THE 2ND CONFERENCE OF THE
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN NETWORK
FOR THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF WESTERN ESOTERICISM
(CEENASWE)

ESOTERICISM, LITERATURE AND CULTURE
IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

BELGRADE 27-28 MAY 2016.
FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY,
STUDENTSKI TRG 3

ORGANIZERS:
FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE
CEENASWE
EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF WESTERN ESOTERICISM
(ESSWE)

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
BOAZ HUSS (BEN GURION UNIVERSITY, BEERSHEBA)
SERGEY V. PAKHOMOV (SAINT-PETERSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY)
MARCO PASI (UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM)
RAFAł T. PRINKE (EUGENIUSZ PIASECKI UNIVERSITY, POZNAń)
YURI STOYANOV (UNIVERSITY OF LONDON-ALBRIGHT INSTITUTE JERUSALEM)
GYÖRGY ENDRÉ SZÖNYI (UNIVERSITY OF SZEGET-CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY, BUDAPEST)
NEMANJA RADULOVIĆ (UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE)
A number of pseudepigraphic texts preserved and disseminated in the medieval Byzantine and Slavonic Orthodox world betray distinctive elements of esotericism and visionary mysticism which has been characteristic of some currents in Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature in which the revelations, granted during a heavenly ascent to the ascent protagonist, are seen as secreted by necessity to an inner group. These traditions were inherent, for example, in *The Vision of Isaiah*, and were adopted and elaborated in medieval Eastern and later, Western Christian dualist literature. In a manner similar to the way ancient Gnostic schools and groups have inherited and re-interpreted esoteric attitudes, revelations and interpretations from the Jewish apocalyptic and apocryphal literature they came to use, the medieval Christian dualists absorbed (admittedly only partially in comparison to the Gnostics in late antiquity), similar attitudes and notions from the texts they adopted, which would explain the resurgence of specific, if not always apparent, strands of esotericism and visionary mysticism in medieval Christian dualism. The marked presence of a predilection for elaboration of new apocryphal literature and vivid apocryphal stories in support of dualist doctrines both in medieval Eastern and Western Christian dualism, some of which were indeed seen as belonging to the *secreta* of the elite religious grade of the *perfecti*, presents another parallel to ancient Gnosticism, in which the creation of Gnostic secret myths was a crucial part of the process of ‘a self-conscious re-mythologization’ by Gnostic teachers. Both the important differences and parallels between initiatory and esoteric traditions in ancient Gnosticism, on one hand, and medieval Eastern and Western Christian dualist heresy, on the other, highlight again the need to integrate medieval Christian dualism and its assimilation and re-interpretation of late antique pseudepigraphic literature into the scholarly study of comparative Western esotericism and explore the relevance of these processes to its history.
Yuri Stoyanov is Research Associate at School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (Department of the Languages and Cultures of Near and Middle East) and Senior Fellow of the Albright Institute in Jerusalem. He obtained his MA degree at University of Sofia and PhD at The Warburg Institute (University of London). His research fields include cosmologies, soteriologies and eschatologies of Zoroastrianism; dualist, heretical, mystical, esoteric and apocalyptic currents in the Abrahamic faiths; Eastern Christian theologies and ideologies of warfare; religious sectarian groups and minorities in the Balkans; status of religious and archaeological sites in these regions and associated cultural heritage protection issues. Books: The Hidden Tradition in Europe (1994); Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World C. 650-C.1450: Selected Sources (1998); The Other God. Dualist Religions from Antiquity to Cathar Heresy (2000); Defenders and Enemies of True Cross (2011).
Abstracts

Konstantin Burmistrov. Russian emigration of the 1920s – 1930s in Yugoslavia and esotericism

