HISTORY OF HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY
AND RELATED CURRENTS

REPORT 2016
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1. Introduction

Fortunately the decline in student numbers mentioned in the previous report has not continued in the academic year 2016-2017. Fifteen students were admitted into the Master program, of which six actually registered in the end (this is actually a problem: in practice, based on the admission numbers it is almost impossible to predict how many students will actually show up). Those six were joined by another student who had already been admitted a year earlier but could not make it at that time, plus various students from other UvA programs who took courses offered by HHP as an elective, resulting in an average attendance of 12-14 students. As for the new introductory module “Western Culture and Counterculture”, due to a problem with the online publicity, students numbers were still relatively modest; but the course was extremely well received and there are good reasons for expecting a considerably larger audience next year. In general, it can be said that the program has essentially returned to normal.

2. Personnel

Marco Pasi applied successfully for a one-year Fellowship at the Max-Weber-Kolleg of the University of Erfurt (Germany). During this one-year period he is being replaced by Dr. Julian Strube (University of Heidelberg), who teaches Pasi’s courses in the 2nd semester.

3. Teaching: Program and Levels of Participation

1st semester 2015-2016, block 3

Master
Western Esotericism and Its Scholars (W.J. Hanegraaff), 3 students

2nd semester 2015-2016, block 1-2

Bachelor
Western Esotericism from the 18th to the 20th Century (M. Pasi). 13 students

Master
Occult Trajectories II: Modern Western esotericism and politics (M. Pasi), 7 students

1st semester 2016-2017, block 1-2

Bachelor

Western Culture and Counterculture (W.J. Hanegraaff). 28 students

Western Esotericism in the Early Modern Period (P.J. Forshaw). 14 students

Master

Contested Knowledge (W.J. Hanegraaff). 12 students.

Renaissance Esotericism I: Medieval and Early Modern Alchemy (P.J. Forshaw). 12 students

Other teaching

Master


4. Research

4.1. Research Program

No new projects were started this year (for the current projects, see description in previous Annual Reports).

4.2. Research Output

Peter J. Forshaw


J. Christian Greer


Wouter J. Hanegraaff

Западный эзотеризм: путеводитель для запутавшихся (Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed, Russian translation by Kateryna Zorya), Moscow: Center of Books Rudomino 2016 (255 pp.).


Marco Pasi


'L’étude de l’ésotérisme occidental: Développements institutionnels et questions méthodologiques’, in: Jean-Daniel Dubois, Lucie Kaennel, Renée Koch Piettre,


‘The Hidden Hand’, *Tate Etc.* 37 (Summer 2016), 88-95.

**Julian Strube**


**5. Public Activities**

**Peter J. Forshaw**

Lectures

‘In Oratory and Laboratory: Alchemy, Magic and Cabala in Heinrich Khunrath’s *Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom* (1609)’, Guest Lecture University of Tokyo, Japan, 8 January 2016.

‘Mythoalchemy in Michael Maier’s *Arcana Arcanissima* and *Atalanta Fugiens*’, Project Atalanta Workshop, Brown University, USA, 6 February 2016.
‘Hermes Trismegistus and the *Emerald Tablet*, Guest Lecture Brown University, USA, 8 February 2016.


**Outreach**

Infinite Fire Interview - on Jung & Alchemy (with Sonu Shamdasani & Hans van der Hooff) - recorded 29 April 2016; published online 28 June 2016

J. Christian Greer

**Lectures**


**Outreach**
'Total Assault on Culture: Spiritual Brotherhods, Urban Tribes, and Psychedelic Churches in the mid-1960s’, Western Esotericism Film Night, Filmhuis Cavia, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 10 December 2016.


Wouter J. Hanegraaff

Lectures

‘Georgius Gemistos Plethon en Platonisch Oriëntalisme’, Guest Lecture, Department of Philosophy, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, the Netherlands, 14 March 2016.


‘Esoterie als academisch vakgebied’, Invited lecture at Symposium *God is geestig*, Amsterdam, 14 May 2016.

