at bringing out the broad relevance of our field, while others decidedly need to work harder with this. One important thing here is to spread awareness of esotericism as a crucial component of cultural history in disciplines where such an understanding has not yet penetrated. Entering into dialogue with the public is likewise essential. If I have a New Year's resolution, it is to continue my endeavors with this – and I hope many of you will do the same.

In April 2015, the bi-annual ESSWE conference takes place in Riga. I trust quite a few Newsletter readers will be there. Please do not hesitate to grab hold of me in Riga to give suggestions for improving the Newsletter. All suggestions are, as always, very welcome indeed. ♦

## Presentation of ESSWE's new Student Representative

–Lori Lee Oates



Let me begin by taking this opportunity to thank the students of ESSWE for the honour of being elected the student representative to the board of our collective association. It has long been my observation that ESSWE is an excellent organization, supporting the growth and development of students through events like its conferences and thesis workshops. The opportunities for networking with top scholars in our field are arguably unequalled by any other academic association. However, if you feel that there is something more that the association can do for us as students, I would love to hear your concerns. I will be in Riga next April and would be happy to meet with any students who have a desire to do so at that time. I would also love to hear if you have any ideas for how we can better network together as students.

I was originally drawn to the study of Western Esotericism after I posed the question 'why are New Age religion texts the best selling books in the world at a time when church attendance is declining on many parts of the globe?' I quickly found that the answers to my question were anything but simple. In 2011, I decided to return to university full-time to pursue a Ph.D. on nineteenth-century occultism and left behind a fourteen-year career in public relations to dig further into the roots of contemporary esotericism. Today, I

am in Department of History at the University of Exeter, pursuing a thesis on British and French occult literature, within the context of nineteenth-century global and imperial history. I also work with literary specialists in the Department of English to examine issues such as the influence of the rise of commercial culture and the printing press on the transmission of occult philosophies in the nineteenth century. I teach first year history and serve as the departmental postgraduate representative. I also serve on the committee of the Society for the Study of French History.

I am a firm believer in the importance of the study of esotericism and its role in the evolution of contemporary culture. As scholars of the esoteric traditions, we are the ones who know the lost history of religion. We are the ones who understand what most people have never been told about Western history. As academics we have a responsibility to teach this more accurate version of history that is unconventional at best and controversial at worst. We need to challenge those who say it is marginal scholarship or not real history at all. These are messages that need to be shouted in the corridors of the academy. In keeping with the theme of the 2015 conference, it is critical that we better understand the interactions between the religions of the East and West. Given the increased desire, within the academy, to comprehend the many aspects of globalization, these themes are going to be under the microscope for some years to come. It is important that the Western Esotericism community be part of that conversation. It is only by building our discipline and bringing it into the mainstream that there will be a place for up and coming scholars like ourselves within the academy of the future. As your student representative, these are the kinds of positions that I will advocate for.

For more information on my research please visit:  
<https://eprofile.exeter.ac.uk/lorioates/?section=1>  
 Academia.edu:  
<https://exeter.academia.edu/LoriLeeOates>  
 Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LoriLeeOates> ♦

## ESSWE member PhD project presentation

–*Johan Nilsson, University of Lund, Sweden*



My PhD project explores the image of Chinese religion in general and Daoism in particular as it appears in English and French journals published within the environment of late 19th century and early 20th century esotericism. In this way the project hopes to further explore the ways in which the occult milieu at the turn of the last century contributed to the interest and interpretation of Asian religions in the West.

At the end of the 19th century the Western image of Chinese culture was in many ways quite dark. An older, romantic understanding of the Far East represented by travelers and Jesuit missionaries had been replaced by far more critical attitudes under the pressure of European colonialism and changing values in the West after the enlightenment; or so the standard narrative of the development of East Asia within the imagination of the West tells us. In reality, Western attitudes were never this uniform. At the same time that Chinese culture was being condemned by missionaries, travelers and intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century, and other voices in the West, seemed to be turning the dominant discourse on its head.

Within the broad esoteric environment that included movements such as the Theosophical society, the French Ordre Martiniste, and diverse hermetic or Rosicrucian groups, there existed, besides the strong interest in Indian and Tibetan religion, a fascination with East Asia, especially with Chinese Daoism. Instead of being dismissed as antiquated superstition, Daoism was seen as a source of inspiration for Western culture.

