



FACULTEIT DER GEESTESWETENSCHAPPEN
*Afdeling Geschiedenis, Europese Studies &
Religiestudies*

**HISTORY OF HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY
AND RELATED CURRENTS**

REPORT 2020



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1. General overview

As can be imagined, the activities of the Centre have been deeply affected by the Covid-19 pandemic throughout 2020. All teaching had to be moved to online platforms halfway through the Spring semester, and has remained there ever since. The format of our courses had to be adjusted accordingly, sometimes in a very short time. In spite of this, teaching went on without interruptions or significant trouble, thanks to the dedication and efforts of our staff. It is comforting to see that the pandemic has not discouraged students from applying to our programs, so that their number in the academic year 2020/2021 has remained relatively stable. At the moment of writing this report (June 2021) there are good reasons to believe that teaching will go back to the traditional on-site format with the start of the new academic year (2021-2022), which will certainly be a positive development.

Quite a few scholarly events (lectures, conferences, etc.) that were being organised by the HHP staff, or in which they had been invited to participate, have been cancelled during 2020, also because of the pandemic. In a few cases it was still possible to transfer them to an online format. Inevitably, the whole international academic system (networks, organisations, book series, journals, research projects, etc.) has slowed down during this period, and its effects will be felt for some time before we can go back to the usual cruising speed. The PhD projects of our own students have also been affected, but thankfully the research schools of our faculty have made it possible to negotiate extensions through the allotment of extra funds.

One thing that was not affected negatively by the pandemic in 2020 was our social media visibility. We continued to showcase our activities and study programs on various online platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, not to mention our own website). Ninian Nijhuis, who is in charge of our social media presence, has done admirable work, and thanks to her efforts we now have a large online following (at this moment our Instagram account alone has no less than 13.600 followers, which is quite extraordinary for a scholarly centre like ours). Apart from that, mention should be made of the update of the HHP institutional website, which was now overdue. Michiel de Wijn from MIAX has been



working on this in the final months of 2020. The HHP staff is now also working on a general re-writing of the contents, so that we can launch a fresh, renovated website before the start of the new academic year.

One of the activities that had been planned for the summer of 2020 and that had to be cancelled because of the pandemic was our first Summer School, on which our alumnus and former PhD student Christian Greer was collaborating with us as co-coordinator and teacher. In the end it was decided to move the School to the winter period and to an online format as well. The School has been held in January 2021 and it falls therefore outside of the temporal scope of this report. I will give more details about it in the report for next year, but I can already mention that it has been a huge success and an extremely positive experience for all the persons involved, and especially for the students, who gave glowing evaluations at the end of the program. We are now planning to continue with this activity in the future. The next school will be in early July 2021, also in an online format, but we plan on going back to an on-site format when this will be possible.

Another development in 2020 worth mentioning is the creation of an HHP student association. This will be a very useful interface in communicating with our students and will certainly improve their own social interaction by organising events and get-togethers. The association will also reach out to our alumni, thereby making it easier for us to remain in contact with and keep track of our former students.

Finally, we were happy to see the state-owned part of the Ritman Collection finally return to Amsterdam and land in the Allard Pierson section of the UvA University Library in autumn 2020. This was very exciting news for all of us. We hope in the future to collaborate with Allard Pierson in organising events related to the collection (symposia, exhibitions, etc.). This will have to wait until the general situation returns to normal.

2. Staff

The hiring process for our two new assistant professors (esotericism in Late Antiquity and esotericism in the Middle Ages) took place in the later part of the year. After a thorough selection, the hiring committee decided to nominate Dr. Dylan Burns for the



Late Antiquity position and Dr. Liana Saif for the Middle Ages position. The procedure was completed before the end of 2020 and the starting date for the contracts of our two new colleagues was set in March 2021. Both the selection procedure and the introduction of Burns and Saif into our group have been very smooth and without any hitch. We are extremely happy to have expanded the scope of our research and teaching expertise with such well-respected colleagues, who have already earned significant international recognition.

There have been no other significant changes in our staff in 2020.



3. Teaching: courses and levels of participation

2019-2020, 1st semester, block 3

MA

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

2019-2020, 2nd semester, block 4-5

BA

Western Esotericism from the 18th to the 20th Century (M. Pasi). 15 students

MA

Sufism, Islamic mysticism and Western esotericism (M. Pasi, in collaboration with R. van Leeuwen), 14 students.