After the Civil War in Russia, not less than 50,000 Russian immigrants, mostly associated with the White Army, settled in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The government and especially the king Alexander I Karadjordjevic tried to create the most favorable conditions for new immigrants. By February 1921, about 215 colonies of the Russian refugees were established in Yugoslavia. Not surprisingly that numerous Russian cultural and educational institutions, societies, publishing houses emerged in the main cities, including Belgrade and Novi Sad. Not a few people among the immigrants were still in Russia engaged in spiritual pursuits belonging to various esoteric schools and groups. Thus, in the 1920s-1930s Yugoslavia became one of the most important centers of Russian esotericism in exile. I will review in my paper the main points in the development of esotericism among Russian emigrants in Yugoslavia in the period between the two world wars. First, I’ll discuss the views of one of the most controversial exponents of the Russian esoteric movement - Gregory Schwartz-Bostunitsch (1883-1945?). This writer, playwright, and journalist, was a staunch opponent of the communists and a convinced occultist. He was made a name for himself in Nazi Germany in the 1930-1940-ies as an author of some anti-Semitic works on the international conspiracy of Jews and Freemasons. It is known, however, that he started working on this issue as early as at the beginning of the 1920s in Belgrade. The early versions of his books on Freemasonry, Kabbalah, and the global conspiracy were created and published at that time in Russian in Novi Sad and Belgrade, and soon translated into German. After moving to Germany in the mid-1920s, he continued to take part in the Russian esoteric activity. In the early 1930s, Bostunitsch became a member of the editorial board of the most respectable and serious Russian esoteric periodical, “Occultism and Yoga”, published in Belgrade by a zealous occultist Alexander Aseev (1902-1993). The scope of the matters discussed by its authors was extremely wide, comprising Agni Yoga, Martinism, Rosicrucianism, parapsychology, healing etc. So, an overview of esoteric issues which were essential for the Russian refugees in Yugoslavia is to be given in the paper.
Konstantin Y. Burmistrov is senior research fellow at the Department of Philosophy of Islamic World, Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow, Russia), specializing in the history of Jewish philosophy and mysticism.

Łukasz Byrski. Magical Books of Wisdom in Ancient Egypt and China and their reception in modern culture

It is not surprising that in the Ancient Egypt – one of the cradles of written culture – appeared also the idea of magical usage of writing. The specific form of writing and connecting it with the cosmogonic myth lead Egyptians to believe that there is source of all knowledge written in the book (scroll) by the god Thoth himself. Most interesting however is that already in ancient times people started to pass on the stories about quests in purpose of obtaining this book. Not far from it was the Chinese culture facing similar context – very old written tradition and non-alphabetic logophonetic writing system. This idea of the secret hidden book of knowledge was not lost of course and its latest versions of the story are told by cinematography. This presentation will trace the original sources, reconstruct the ancient beliefs and compare them with how they are shown in our times in movies.

Łukasz Byrski. obtained B.A. in cultural studies, specialisation: comparative studies of civilizations (Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland), B.A. in archaeology (Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland), M.A. in cultural studies, specialisation: comparative studies of civilizations (Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland). Currently PhD candidate in the Department of the History of Religion of Institute for the Study of Religions (Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland). University teacher in the Department of the History of Religion of Institute for the Study of Religions (Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland) and Department of Comparative Religion (Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia).
Matylda Ciołkosz. The pātañjala yoga of Leon Cyboran. How the Yoga Sūtra was given a Polish voice

The purpose of the paper is to discuss the interpretation of the aṣṭāṅga yoga of Patañjali provided by the Polish philosopher and Sanskritologist, Leon Cyboran.

Cyboran (1928-1977), who received his PhD from the University of Warsaw in 1970 for a dissertation on the ‘philosophy of yoga’, remains one of the most influential Polish Indologists. He is best known for his comprehensive, critical translation of the Yoga Sūtra and the Yoga Bhāṣya (the 4th century text on yoga authored by Patañjali and the commentaries thereto attributed to Vyāsa). This translation, accompanied by a comprehensive introduction, remains an important reference for Polish scholars, students and yoga enthusiasts.