Over the course of its long history Daoism in Asia has been a religion that could be expressed in many ways, from metaphysical speculation to the arranging of marriages and funerals. It has been related to the cult of gods and divine beings, and to monasticism and magical practices. In the West, however, the religion has often been understood as a form of philosophy almost completely separated from the social or practical aspects of religion, or, paradoxically, as something almost completely practical, connected to bodily forms of cultivation and exercise like taijiquan or qigong. Could the early reception of Daoism within the esoteric environment have contributed to the development of such interpretations?

My project will analyze and contextualize the interest in Chinese religion within late 19th and early 20th century esoteric movements, looking primarily at the medium of esoteric periodicals, a rich and underutilized source material. The reception of Asian religions within this environment actualizes several questions of interest. It is relevant for the understanding of how the Western relationship to East Asia has developed in modernity, and what the religious exchange between Europe and Asia has really looked like. But it is also relevant for understanding the foundations and the early history of the 20th century New Age movement. Finally, the project will hopefully take another step in the direction of integrating the history of a partly overlooked, but apparently very influential, religious environment into the intellectual history of the 20th century. ♦

## Scholar interviews

–Per Faxneld

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

### Nina Kokkinen, Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Turku, Finland



*How did you come to be interested in Western esotericism?*

I started my scholarly path as an art student at the University of Lapland. There I came to know my most beloved mentor, Sisko Ylimartimo, who is an expert in analyzing art from a Jungian point of view. I used this method in my master's thesis and ran into Jung's theories about alchemy. After graduating I continued my studies in the University of Turku, with comparative religion as a major. Here I immersed myself in the study of Western esotericism at large. Obviously, Jungian art analysis never looked the same after that.

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

One of the major challenges in the humanities in general is "the mindset in a rut". It is hard to keep an open mind when scholars have such a short time to do so many things. It would be great to have plenty of time to read all sorts of books and visit all the different conferences and exhibitions just to keep the mind freely associative. I believe this kind of heterogenic environment would give rise to new ideas and excellent scholars, too. The free cruising should, of course, be accompanied by explicit theorizing and contextualizing. In the study of Western esotericism this is extremely important, since the whole field seems to be in a way one freely assembled environment. Hence, one of the major challenges for the field is surely the demarcation of it.

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

One memory that springs to mind has to do with the random thinking I just spoke so highly of. A couple of years ago, I had this teaching session in which I wanted to try something different – and pretty chaotic, too. So I gave the students as a task to interpret some media photos taken from the events surrounding the Peoples' Temple. I also told them to read Jonathan Z. Smith's great article "The Devil in Mr. Jones", in which the necessity of trying to make sense of even the most irrational deeds is underlined by comparing the mass suicide in Jonestown to Dionysian cults of antiquity. I did not have any idea where all this should lead to. After a week, we had the seminar, and as a collective we came up with some quite profound and interesting ideas about how the case of Jonestown should be contextualized. I hope someday I have time to write about all this... But I sincerely enjoyed myself and learned a lot from my students. And it wasn't the first nor the last time this happened. Some students tend to have a rather radical mind that doesn't recognize the borders between different fields – or limits of any sort, for that matter. At its best, this gives rise to great analyses.

*What are your interests aside from Western esotericism?*

My main interests lie somewhere between art and religion. In my PhD thesis, I am tracing the way the

discourses of spiritual art were constructed at the turn of the 20th century, but all the phenomena I associate with this discourse seem highly interesting to me. Hence, my interests include everything from 19th century spirit photography to all recent art exhibitions dealing with the “sacrality” of modern and contemporary art. I also seem to find my way time and time again to the mires of theories and concepts. I can't say that I really enjoy it, but for some reason I seem to have a sort of obsession with different theoretical approaches, both in art history and religious studies. In my spare time I enjoy photographing, wandering in the woods and doing nothing – which usually means yoga. During the last weeks I have also been re-watching the tv series *Carnivàle* written by Daniel Knauf, which I adore both for its visual appearance, and for the many references it makes to Western esotericism.

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

I sometimes wish that I did not have this job, that I feel so enthusiastic about. It gets tiring from time to time. Maybe it would be better just to have a simple flower shop somewhere at the end of world, from which you could always leave early and just spend the rest of the day making tea.