2020-2021, 1st semester, block 1-2

BA

Western Esotericism in the Early Modern Period (P.J. Forshaw). 17 students

Western Culture and Counterculture (W.J. Hanegraaff). 35 students

MA

Spirituality and Religion: Theories, Concepts, and Methods (W.J. Hanegraaff and M. Pasi). 13 students

Introduction to Western Esotericism and Spirituality (W.J. Hanegraaff). 12 students

Renaissance Esotericism I: History of Alchemy (P.J. Forshaw). 16 students

Nature and the Supernatural (P.J. Forshaw). 18 students



4. Research

4.1. Research output (academic)

Peter J. Forshaw

“Michael Maier and Mythoalchemy”, in: *Furnace and Fugue: A Digital Edition of Michael Maier's Atalanta fugiens (1618) with Scholarly Commentary*, ed. by Tara Nummedal and Donna Bilak, University of Virginia Press, 2020. [Michael Maier and Mythoalchemy · Furnace and Fugue](#)

“Alchemical Images”, in: *Encyclopedia of Early Modern Philosophy and the Sciences*, ed. by Dana Jalobeanu and Charles T. Wolfe, Springer, Cham, 2020, 10 pages. [Alchemical Images | SpringerLink](#)

Wouter J. Hanegraaff

“Imagining the Future Study of Religion and Spirituality,” *Religion* 50:1 (2020), 72-82.

“Western Esotericism and the Orient in the First Theosophical Society,” in: Hans-Martin Krämer & Julian Strube (eds.), *Theosophy Across Boundaries : Transcultural and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Modern Esoteric Movement*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2020, pp. 29-64.

“The Santo Daime Church in the Netherlands: Why the ECHR Should Consider the Case” (Massimo Introvigne, Wouter J. Hanegraaff & Holly Folk), *The Journal of CESNUR*, supplement to vol. 4:2 (2020), pp. clvii-clxii.

“Psychedelica in de Westerse cultuur: Onnodige psychiatrisering van visionaire ervaringen,” *Tijdschrift voor Psychiatrie* 62 (2020), pp. 713-720.

“Alan Moore’s Promethea: Countercultural Gnosis and the End of the World,” in: April D. DeConick and Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta (eds.), *Gnostic Countercultures: Terror and Intrigue*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2020, pp. 225-248. [reprint from 2016]

“Open Access to the Absolute: Some Remarks on the Concept of Religion,” in: Kurt Almqvist (ed.), *Religion: In the Past, the Present Day and the Future*, Stockholm, Bokförlaget Stolpe / Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation for Public Benefit. 2020, pp. 109-124. [reprint from 2015]

Review of Yulia Ustinova, *Divine Mania*, *Aries* 20:1 (2020), pp. 125-127.

Manon Hedenborg White

“Auktoritet, proximitet och femininitet inom den ockulta nya religionen thelema”, in: Simon Sorgenfrei & David Thurffjell (eds.), *Kvinnligt religiöst ledarskap: en vänbok till Gunilla Gunner* [Huddinge], Södertörns högskola, 2020, pp. 137-148.

“From Chorazin to Carcosa: The Black Pilgrimage of Jack Parsons and Cameron.” *LIR.journal*, 12 (2020), pp. 52-73.



Hedvig Martin-Ahlén

“Hilma af Klint and The Five: The Time of Preparation”, Iris Müller Westermann and Milena Høgsberg (eds.), *Hilma af Klint. Artist, Researcher, Medium*, [Malmö], Moderna Museet, 2020, pp. 61-67.

Marco Pasi

“Afterthought Forms. Theosophy in Modern and Contemporary Art”, in: Kurt Almqvist and Louise Belfrage (eds.), *Hilma af Klint Visionary*, [Stockholm], Bokförlaget Stolpe, 2020, pp. 92-109. [incorrectly mentioned in the previous report as being published in 2019]

“Esoteric Experiences and Critical Ethnocentrism”, in: Kurt Almqvist (ed.), *Religion. In the Past, the Present Day and the Future*, [Stockholm], Bokförlaget Stolpe and Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation for Public Benefit, 2020, pp. 161-173. [reprint from 2015]

“Esoteriska upplevelser och kritisk ethnocentrism”, in: Kurt Almqvist (ed.), *Religion. I historia, samtid och framtid*, [Stockholm], Bokförlaget Stolpe and Axel och Margaret Ax:son Johnsons Stiftelse för Allmännyttiga Ändamål, 2020, pp. 161-173.