In the paper, the author will discuss the interpretation of the ‘philosophy of yoga’ proposed by Cyboran, as well as its possible sources. In the discussion, both academic and non-academic influences on this interpretation will be considered. Significant biographical factors will be taken into account, i.a Cyboran’s personal experience as yoga practitioner, as well as his interest in esoteric currents, such as astrology.

The presented material will be based on in-depth textual analysis of Cyboran’s work, as well as on interviews with his colleagues and former students.

Matylda Ciołkosz is a PhD student at the Jagiellonian University Institute for the Study of Religions. Her research concerns the relation between āsana practice and the interpretation of religio-philosophical notions in strands of Modern Postural Yoga.

Helena Čapková. Traces of the great Arahats - orientalisms and Bohemian art scene in the context of local esotericisms

This short presentation aims to test the idea of to what extent the study and passion for the arts of Orient resonated with artists who were equally inspired and involved with occult circles and groups practicing esoteric activities. According to the recent scholarship, the strong connection
between the arts and esoteric activities in the late 19th and the first half of 20th century has become very clear and it is currently being explored by a good number of researchers. The ties with the phenomenon of Japonisme, that served as the key reference point for artists till WWII, and its relevance for artists in Bohemia and later in Czechoslovakia is still relatively little explored area of study.

This presentation will explore only a fraction of this realm, focusing mainly on circles around František Drtikol (1883-1961), the Theosophical Society and networks of yoga practitioners in the era between the two wars.

Helena Čapková is an Assistant Professor teaching art history at the School of International Liberal Studies of the Waseda University in Tokyo. She received her PhD. at the TrAIN (Transnational Art Identity and Nation) Research Centre of the University of the Arts in London.

Ewelina Drzewiecka. “Enlightened Esotericism”: A Case Study on Migrating Ideas in the Modern Bulgarian Tradition

The presentation raises the question of place and significance of the Enlightenment motifs in a modern esoteric tradition. The object of analysis is texts of the Bulgarian esoteric writers and proponents and the paradox of the hybridization of ideas. The focus is on the writings of the authors from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, such as Konstantin Velitchkov, Peter Deunov, Nikolay Raynov, and Ivan Grozev, and the main goal is to interpret the ideas of education/schooling, religion and secularization in the light of the process of implementation and local adaptation of meanings.

The research is part of a larger project entitled “Migrating ideas in the Slavic Balkans (XVIII-XX c.)” and conducted in the Institute of the Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. It is devoted to the problem of migration of ideas related to Enlightenment and Modernity in the Slavic Balkan, and the main source materials are written texts understood as a testimony of both the semantic and the pragmatic level of their functioning.
Ewelina Drzewiecka is Assistant Professor in the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences and in the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of „Slavia Meridionalis”.

Małgorzata Alicja Dulska. The Prophets of the New Age. Mickiewicz, Słowacki and Krasiński in Polish Esoteric Writings in the Interwar Period

The three most important Polish national bards, Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki and Zygmunt Krasiński, were treated as prophets of the New Age in esoteric writings in the interwar period. Their predictions did not only pertain to Poland’s historical mission but also to the salvation and rebirth of the whole world.

Based on a vast number of source materials including esoteric magazines published in Poland in the twenties and the thirties (such as Lotos, Odrodzenie, Wiedza Duchowa, Hejnał), I would like to present the roles of the three poets and the interpretations of their works, undertaken by such characters as Agnieszka Pilchowa, Józef Chobot or Karol Chodkiewicz.

Romantic poets were presented as spiritual teachers of mankind. Their works were treated as sacred books and had greater authority than the Bible. This reflected not only on the prophetic nature of their works, their writings were also a kind of a validation of the esoteric world’s vision.

Mickiewicz played an important role and his specific soteriological-eschatological concept, included inter alia in the book: Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego (1832).