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

Having Tarot cards, the Bible, Tolstoy's books, and pictures of some fin-de-siècle artworks on my desk at the same time. The weird combination of different things I get to know through my work inspires me. In this field, you are never forced to hear an uninteresting presentation. ♦

## Claire Fanger, Assistant Professor, Rice University, USA.



*How did you come to be interested in Western esotericism?*

Most of the time I was doing my doctorate I didn't think of my studies as pertinent to esotericism at all. I'm a medievalist, and there are few medievalists who think of themselves as working in the field of esotericism for somewhat systemic reasons. Esotericism has been constructed as a discourse that exists in antiquity and then dramatically leaps over the middle ages to land with a bump in the fifteenth century when Ficino translates *Pimander*. This is only to say it shares the same limits and blind spots as almost all discourse about modernity. Of course things are more complicated than that; but the fullness of their complexity has not been very visible since the stream of medieval magic texts through which hermetic thought largely flowed has been so underexamined. From the time of my doctorate, I had an interest in the history of magic, in particular intellectual magic. Why was it that in the medieval world magic was traditionally either excluded from the order of knowledge altogether, or accepted (by those who represented it positively) as being at the very top of the pinnacle, as a kind of knowledge quite close to God? A positive representation of magic begins to appear in the later middle ages, certainly well before the fifteenth century, in connection with certain Islamic and Jewish

sources, but also in some places apparently endogenously. All the discourses of knowledge formation that came into contact with this problem of “magic” were of interest to me.

But I would have had no reason to associate my interests with esotericism except for the accident of coming to know Wouter Hanegraaff in the late 1990s. This happened virtually, on an internet list, before either of us held our current positions. We seemed to have quite a lot to talk about, and I gravitated very naturally to the group of people around Wouter at that time, and those who came to teach later at the Institute for the History of Hermetic Philosophy in Amsterdam. They are still some of my most valuable conversation partners.

At the same time, because I was studying texts that very few other people knew anything about at all, I seemed to be slipping off the edges of the knowledge map myself – I mean the order of academic knowledge as represented by traditional university curricula. It took a long time for me to get an academic job because the material I study was not very recognizable to most people in the traditional departments where I interviewed. It took a religion department with an interest in esotericism that needed a medievalist before things fell into place for me.

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

I think perhaps we can each talk most easily about the challenges that we have a personal stake in. I would very much like to see more esoteric scholars in touch with medieval subjects, especially the ones with that do contiguous areas, in late antiquity or the early modern period. On the one hand I'd like to see ASE and ESSWE reaching out to medievalists, because so few medievalists really know about these organizations, or what they do. This is happening to some extent though the bulk of people on the boards of directors of both organizations are inevitably modernists.

At the same time I would like to see the medievalists who do have an esoteric side to their work reaching out too, and addressing issues of interest to people on both sides of the period divide. I think this is also starting to happen. Many of the books in Penn State's Magic in History series target cross-disciplinary and cross-period interests. The most recent ones are all by medievalists. Transformations of Magic by Frank Klaassen, Magic in the Cloister by Sophie Page (who is also on the ESSWE board), and my own book, Rewriting Magic, forthcoming in Spring, all have material that should interest the early modernists and I hope esotericism generally. But I continue to think much more interesting work could be done if we were better connected with medievalists through ASE and ESSWE.

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

Well I have had fun, lots of conferences in exciting places, and I've had many opportunities that I'm grateful for to develop intellectual community. I could not have written what I have without that. But that's not why I do this. I do it really for the sublime and dizzy steep of intellectual discovery, the various times in the libraries mulling over those quaint and curious volumes of forgotten lore and realizing I've suddenly seen or understood or grasped something completely new – something that so far nobody knows but me.... is it even knowledge yet? What if I get hit by a bus on my way out of the Bodleian? No one will ever know it. That thrill is absolute. And I do it for the sharing of these things as I craft the penitentialia of these discoveries into books and articles. What this boils down to, though, is that my moments of most keen pleasure and delight are very solitary. I was always a little bit the cat that walked by itself, by its wild lone; perhaps for this reason the long years of being an indie scholar were less onerous for me than they might be for others.