“Hilma af Klint, Western Esotericism and the Problem of Modern Artistic Creativity”, in: Kurt Almqvist and Louise Belfrage (eds.), *Hilma af Klint. The Art of Seeing the Invisible*, Bokförlaget Stolpe and Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation for Public Benefit, 2020, pp. 99-110. [reprint from 2015]

“Västerländsk esoterism och modern konstnärlig kreativitet”, in: Kurt Almqvist (ed.), *Hilma af Klint. Konsten att se det osynliga*, [Stockholm], Bokförlaget Stolpe and Axel och Margaret Ax:son Johnsons Stiftelse för Allmännyttiga Ändamål, 2020, pp. 99-110.

4.2 Other publications

Manon Hedenborg White

“Om det feminina uppvaknandet.” In: Elin Berge, *Awakening*, [Stockholm], Bokförlaget Max Ström, 2020.

5. Public activities

Peter J. Forshaw

Head of Ritman Research Institute: supervising students as Honorary Researchers and as Interns, working on grant application collaborations between HHP and EFM; collaborating on event organization (lectures, tours and exhibitions).



Co-Supervision of PhD Lyke de Vries at Radboud University, Nijmegen (with Christoph Lüthy). Lyke successfully defended her thesis on 26 March 2020.

John Dee Monas Hieroglyphica Reading Group (with Dr Stephen Clucas), *Embassy of the Free Mind*, Weekly, February, March 2020

Chair of Lucinda Martin's lecture, 'The Feminine in God: Divine Wisdom and the Writings of Jacob Böhme', *Embassy of the Free Mind*, 6 February 2020

Chair of Sarah Green's lecture on 'The Invisible Worlds of John Pordage', *Embassy of the Free Mind*, 20 February 2020

Chair of Stephen Clucas's lecture on 'Occult Vision John Dee, Seeing and Skrying', *Embassy of the Free Mind*, 22 February, 2020.

[Most activities cancelled due to Covid, e.g. 'Women and Alchemy', Leiden, 20 March; Workshop on Alchemy, "La chimie dans l'histoire, la philosophie, l'art et la littérature" Paris, 24 March; 'Alchemical Imagery Conference, Princeton, July]

Active with Instagram account @petrus.malus to help with HHP social media. (Currently 48,000 followers).

Wouter J. Hanegraaff

Lectures

"Hermetic Spirituality," Opening Lecture Master Program "Spirituality and Religion, University of Amsterdam, 31 August 2020. [Hermetic Spirituality - \(OMHP D0.08 - Live\) - 31-08-2020 001 \(uva.nl\)](https://www.uva.nl/en/omhp/d0-08-31-08-2020-001)

"Psychedelics as Rejected Knowledge," International Conference on Psychedelic Research (OPEN Foundation), Zoom, 26 September 2020.

Interviews and Media Appearances

"Wouter Hanegraaff: Bohové vstupují dovnitř," *Legalizace* #59, 28 May 2020 [Wouter Hanegraaff: Bohové vstupují dovnitř - Legalizace | Magazín, který vám rozšíří zorničky](https://www.legalizace.cz/bohove-vstupuji-dovnitř/) (Interview in Czech; English translation: "Enter: The Gods," *Creative Reading*, 25 September 2020, [Creative Reading: wouterjhanegraaff.blogspot.com](https://www.creative-reading.com/wouterjhanegraaff))

Blogposts ([Creative Reading: wouterjhanegraaff.blogspot.com](https://www.creative-reading.com/wouterjhanegraaff))

"In Search of Humanity: Reading Thomas Mann," *Creative Reading*, 30 March 2020.

"Living with Ambiguity: Chaim Potok's *The Book of Lights*," *Creative Reading*, 6 May 2020.

"Alterius Non Sit, Qui Suus Esse Potest: Will-Erich Peuckert's *Pansophie*," *Creative Reading*, 9 June 2020.

"The Third Kind: Gilles Quispel and Gnosis," *Creative Reading*, 11 July 2020.

"Yes, It Is Possible... (Rainer Maria Rilke)," *Creative Reading*, 24 July 2020.



John MacMurphy

Class lectures

“Bible and Creation” class – guest lecturer – *Nature and the Supernatural* course – Fall 2020 – University of Amsterdam.