When writing about Mickiewicz, one can’t neglect Andrzej Towiański’s figure and his ‘God’s Cause’ (Sprawa Boża), especially that his beliefs have also influenced Słowacki and Krasiński. The reception of Towiański’s views, Słowacki’s esoteric mystical and Krasiński’s christian messianism created a kind of an esoteric mixture of ideas on the pages of esoteric publications, which can be exemplified in the conception of Poland as a simultaneous impersonation of Job and Christ of Nations. Poland has also been chosen to build the Christian Kingdom of God on Earth and the Church of the Holy Spirit.
The aim of my presentation is to demonstrate a diverse image of ideas and a variety of contents formed in the Polish esoteric milieu, based on the works of messianic poets.

Małgorzata Alicja Dulska is a PhD student at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland, at the Faculty of Philosophy, Institute for the Study for Religion. Her research focus on the soteriology on the esoteric movements in Poland between 1918-1939 and explore different concepts of the salvation in the esoteric writings.

Nadežda Elezović. Živorad Mihajlović Slavinski-Author of Globally Influential Systems of Spiritual Technology.

In this paper I will deal with spiritual growth techniques of Živorad Mihajlović Slavinski (Belgrade, 1937), author of some 30 books in the field of Western Hermeticism, and author and creator of about twenty methods and techniques of mental self-development, growth of consciousness, and methods in the field of spiritual technology. His gathered knowledge and authorial systems which he created and exhibited in his books had a significant impact on personal spiritual growths, views of life and general ways of living upon many people today.

Živorad Mihajlović Slavinski was the first in Southeast Europe, Serbia and in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia to bring forward and make accessible the practices in the fields of Hermeticism, Mysticism, Gnosticism to general public, and to describe and provide overviews of some of the existing systems of contemporary Hermeticism in his books. In his early books, published from 1970 onwards, he described some operative psychomagic techniques, magic formulas and publicly unavailable occult knowledge. Slavinski is a psychologist by profession, founder of The Ecclesia Gnostica Alba (White Gnostic Church) in former Jugoslavija, creator of the Gnostic Intensive technique aiming to “obtain direct experience of Truth”.

Having studied numerous existing systems of spiritual growth over decades, he focused on development and improvement of these existing systems, and then creating new techniques and methods to solve everyday problems. Today he is an author of about twenty popular methods and systems of Spiritual Technology, teaching them through workshops with coaches he had
personally trained. Furthermore, there are a growing number of coaches who use and advance his practice in their own professional therapeutic practices.

**Nadežda Elezović** is an independent curator and art critic. Working as an art critic for the daily newspaper and art magazines, she has published over a hundred art criticisms, reviews and overviews on contemporary art exhibitions in Croatia and Europe.

Jan Miklas-Frankowski. „*Visions from San Francisco Bay*” as an example of esoteric inspirations in Czesław Miłosz’s work

Esoteric and gnostic themes appear in Miłosz’s work from early, catastrophical ‘Three winters’ (1935) to the last *summa* - ‘Theological Treatise’ (2001). The experience of the world’s cruelty and recognition that its structure is embedded with evil affected both his worldview and work.

Reflections about “Californian variety of the twentieth century civilization” in Czeslaw Milosz essays lead to a creation of concept of “neo-manichaeism” that is best in bringing out the state of a contemporary man. On one hand this state relies on aversion to the Nature, reluctance to agree to Nature’s laws and a feeling of one’s distinctiveness, on the other hand on shock with one’s own animalism. According to Milosz, a very important feature of a society observed in the Sixties is “abhorrence to impersonal cruelty, written in a structure of the Universe”. You can defend yourself against evil matter only with human power, as “God retreated, losing His attributes”. However “the fear of Hell’s fire haven’t disappeared, but, like to the old Manes’es pupils, Hell is embedded in our surrender and vulnerability towards nature’s powers residing inside us – today’s domain of biologist, doctor and psychiatrist.” In Milosz’s opinion the main difference between old and neo-manichaeism is a certainty of “man’s loneliness (…) in limitless space in motion, empty, as there is no voice heard from within”.