*What are your interests aside from Western esotericism?*

I like to retreat to domestic things that are also somewhat solitary; I like cooking, and I like gardening, putting in plants and then digging them up again and messing about in the dirt. I am interested in botany, I like to know the names of weeds and flowers. I love roses especially, not for romantic reasons, just the enormous variety of the genus. I also write poetry, another solitary practice.

*What are the worst things about having this as your specialty?*

I said that being an indie scholar was not onerous to me, but that is not completely true. Not having enough money was sometimes distressing. Negotiations around money were probably the worst of my experience. Also trying to get books from interlibrary loan could take literally months. I would like to have been more readily employable.

And yet if I had it to do over again, I don't think I would want to change much. I mean I couldn't have changed it if I'd wanted to, but my point is that everything that happened to me also gave me certain advantages, whether it seemed bad or good at the time. I learned a lot from being extra institutional, for example; I learned a lot from the work I did (being an arts administrator, working for a non-profit children's literacy council), and I also got to spend much more time on book projects like the edition of John of Morigny's Liber florum that I have just lately finished with Nicholas Watson. It is a much solidier, deeper, more informative book than it would have been if I'd felt I needed to rush it to the press to get tenure.

*What are the best things about having this as your specialty?*

That is like saying "what are the best things about being Claire Fanger?" I like finding things out; I like coaxing information out of crabbled faded manuscript pages in forgotten languages. I revert to the dizzy steeps of intellectual discovery; in my book I note that archives exist on the very edges of the knowledge world. A manuscript library is a cross between an official institution and a kind of ancient dumpster with possible treasures lying all about. Nobody knows half of what is in there. I love sorting through such detritus, I love the dumpster dive aspect of it. Really I cannot think of anything to call "best"; I am in love with all of it.



## Exeter Centre for the Study of Esotericism (EXESES0)

*– A final report compiled by Clare Goodrick-Clarke*

In 2005 Dr Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (1953–2012) was appointed to a personal Chair in History at the University of Exeter where he founded the Exeter Centre for the Study of Esotericism (EXESES0) and initiated a two-year, part-time, distance-learning MA. Starting in 2005, the course immediately attracted students from around the world and recruitment grew steadily. The core tutorial team assembled by Goodrick-Clarke – Paul Bembridge, Dr Peter Forshaw, Clare Goodrick-Clarke, Dr Christopher McIntosh, and Dr Angela Voss – all stayed involved with EXESES0 from the beginning in October 2005 until its closure. The MA modules were delivered on-line via the Exeter Learning Environment (ELE) and were supplemented by three study intensives a year, one per term, held at Exeter University. These study intensives included lectures, seminars, tutorials as well as films and discussion groups and provided attendees with 70 hours of staff-student contact time. Lectures and seminars were recorded and made accessible on the ELE. The writer and film-maker Tobias Churton was a contributor to the MA Programme and his films on the Gnostics, and on Elias Ashmole stimulated interest. There was always a convivial dinner which enabled students to get to know one another, and long-lasting friendships were formed. The EXESES0 Alumni group is active and flourishing. Students, who enrolled from all over the world including places as far flung as Alaska and Dar es Salam, had access to tutor support by means of email and Skype. Members of Exeter University lent their support and the academics who contributed in various ways to EXESES0's success include Prof Jonathan Barry

(formerly Head of School of Humanities until 2008), Dr Laura Sangha, Dr Alastair Logan, Dr Morwenna Ludlow, and Dr Richard Noakes. Other leading scholars involved by means of lectures, supervision or other contributions included Prof Antoine Faivre, Prof Gyorgy Szonyi, Prof Andrew Prescott, Dr Jonathan Hughes, Dr Geoffrey Ahern, Dr Sarah Boss, Prof Jean-Pierre Brach and Prof Paul Fenton, both of the Sorbonne, and the film-maker Jonathan Stedall. The External Examiner for the MA, a leading professor in the field of Esotericism, reported that the course "stands out as a highly commendable example of rigorous academic standards and achievements." This statement was endorsed by his successor who also commended the teaching and guidance given to students.

As Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke held a personal chair at Exeter, there was little expectation that a new appointment would be made after his death in service, despite numerous pleas from scholars around the world for Exeter University to continue the MA in Western Esotericism. After Nicholas' death in August 2012, Clare Goodrick-Clarke continued to manage the programme and run the study intensives so that students who were half-way through the two-year programme could graduate. Dr Tim Rudbøg and Dr Richard Noakes took over the teaching of Goodrick-Clarke's two core modules. In April 2013 Professor Jonathan Barry delivered the Goodrick-Clarke Memorial Lecture at Exeter on John Beaumont and esotericism. In 2014 the Centre was officially closed. The last student to graduate is Gabriel Mateus who formally receives his MA with Merit in January 2015. In its short lifetime, EXESES0, its MA in Western Esotericism and doctoral programmes run at Exeter University, achieved a great deal. A list of graduates appeared in the ESSWE Newsletter of Spring 2012 (pp. 11–12).

The conversion from MA to PhD candidature remains high and successful EXESES0 graduates are now in teaching posts in America, Israel, Oxford, Copenhagen, and other places in Europe. A number of EXESES0 graduates are involved in other initiatives and publications all over the world; its alumni are active members of ASE and ESSWE and frequently feature at International Conferences. A Festschrift for Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke *The Old in the New: Esotericism and Historical transformations* [Provisional title, 2015] is in preparation jointly edited by two of Goodrick-Clarke's doctoral students, Dr Jo Hedesan and Dr Tim Rudbøg. An update of some graduates' subsequent activities is given below and, where students have indicated the wish, in their own words.

**Vanilla Beer's** paintings on the theme of Mythmaking were exhibited at The Greenwich Gallery, London in 2013.

**Dr Sasha Chaitow** gained her PhD Literature, University of Essex in October 2014 with a thesis on Joséphin Péladan and Symbolist Art.

**Dr Julie Chajes** gained her PhD from the University of Exeter in 2011. Her research on Reincarnation in Theosophy was funded by Arts and Humanities Research Council and supervised by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke. She is currently Post-doctoral researcher under the supervision of Professor Boaz Huss at Ben Gurion University of the Negev where she organised a conference on Theosophical Appropriations: Kabbalah, Western Esotericism and the Transformation of Traditions in 2013.

**Anne Crossey** writes: "My achievements are still very much grounded in the MA. My paintings based on the writings of Trithemius are currently on exhibition in New York at the New York Foundation for the Arts gallery in Brooklyn. Another series of my paintings based on alchemy have just been shown in London alongside work by Kenneth Grant, Austin Spare and Aleister Crowley at an exhibition organised by Fulgar Press."

**Orlando Fernandez** was one of EXESES0's first graduates. He is currently reading for a PhD on Twentieth-Century science and esotericism and expects to finish his doctorate in the coming year. He has participated in some conferences, notably in the IAHR XX Quinquennial World Congress in Toronto in 2010.

**Roxani Giannou** writes: "I feel I have in some very small way kept the spirit of the course alive, especially in Greece where unfortunately the Esoteric circles are hard to find. I have given a talk in London, on "Amulets and Talismans in Renaissance Magic and the rituals of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn" (February 2013); I have lectured in the Cultural Centre of Corinth, Greece on "The spiritual in Art: From Michelangelo to Rothko, and from the Alchemists to Kandinsky" (June 2014). Further talks scheduled for 2015 include a series of lectures focusing on subjects such as "Renaissance Symbolism: Florence and Neoplatonism" and "The alchemical journey of the psyche: from Jungian approaches to modern art therapy methods". I have also been part of an art exhibition in The Municipality Gallery of Corinth with an art project consisting of ten paintings called: "Alchemy and the Psyche", June 2014."

**Christian Guidice** is studying for a PhD at Göteborgs Universitet. He co-organised the ESSWE4 conference at the University with Dr. Henrik Bogdan in June 2013. He writes: "In 2012 I was elected Student representative of ESSWE, and founded Azoth, a Student Organisation at Göteborgs Universitet dedicated to the study of Western Esotericism. I co-founded WEAVE, a subnetwork of ESSWE dedicated to the study of the influence of Occultism in Visual Art <http://networkweave.com/> : the first conference will be held at Göteborgs Universitet in 2015. All of this would have been impossible without EXESES0, Nicholas

and all the splendid people who helped me take up academic studies at the Exeter Centre."