“Kabbalah and Creation” class – guest lecturer – *Nature and the Supernatural* course – Fall 2020 – University of Amsterdam.

Conferences

“Scientific and Occult Influences on Jewish Kabbalah”. ASE Ninth International Conference, *Esotericism and the Scientific Imagination*, May 14 – 17, 2020, University of California, Davis, California, USA. [Status: abstract proposal accepted. Conference was cancelled due to COVID-19. Abstracts and tentative schedule were published, see http://www.aseweb.org/?page_id=459.]

“Between chymia and Alchemy: Chayim Vital’s Intimate Relationship with Western Occult Praxis”, presented at the “*For There I, Hayyim, was Living*”: R. Hayyim Vital and His World. A Conference Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of his Death (1620-2020), September 14th-16th, 2020, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and The Ben Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East. [Status: conference venue was originally Be’er Sheva and Jerusalem, Israel. Due to COVID-19, the event was converted to an online format, see <https://www.sites.google.com/view/vital400/en>]

Hedvig Martin-Ahlén

Interviews and media appearances

Interview with Fulgur Press on Hilma af Klint, “Hilma af Klint: Painting with Spirits”, July 2020, <https://fulgur.co.uk/hilma-af-klint-painting-the-unseen/>.

Participant in the Q&A on the film “Beyond the Visible - Hilma af Klint”, with Halina Dyrschka and Marco Pasi. Organised online by Drawing Room and Modern Films (London), 29 October 2020.

Mriganka Mukhopadhyay

Lectures

“Travel of the Words: Locating the Importance of Translation in the History of Theosophy and Occultism”, Current Issues Seminar, University of Amsterdam, 21 September 2020.

“Theosophy in Bengal: Organisation, Individual and Ideas”, Department of South Asian Studies, University of Lausanne, 20 October 2020.



Conference Organization

Organisation of the panel “Esotericism in a global context: centres, margins, and everything in between”, for the 22nd IAHR quinquennial world congress, University of Otago, Dunedin (NZ), scheduled on 23-29 August 2020 (congress cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic). In collaboration with Marco Pasi and Henrik Bogdan.

Organisation of the panel “Occult South Asia: Rethinking the History of Modern South Asian Religions and Spiritualities through the Lens of Esotericism Research and vice versa”, 26th EASAS Conference, University of Vienna, scheduled on 29 July-1 August 2020 (congress postponed to 26-29 July 2021). In collaboration with Karl Baier.

Academic Administration

Elected as the Student Representative to the ESSWE and thus became an ex-officio Board Member to the ESSWE for a period of two years (January 2020-December 2021).

Manon Hedenborg White

Lectures

“The Scarlet Woman: From Magical Mistress to Feminist Archetype”. Video lecture recorded for *Treadwell's Books*, London, UK. Ca 1 hour. https://www.treadwells-london.com/lectures?fbclid=IwAR3DVLh90w64iLiGQRY8rh-uyrvHuyYDqm5_sOMev09eiNvacsvDmKcFQUM

“From Chorazin to Carcosa. The Black Pilgrimage of Jack Parsons and Cameron.” Carl Kellner Camp — Ordo Templi Orientis Austria, June 11, 2020. Zoom.

“Scarlet Women: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Western Esotericism”, *Current Issues in Religious Studies*, University of Amsterdam, May 11, 2020. Zoom.

Interviews and media appearances

“Scarlet Women with Dr. Manon Hedenborg White”, host: Amelia Quint, *Bad Astrologers* [podcast], ca 73 mins. December 18, 2020. <https://badastrologers.fireside.fm/scarletwomen>

“Pt 2. Interview with Dr. Manon Hedenborg White & the ESOGEN Network.” *Rejected Religion*. Ca 23 mins. November 20, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3l9cwV7ZMM&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1CB2jRz4hPXjgi4jw_H2XNGwWrhsL5KnUF1tT5Cs7sw_63yh1e-O_tl9k

“Sect of Nacozari”, host: Alex Letic. *Sekter* [podcast produced by Spotify Studios/Parcast], ca 45 mins. September 13, 2020. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/7JFv3okVKbKrRwM3rcXQah>

“Manon Hedenborg White talks to Harper Feist about her book, *The Eloquent Blood*”. *Thelema NOW!* [podcast], ca. 69 mins. 27 juni. <http://thelema-now.com/thelema-now-guest-manon-hedenborg-white-2020>

“Interview with Dr. Manon Hedenborg White & the ESOGEN Network”. *Rejected Religion*. Ca 9 mins. April 1, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cT7Y9vHiIck&t=9s>



Marco Pasi

Lectures

Participation as external contributor (invited) in the workshop “Esoterische Praktiken in globaler Perspektive”, organised by the International Consortium for Research in the Humanities (FAU), Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. Erlangen, 15 January 2020.