“What Happens when Historians Imagine the Occult?”, Keynote lecture, *Scientiae* conference, St. Anne’s College, Oxford, United Kingdom, 7 July 2016.

‘Close to Death in the 19th Century Occult’, Invited lecture at Conference *Boundary Work on the Baseline: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Near-Death Experiences*, Universität Greifswald, Germany, 6-8 October 2016.


'Elementals, Dr Watson! From *Gabalis* to *Zanoni* and *Ghost Land*', Invited lecture, Workshop *The Occult in Popular Fiction and Entertainments*, University College Dublin, 25 November 2016.

Marco Pasi

Lectures

'Western Esotericism, Theosophy and the Modern Complex', Invited lecture for the Theosophy and modernism event organized by Santiago Borja at Huis Sonnenveld for Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 11 February 2016.

'Believe Not Every Spirit: Georgiana Houghton's Art', Invited lecture for the event “Now is forever lasting constant in the mind” organized by Pádraic Moore at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands, 17 March 2016.

'Piccoli mondi antichi e visioni del futuro: Cultura italiana e teosofia tra fine dell'Ottocento e primi del Novecento'. Keynote lecture conference *Bromosia dell'ignoto: Esoterismo, occultismo e fantastico nella letteratura italiana tra fin de siècle e avanguardia*, organized by the Italian Institute of Culture and the department of Italian Studies at the Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, 15 April 2016.

'And Never the Twain Shall Meet: The Study of Western Esotericism and the Problem of “Orientalism”', Invited lecture for the Institute for Religious Studies at the University of Bern, Switzerland, 26 May 2016.

'Mediumistic Art and the Problems of Interpretation: The Case of Georgiana Houghton (1814-1884)', Invited lecture for the “History of the Psychological Disciplines Seminar Series” coordinated by Sonu Shamdasani at University College London, United Kingdom, 14 June 2016.

'Religious Individualisation and Nationalism in Modern Europe through the Lens of Alternative Spirituality and Western Esotericism (1823-1939), Paper presented at the annual conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR), University of Helsinki, Finland, 29 June 2016.
Participation in the session “Curators of the exhibition in conversation” for the Georgiana Houghton: Spirit Drawings study day at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, United Kingdom, 7 September 2016.


Participation as a speaker in discussion panel “Black Mirror: Journal & Research Network”, conference Trans-States: The Art of Crossing Over, University of Northampton, United Kingdom, 10 September 2016.


Conference organization


Panel “Western Esotericism and Nationalism: Strange Bedfellows or Happy Allies?” for the annual conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR), University of Helsinki, 29 June 2016.

(in collaboration with Sarah Turner and Barnaby Wright) Study day Georgiana Houghton: Spirit Drawings study day, 7 September, Courtauld Institute of Art, London, United Kingdom, 7 September 2016.

Julian Strube
Lectures


Interviews

Interview with National Geographic TV for a documentary “World War Weird”, about the relationship between National Socialism and Esotericism.

Mike A. Zuber


Conference organization.

”Colouring and Making in Alchemy and Chemistry (7th SHAC Postgraduate Workshop), Universiteit Utrecht, 26 October 2016 (in collaboration with Thijs Hagendijk).

6. Editorial Activities

Peter J. Forshay
(editor in chief) Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism. Leiden/Boston: Brill
(editorial board) Apocalypticism: Cross-Disciplinary Explorations, Bern: Peter Lang
(editorial board) Correspondences: Online Journal for the Academic Study of Western Esotericism
(editorial board) História Revista
(advisory board) Magic, Ritual, & Witchcraft, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

Wouter J. Hanegraaff
(editorial board) Religion. Elsevier.
(editorial board) Religion Compass, Section “New Religions”.
http://www.blackwell-compass.com/subject/religion/
(advisory board) Esoterica http://www.esoteric.msu.edu
(advisory board) Journal of Contemporary Religion. Carfax

Marco Pasi
(editorial board) Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism.
(editorial board) Politica Hermetica.
(editorial board) Annali di Storia dell’Esegesi.

Julian Strube
(review editor) Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism. Leiden/Boston: Brill