**Dr Jo Hedesan** completed her PhD on Jan Baptista van Helmont, supervised by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, in 2012. Currently she is Wellcome Trust Research Fellow in Medical History and Humanities, University of Oxford (History Faculty) until October 2016. Her research project is "The Pursuit of Universal Medicine: Alchemical Prolongation of Life and Christianity in Seventeenth Century Paracelsian and Helmontian Thought". She is also Junior Research Fellow (JRF), Wolfson College, Oxford, until October 2017.

**Sue Lewis** writes: "Since graduating with an MA in Western Esotericism in 2012, I have given conference talks on 'The Transformational Techniques of Huber Astrology', Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture, 'Celestial Magic', Bath, 2013; 'Astrological Psychology as a New Age Discipline within the Western Esoteric Tradition', Kepler Research Conference, London, 2013. My book, *Astrological Psychology, Western Esotericism, and the Transpersonal*, is due for publication by HopeWell in 2015, The dedication reads: 'In memory of Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke without whose inspirational two-year MA in Western Esotericism and tremendous intellectual encouragement, all this would not have come together!'"

**Len Maurer** writes: "As a result of my MA, in January I am beginning a PhD at Bristol uni on the influence of Gnosticism and Jewish and Pagan mysticism on the New Testament corpus. This is in no small measure due to the contribution made by Nicholas to my academic development."

**Judith Mawer** writes: "Following first class honours in Humanities with Classical Studies, I graduated in the MA Western Esotericism with distinction in 2011. The sad and untimely death of Nicholas deprived me of the possibility of pursuing doctoral research under his supervision. Having undertaken the first year of the part-time MPhil/PhD programme at the University of Exeter, I transferred this October to continue my research at Goldsmiths College, University of London, where my supervisor is Dr Ariel Hessayon, an expert in my field of study.

As a mature student, living and working in Liverpool, I was only able to pursue my studies in an area of history about which I am passionate because of the enlightened and accessible format of the programme at EXESES0. The methodology adopted by Nicholas and his colleagues permitted students to have access to teaching that was academically rigorous and that required of its students an uncompromising standard of scholarship. I believe that Nicholas was particularly aware that a relatively new and, for some, contentious discipline like Western Esotericism needed to be demonstrably robust and to have parity with the standards maintained for historical studies within other prestigious universities."



**Lori Lee Oates** writes: "At the suggestion of Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke I applied for and won an International Doctoral Studentship at the University of Exeter. I am now in the final year of my Ph.D. and have received research funding from the Society for the Study of French History (SSFH) and Gladstone Library. I serve on the board of SSFH and ESSWE. I am planning an interdisciplinary postgraduate day for students of French history and French cultural studies, to be held at Exeter on March 7, 2015. I teach Making History, Approaches to History, and Understanding the Modern World at the University of Exeter." Lori Lee has presented at conferences in Canada, the United States, Britain, Europe.

**Dr Malcolm Peet** writes: "My book *Medicine, Mysticism and Mythology*: Garth Wilkinson, Swedenborg, and nineteenth-century esoteric culture, which is dedicated to Nicholas, is in press with the Swedenborg Society."

**Robert Radacovic** writes: "I have started studying for a PhD in Religious Studies at Lancaster University. Nicholas' passion and expertise, tied in with the professionalism and enthusiasm of all of the Exeter Master's Programme lecturers as well as the content and structure of the course and the associated conferences, were instrumental in my decision to further my activities within academia."

**Dr Tim Rudbøg**: Tim was awarded his PhD for his thesis on H. P. Blavatsky's Theosophy, supervised by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, in 2013. Currently he teaches several courses on the history of religions at the University of Copenhagen. Tim is also co-founder of H.E.R.M.E.S. and the proprietor of H.E.R.M.E.S.' Antiquarian. During the past years, Dr. Rudbøg has contributed to the field of Western esotericism with his book on *The Academic Study of Western Esotericism*, several scholarly articles, and many international conference papers. In appreciation of Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, Tim wrote two In Memoriam notices (published in the H.E.R.M.E.S. newsletter and *Theosophical History*)

**Dr George Seig's** PhD on the topic of Occult War, supervised by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, is due to be published by I.B. Tauris under the title *Iranian Dualism and its Global Legacy: Manichaeism in Modern Politics and Religion*. George writes: "The opportunity to work under Nicholas' supervision was surely the indispensable opportunity of my graduate career and essential to all of my subsequent achievements, as well as my current employment as an adjunct professor at the University of New Mexico, where I have now been teaching since 2010 after receiving my doctorate that year in Western Esotericism from EXESES. In addition to teaching courses for the Religious Studies Program, Department of Philosophy, and Department of

Psychology (all including courses that are part of the standard curriculum), I have also designed and taught special topics courses for the Department of History, including the History of Esotericism, the History of Magic, the History of Occultism, and the History of Witchcraft and Demonology. Further, I have designed a special topics course for the Department of Psychology in the Psychology of Religion."

