HISTORY OF HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY
AND RELATED CURRENTS

REPORT 2018
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1. Introduction

While regular teaching and research activities have proceeded as normal, much additional attention this year has gone to preparations for the upcoming 20-year anniversary of HHP in combination with the 7th international conference of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE) that will take place in Amsterdam from 2-4 July 2019. At the occasion of the conference reception, the anniversary will be celebrated by the public presentation of a collective volume *Hermes Explains: Thirty Questions about Western Esotericism* to be published by Amsterdam University Press (which also published the 10-year anniversary volume *Hermes in the Academy* in 2009). Thirty “friends of HHP” have agreed to write a 3000-word contribution answering a “journalistic” question about some aspect of the field. The ESSWE7 conference theme is “Western Esotericism and Consciousness: Visions, Voices, Altered States.” With eight slots of five parallel sessions each, resulting in a total of forty panels plus three keynote lectures (Yulia Ustinova, Karl Baier, Sonu Shamdasani), this will be the largest ESSWE conference so far. Editorial work on the volume and organizational work on the conference have both been intense and time-consuming, but we are happy with the results.

2. Personnel

An important event for HHP in 2018 concerns the secretary position. Having given birth to twins, Nadine Faber decided to explore new and other directions in her life. Thus an excellent collaboration of five and a half years has come to an end, and we wish to express our deep gratitude to Nadine for all that she has done for our group and our program. During her pregnancy leave, Nadine was replaced by Antoinette Rutten. Since this turned out to be a success, Antoinette has now been appointed as HHP’s new secretary.

A visiting postdoc has joined HHP in 2018 for a period of two years:
Manon Hedenborg White (Sweden) obtained her PhD in the History of Religions at Uppsala University (Sweden) in 2017. Her doctoral dissertation The Eloquent Blood. The Goddess Babalon and the Construction of Femininities in Western Esotericism is forthcoming in 2019 from Oxford University Press.

3. Teaching: Program and Levels of Participation

1st semester 2017-2018, block 3

Master
Religionism and Historicism (W.J. Hanegraaff). 8 students.

2nd semester 2017-2018, 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), 13 students
Sufism, Islamic mysticism and Western esotericism (M. Pasi, in collaboration with R. van Leeuwen), 20 students

1st semester 2018-2019, block 1-2

Bachelor
Western Culture and Counter Culture (W.J. Hanegraaff). 38 students
Western Esotericism in the Early Modern Period (P.J. Forshaw). 21 students

Master
Contested Knowledge (W.J. Hanegraaff). 14 students.
4. Research

4.1. Research Program

Manon Hedenborg White

The purpose of this postdoctoral research project is to analyse patterns of female religious agency and authority at different stages of religious emergence through the biographies of three women: Leah Hirsig (1883–1975), Jane Wolfe (1875–1958), and Phyllis Seckler (1917–2004), prominent figures within the religion Thelema, founded in 1904 by the British occultist Aleister Crowley (1875–1947). Max Weber’s tripartite typology of authority will be applied to the development of Thelema from loosely organised charismatic movement to bureaucratised structure. The project will propose a supplementary category to Weber’s typology: proximal authority, defined as authority ascribed to, and enacted by, a person based on their (perceived) relational proximity to a religious leader. By analysing female agency at different stages of religious emergence, the project contributes to the development of theoretical concepts for understanding female authority in male-led religious movements. The project is based on archival research, and sources consist mainly of unpublished diaries and correspondence. The time frame is 3 years, 2 of which will be spent with Center HHP as a base.

4.2. Research Output

Peter J. Forshaw

Wouter J. Hanegraaff


Manon Hedenborg White


Marco Pasi


4.3 Varia

Wouter J. Hanegraaff


Mriganka Mukhopadhyay

‘Behind every Fascism’: Is Žižek’s appropriation of Walter Benjamin’s thesis applicable in India?, *Asia Dialogue*, August 29, 2018


5. Public Activities

Peter J. Forshaw

Lectures

“Speaking Pictures and Seeing Words,” *De Bovennatuurlijke kracht van woorden en beelden*, UvA Illustere school, Amsterdam, 12 January 2018.


“Jung and Alchemical Imagery: The Emerald Tablet,” Workshop Nederlandse Associatie voor Analytische Psychologie (NAAP), Amsterdam, 6 October.

“Reading Alchemical Images,” Workshop Nederlandse Associatie voor Analytische Psychologie (NAAP), Amsterdam, 17 November.
Wouter J. Hanegraaff

Lecture


John MacMurphy

Lecture


Mriganka Mukhopadhyay

Lectures


Conference Organization

Co-organization (with Karl Baier) “Occult South Asia Workshop” at the University of Vienna, 23-24 November, 2018.

Podcast


Manon Hedenborg White

Lectures


“From Polarity to Plurality: Shifting Notions of Sex and Gender in Modern Occultism,” European Association for the Study of Religion (EASR) Annual Conference, University of June 17-21, 2018.

Other


Marco Pasi

Lectures


“The Art of Esoteric Transgression, the Esoteric Transgression of Art.” Keynote lecture for the conference Consciously Illicit: Transgression In Western Esotericism,” Masaryk University, Brno, 6 June 2017.


Interviews and media appearances


Pablo Esparza, “Por qué el nuevo gobierno de Italia no acepta masones (y qué tienen que ver una logia clandestina y la mafia en esa decisión),” BBC News Mundo, 24 May 2018 (available HYPERLINK "https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-44232646?bclid=IwAR2Z_8aq2M1uZXUdK6HCYE7cGA_ig_MmW_TT2JQRl06TzeyCkIHmFQx-Gvo").
6. Editorial Activities

Peter J. Forshaw
(editor in chief) Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism. Leiden/Boston: Brill
    London: Maney
(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
(editorial board) Universal Reform: Studies in Intellectual History, 1550-1700,
    Aldershot: Ashgate
(editorial board) Apocalypticism: Cross-Disciplinary Explorations, Bern: Peter Lang
(editorial board) Oxford Studies in Western Esotericism, Oxford: Oxford University
    Press

Wouter J. Hanegraaff
(editorial board) Religion. Elsevier.
(editorial board) Religion Compass, Section "New Religions".
    http://www.blackwell-compass.com/subject/religion/
(editorial board) Metamorphoses: International Journal of Rudolf Steiner Studies,
    frommann-holzboog.
(advisory board) Journal of Contemporary Religion. Carfax
(advisory board) *Aegyptiaca: Journal of the History of Reception of Ancient Egypt.*
[www.aegyptiaca.org](http://www.aegyptiaca.org)

(member research council) *Scripta Classica*

**Marco Pasi**


(editor) *Axolotl: Studi di Storia delle Religioni.* Milan: Mimesis.

(editorial board) *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism.* Leiden / Boston: Brill.

(editorial board) *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi.*

(editorial board) *Politica Hermetica.*