**Jan Miklas-Frankowski** is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Journalism at the University of Gdańsk. His main area of research includes work of Czesław Milosz and Polish contemporary reportage.
Karolina Maria Hess. **Fascination with the Occult and the East:**

**Literature of Władysław Reymont and the First Generation of Polish Theosophists**

While Władysław Stanisław Reymont (1867–1925) is not often considered an author interested in Modern Theosophy, he referred to Theosophical themes many times in his works, e.g. in a novel *The Vampire* (1911). He took part in the Theosophical Congress that was organized in London in 1894, where he met Annie Besant in person. He was also a colleague of Julian Ochorowicz, a famous Polish psychologist and researcher of Mediumic phenomena. The paper analyzes the figure of the Polish Nobel Prize winner in the context of his fascination with Occult phenomena and Eastern and Theosophical thought.

Reymont, however, can be connected to Theosophical interests not only through his clear inspirations and references in his works, but also directly through contact with a milieu of scientists, writers, painters etc. that may be called the first generation of Polish Theosophists – that is people connected to organized circles of the Theosophical Society’s members and sympathizers. Those Polish circles weren’t registered as an official branch of the international organization before 1923, although there were attempts to do this, and artists involved in them were – with no doubt – Theosophists.

The aim of the paper is to trace and analyze Theosophical references in literature at the turn of 20th century focusing on the example of Reymont, showing the background of the wider context of the Polish Theosophical movement of the time.

**Karolina Maria Hess** is a Ph.D. candidate at the Faculty of Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Her research interests include Western esotericism, especially Theosophy, cultural and philosophical anthropology and philosophy of religion. She is a member of Polish and international organizations devoted to the academic study of Western esotericism.
Boaz Huss. **Moses Gaster and Western Esotericism**

Moses Gaster (1856-1939) the Jewish scholar and Rabbi who was born in Rumania, became the Sephardi chief Rabbi of England, after his expulsion from Rumania in 1885. Gaster is very well known as a scholar of Rumanian folklore, a scholar of Jewish studies, as well as a Jewish communal leader and Zionist. His interest in the occult and his relations with western esoteric circles is much less known.

In the lecture, I will present new findings concerning Gasters' interest in the occult, his affiliation with the Theosophical Society and his close friendship with G.R.S Mead. In light of these new findings, I will examine Gasters' scholarship of Kabbalah and its place in the early academic study of Jewish Mysticism.

**Boaz Huss** is a Prof. of Jewish Thought at Ben-Gurion University. He received his PhD in history of Jewish Thought from the Hebrew University, after which he was a Fulbright post-doctoral fellow at Yale University. He was a Starr fellow at the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University, and a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies of Jerusalem. His recent works include: *Kabbalah and Contemporary Spiritual Revival* (as an editor)2011; *The Question of the Existence of Jewish Mysticism*: The Genealogy of Jewish Mysticism and the Theologies of Kabbalah Research, (forthcoming, in Hebrew); *Zohar: Reception and Impact*, (forthcoming). He is the vice-President of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism. His research interests include history of Kabbalah, Western Esotericism, New Age Culture and New Religious Movements.

Massimo Introvigne. **Artists and Theosophy in Present-Day Czech Republic and Slovakia**

Building on other “regional” studies of how Theosophy influenced artists in specific countries and regions, the paper focuses on present-day Czech Republic and Slovakia. It considers the influence of Theosophy on such well-known artists as Ladislav Mednyánszky (1852-1919) and František Kupka (1871-1957). It explores the circle around Josef Váchal (1884-1969) and the gatherings in Prague in the studio of Theosophist and sculptor Ladislav Jan Šaloun (1870-1946).
It also discusses the photographer František Drtikol (1883-1961), concluding that Theosophy was both an important and continuous influence on Czech and Slovak visual arts.