**Steve Smith** is studying for a PhD at Canterbury Christ Church University with a thesis on 'The Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences and their impact on English Freemasonry.' He writes: "I have had several articles printed in Masonic magazines and am hoping to present a paper on my research at a international conference in 2015. I am eternally grateful to Nicholas and his staff for their support for my MA dissertation subject and it is from this that I have been able to move on to a PhD in a masonic subject."

**Anthony Wilkins** is enrolled on a PhD programme at the University of Derby, faculty of Arts, with a thesis on: 'Identity and Isolation: Historical, Topographical and Imaginative Themes of the Supernatural in Gothic Literature from the 18th Century to the Modern Age'.

**Cecile Wilson** writes: "I will always be grateful to EXESES for providing me with the opportunity to engage in the academic research of esoteric subjects. It has opened a whole new world of possibilities for me, and I hope I can do Nicholas and EXESES proud by continually improving my research. Since graduating from EXESES I have begun a five-year PhD program in Cultural Mediations at Carleton University. My project will compare sixteenth-century prints by Dutch and German artists on the theme of the Power of Women and contemporaneous humanist discourse on the subject of women. Agrippa von Nettesheim will play a key role in my research."

Finally, **Dr Christopher McIntosh** writes his *Memories of EXESES*:

"The award of a personal chair at the University of Exeter was the culmination of Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke's brilliant career as a scholar, writer and teacher. The foundation of the Centre was made possible not only thanks to his enormous energy, charisma and vision but also to his skill in raising financial support from the Blavatsky Trust. The seminars at Exeter stand out for me as among the most memorable events of those years: the enthusiasm of the students, who came from many different countries, the convivial atmosphere, the lively discussions, the sense that with our distance MA in esotericism we were doing something unique. I believe the vast majority of students felt greatly enriched by EXESES. I am enormously proud and grateful to have been part of it." ♦

## Calls for papers

### Blood Rituals – Past and Present.

A One-Day Workshop. Section for the History of Religions, ERG, Stockholm University, Sweden. Blood is attested worldwide as a suggestive and emotionally charged substance, either in its physical form or in the form of different substitutes, for instance wine and red colorants, such as ochre. The cross-cultural contexts of blood symbolism are typically linked to notions of kinship, life force, pollution, and sacrificial communion, but there are numerous other and arguably less obvious aspects of its application. Taken together, these notions and practices provide important assets to our understanding of human symbolic behavior in general.

We hereby invite scholars from different branches of the humanities and the social sciences to participate in a one-day workshop devoted to the presentation of 6-7 original papers on ritual blood symbolism and the “meaning of blood”. The workshop will be run under the auspices of Paul Bouissac, a leading semiotician and Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto (Victoria College), Canada. Bouissac has promised to consider the contributions for publication in a book series he is currently editing for Bloomsbury Publishing in London. Since we are only able to accommodate a small group of participants, we need to apply strict principles of selectivity. We especially welcome paper proposals with a solid empirical grounding and a broad theoretical scope.

Please submit your abstract and a short CV by March 1st, 2015, at the latest. If you wish to attend the workshop without presenting a paper, we need a few words about your academic interests and affiliations before we can add you to the list of participants. Submit your queries and proposals to: peter.jackson@rel.su.se and per.faxneld@rel.su.se.

### The Evil, Women and the Feminine Project: 7th Global Meeting Wednesday 6th May – Friday 8th May 2015, Dubrovnik, Croatia

From Medea and Lady Macbeth, to Myra Hindley and Dorothea Puente, the human imagination has been captured by the complex relationship between women and evil. We are fascinated by stories of real and fictional women who perpetrate evil deeds and take the blame as scapegoats for evil that exists in the world. These accounts raise a host of questions about the nature of evil itself and why cultural cues encourage us to see the relationship between women and evil in very different terms from the way we understand the relationship between men and evil.