Chair of the Q&A on the film “Beyond the Visible - Hilma af Klint”, with Halina Dyrschka and Hedvig Martin Ahlén. Organised online by Drawing Room and Modern Films (London), 29 October 2020.

Conference Organization

Organisation of the panel “Esotericism in a global context: centres, margins, and everything in between”, for the 22nd IAHR quinquennial world congress, University of Otago, Dunedin (NZ), scheduled on 23-29 August 2020 (congress cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic). In collaboration with Henrik Bogdan and Mriganka Mukhopadhyay.

Member of the Program Oversight Committee of the XXII Quinquennial Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), University of Otago, Dunedin, 23-29 August 2020 (congress cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

Organization of public events

Curatorship, in collaboration with Lars Bang Larsen and Simon Grant, of the exhibition “Not without My Ghosts: The Artist as Medium”, Drawing Room - Hayward Touring, London, 10 September – 1 November 2020. Subsequently touring to the following locations: Millennium Gallery, Museums Sheffield (3 Dec. 2020 - 28 Feb. 2021); Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea (20 March - 13 June 2021); The Levinsky Gallery, The Arts Institute, University of Plymouth (16 July - 3 October 2021); Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool (15 Oct. - 11 Dec. 2021). Reviews: *The Guardian*, *The Spectator*, *Art Review*, *Art Monthly*, *The Burlington Magazine*, *Apollo: The International Art Magazine*, *Royal Academy of Arts Magazine*, *Hyperallergic*, *i-news*.

Interviews and media appearances

Paul Steenhuis, “Allard Pierson wil voortaan meer dan een museum zijn”, *NRC Handelsblad*, 11 December 2020, p. C19.

Interview with Juan Pablo Bubello on esotericism in Spanish-speaking countries (in Spanish), History of Hermetic Philosophy Amsterdam YouTube channel, 2 March 2020.

“Luigi Pericle and esotericism”, videoclip for the “Luigi Pericle on stage” series, Archivio Luigi Pericle, April 2020.

Stephanie Shea, “Hermes's Smörgåsbord of Esoteric Delights”, Rejected Religion Podcast, in 2 parts, 14-15 October 2020.



“Mokum E10: Visions of the Occult”, Mokum Podcast: Stories from Amsterdam, Summer Programmes - UvA, 29 October 2020.

6. Editorial activities

Peter J. Forshaw

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

(editorial board) *Ambix: Journal of the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry*. 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 - New York: Oxford University Press.

Wouter J. Hanegraaff

(editorial board) *Religion*. Elsevier.

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

(editorial board) *Religion Compass*, Section “New Religions”.

(editorial board) *Metamorphoses: International Journal of Rudolf Steiner Studies*, frommann-holzboog.

(advisory board) *Aegyptiaca: Journal of the History of Reception of Ancient Egypt*.

(advisory board) *Journal of Contemporary Religion*. Carfax

(advisory board) *Nova Religio*. University of California Press.

(general editor) “The Brill Esotericism Reference Library.” Leiden / Boston: Brill.

(editorial board) “Aries Book Series: Texts and Studies in Western Esotericism.” Leiden - Boston: Brill.

(advisory board) “Oxford Studies in Western Esotericism.” Oxford University Press.

(member research council) “Scripta Classica”.



Manon Hedenborg White

(book review editor) *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*.

(co-editor in chief) *Correspondences: Journal for the Study of Esotericism*.

Marco Pasi

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

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

(editorial board) *Politica Hermetica*.

(editorial board) *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies*.

(editorial board) *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*.

(editorial board) *Pessoa Plural: An International Journal of Pessoa Studies*.

(editorial board) *e-Rhizome. Journal for the Study of Religion, Culture, Society and Cognition*.

(editor in chief) "Aries Book Series: Texts and Studies in Western Esotericism," Leiden - Boston: Brill.

(co-editor in chief) "Axolotl: Studi di Storia delle Religioni." Milan: Mimesis.

(advisory board) "Bustrofedica," Rome: Aracne Editrice.