**Massimo Introvigne** is professor of Sociology of Religions at Pontifical Salesian University in Torino, Italy, and founder and managing director of CESNUR, the Center for Studies on New Religions. He is the author of some sixty books on new religious movements, sociology of religions, and esotericism.

Martin Javor. **Masonic magazine Orpheus in Kosice (1790 – 1791)**

Freemasonry was active also in Hungary. City of Košice was very unique as for the establishment of journals. There was a lodge in Kosice in the 90’s of the 18th century. It was called "Zur ungefährdeten Tugend" (To the fearless virtues). Hungarian writer Francis Kazinczy was the most important member of the lodge. He published a freemasonry magazine in Košice called Orpheus, which was also his freemasonic name. *Orpheus* magazine, which was published by Francis Kazinczy using the pseudonym Széphalmy Wintze, focused on all the areas of life in Hungaria at that time. It contained literary, political, philosophical and poetic contributions. It was written mostly in Hungarian, but it also included German, French and Latin texts, which were then translated into Hungarian.

The first issue of the magazine for example included the Reinis` translation of Vergilius, geographical description of the road from Miskolc to Košice, translations of *Hamlet*, Diogenes and Rousseau. It also contained the poem "The air around Kosice". The next issue contained Lessing`s poems, a travel guide of Jager (Eger), but also the "Ode to the ceremony of the transfer of the Hungarian crown into its homeland." The magazine also contained political discussions like the comparison of the forms of administration in England and Hungaria, but also "The description of the wild man found in 1781 near the town of Brasov." The wide range of this magazine proves the maturity of the intelligence in Košice.

In *Orpheus*, members of the intelligence introduced the idea of a new type of state and demonstrated it on the development in England, France and the Netherlands. In particular, the
English political situation served as a reference point for establishment of a new form of government in Hungaria.

**Martin Javor** is an associate professor at University of Prešov, Slovakia. His research is dedicated to the history of Freemasonry in Central Europe.

Henrik Johnsson. **Alchemy as Poetry: The Case of O.V. de L. Milosz**

The subject of this presentation is the presence and function of esoteric discourse and topoi in the poetry of the poet and dramatist Oscar Vladislas de Lubicz Milosz (1877-1939). Today best remembered as a career diplomat, Milosz has nonetheless attracted a certain amount of attention from scholars interested in examining the relationship between esotericism and literature, such as Jean Richer and Arthur Versluis. Academic research into the oeuvre of Milosz remains limited, however, particularly in regard to how Milosz draws inspiration from esotericism when creating his own literary aesthetic. The presentation will address this research lacuna by highlighting the role of alchemy in the works of Milosz. Alchemy, the single most prominent esoteric current to be found in Milosz’ writings, contributes to his development of a highly personal cosmology which is expressed using motifs commonly associated with alchemical treatises. The presentation examines these motifs and analyzes how Milosz appropriates and reinterprets them, thereby offering an example of how elements of esotericism can be transferred from the domain of esotericism proper to that of literature.

**Henrik Johnsson** is Associate Professor of Scandinavian Studies at Aarhus University, Denmark. He received his doctoral degree from Stockholm University in 2009. His second monograph *The Infinite Coherence. August Strindberg ‘s Occult Science* was published in 2015. His current research interests revolve around the intersection of esotericism and Modernist culture, with an emphasize on Scandinavian prose Modernism.
Eva Kovacheva. Importance of the Occult School of the White Brotherhood opened by Peter Deunov (The Master Beinsa Duno) in Sofia in 1922.

This study will examine the spiritual teaching White Brotherhood founded in Bulgaria by Peter Deunov (the Master Beinsa Duno) and the "Occult School of the White Brotherhood“ established in Sofia in 1922. The reason for researching it is that, in the first place, that nowadays there are the original sources available in big volume and in contemporary Bulgarian language. Second, in 1991 in Bulgaria it has been a growing interest in the personality of Peter Deunov and his ideas in Bulgarian culture, media and social area. And third, last decade has seen a significant increase in the number of studies on the teachings in all areas of science - religion, philosophy, cultural studies, sociology, ethnology, musicology, literature, psychology, aesthetic education, pedagogy, arts, medicine and sport.