The Evil, Women and the Feminine project offers a space for inter-, cross- and multi-disciplinary explorations of these and other questions concerning the dynamics of the relationship between women and evil. We invite proposals for presentations that take the form of talks, workshops, performances, readings, film screenings, art installations with commentary and other interactive content. Activists, anthropologists, archaeologies, archivists, artists and other creative professionals, civil servants, members of the clergy, clinicians, correctional authorities, historians, journalists, jurists and other legal professionals, military personnel, researchers, writers and others with an interest in the project are encouraged to submit proposals on themes that include but are not limited to:

#### **Theology and Theodicy:**

- Women who theorise about evil
- Theological considerations of case studies involving women
- Alternative religious perspectives on the relationship between women and evil
- Female deities and spirits
- Considerations of whether evil committed by women inherently different from evil committed by men

#### **Motherhood:**

- Monstrous motherhood: mothers who kill/abuse/neglect children
- Evil or monstrous maternal bodies

#### **Representations of any aspect of Monstrous**

**Femininity** – women who perpetrate evil, women who fight against evil, women who suffer from evil perpetrated by others and women who are scapegoated as the source of evil in literature, cinema, television, performance, visual arts, music.

The Steering Group welcomes the submission of proposals for short workshops, practitioner-based activities, performances, and pre-formed panels. We particularly welcome short film screenings; photographic essays; installations; interactive talks and alternative presentation styles that encourage engagement.

**What to send:** 300 word proposals should be submitted by Friday 23rd January 2015. All submissions are at least double blind peer reviewed. Proposals should be submitted simultaneously to the Organising Chairs; abstracts may be in Word or RTF formats with the following information and in this order: a) author(s), b) affiliation as you would like it to appear in programme, c) email address, d) title of abstract, e) body of abstract, f) up to 10 keywords.

E-mails should be entitled: EWF7 Proposal Submission.

Please use plain text (Times Roman 12) and abstain from using footnotes and any special formatting, characters or emphasis (such as bold, italics or underline).

**Organising Chairs:**

Natalia Kaloh Vid: [nkvl@inter-disciplinary.net](mailto:nkv@inter-disciplinary.net)

Rob Fisher: [ewf7@inter-disciplinary.net](mailto:ewf7@inter-disciplinary.net)

For further information, see:

<http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/at-the-interface/evil/evil-women-and-the-feminine/call-for-papers/>

**The Spirits as Artists: Spiritualism and the Visual Arts**

An ad hoc seminar organized by CESNUR (Center for Studies of New Religions), Circolo Sociale di Biella, Associazione L'Uomo e l'Arte, and ESSWE, Biella, Italy, May 8–9, 2015.

In the 1880s, Senator Federico Rosazza (1813-1899), an Italian politician connected with Masonic and spiritualist circles, commissioned the painter and architect Giuseppe Maffei (1821-1901), to convert a pre-existing village into a new town with his name, Rosazza. The town, decorated with alchemical, Masonic and Theosophical symbols, raised eyebrows among the Catholic hierarchy, and is now a curiosity often featured in Italian TV shows about esotericism.

Maffei, also a spiritualist, received in fact messages on how to build Rosazza from the spirits, including, or so he claimed, St Augustine. Some of Maffei's paintings and documents, recently rediscovered, will be exhibited in Biella in connection with a seminar exploring how, in the 19th century and beyond, spirits were particularly active in the artistic world, guiding painters as well as sculptors and architects.

Papers will be accepted about spiritualist painters, sculptors, architects (but not authors of literary works or films), with a preference for those claiming that the spirits actually guided them while they produced their artistic works.

Projects for papers and sessions, accompanied by a short CV, should be sent to Massimo Introvigne: [maxintrovigne@gmail.com](mailto:maxintrovigne@gmail.com) and Marco Pasi: [m.pasi@uva.nl](mailto:m.pasi@uva.nl) before the close of business of February 16, 2015. Papers will be accepted in English only. Participants will be offered a guided tour of Rosazza. Unfortunately, no funding will be available to cover travel and accommodation expenses. Biella is easily reachable by train from Turin or Milan. ♦