The aim of this study is to present the foundation of the "School of the White Brotherhood“ in Bulgaria in the first half of the 20th century as a historical fact, to expose the available definitions of it and clarify the concept of "occult school“, to represent the structure of available degrees and classes, as well as cycles of performed lectures and discourses, to present the principle of organization, to enlist the forms of transmission of teachings and to identify the main methods of teaching. The object of this study will be limited to delineating what was new and original in the School of the White Brotherhood at the time of its creation.

Eva Kovacheva obtained her BA degree in Orthodox theology at St.Kliment’s University (Sofia) and specialization at Protestant theology and comparative religion at Phillips University (Marburg), where she defended PhD thesis on White Brotherhood. She is currently assistant-professor at Plovdiv University (Faculty of Philosophy and History, Department of Theology).

Eugene Kuzmin. Valery Bryusov (1873-1924): Selling the Soul as a Method of Research

Sympathy for the Devil and demonism in Russian fin de siècle literary circles are apparent and well-known; they have previously been studied and described from various perspectives. The prominent role of Valery Bryusov, the Russian poet, historian, and critic, in that trend is also
commonly acknowledged. Bryusov himself became a character in many private horror stories in literary circles. Existing studies of Bryusov’s occult interest focus, however, on such points as: (1) the serious inclinations of a poet cannot be taken seriously; (2) occultism was fashionable and Bryusov took advantage of the fact for his own career; and (3) it is easy to explain everything through biographical facts, and this position, for instance, has had a considerable impact on interpretations of Bryusov’s occult masterpiece *The Fiery Angel*.

But the author’s own voice expresses his own concepts better than any theoretical speculations on his inclinations. Bryusov was in fact building a framework for a new science, which would comprise art, modern science, and occult knowledge. He set out those ideas in his articles (for instance, *On Art, Methods of Mediumship, New about Methods of Mediumship, To those who Search*), in his poetry and prose (mostly in *The Fiery Angel*), and in private conversations. The principal method of his new science was, however, called for 'selling the soul to Devil' - complete and absolute obedience to spirits or any guest from a supernatural reality. Bryusov's demonism thus goes well beyond aesthetic fashion or mask of decadence. Bryusov preached Satanism in circles with a Satanist inclination, but was misunderstood; his message was misinterpreted as a joke.

**Eugene Kuzmin** is an independent researcher of the history of science. In 2010 he received his PhD from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (published as *Alchemical Imagery in the Works of Quirinus Kuhlmann (1651-1689)* (2013)).


Multiple motifs characteristic of ancient groups, which are frequently lumped together under the notion of ‘Gnosticism’, has been fruitfully applied by Polish literary critics to study oeuvre of Polish and non-Polish authors, e.g. Bruno Schulz, Jerzy Hulewicz, Tadeusz Miciński, Aleksander Wat, Mikhail Bulgakov or Franz Kafka. Though some of their inquiries are basically correct, they usually lack methodological accuracy or even refer to unscientific works.
In the first part of my paper I will depict a critical reading of various articles of Polish literary critics, e.g. Artur Jocz, Katarzyna Szewczyk-Haake, Anna Chudzińska-Parkosadze or Krzysztof Brenskott and outline the main theoretical difficulties of their analysis’ by alluding to the recent research results in Gnostic Studies. Afterwardly, I will argue that the above-mentioned authors perceive Gnosticism as a rigid category. I will present several instances which illustrate that Polish literary critics often define Gnosticism as an uncontroversial term both on theoretical and historical level. In the second part I will depict interpretations of other Polish literary critics, e.g. Michał Czerwiński or Jacek Kwosek, who are aware of manifold constraints with applying the term ‘Gnosticism’ to literary studies and as a result to analyse works of narrative fiction through Gnostic beliefs.

Hence, the juxtaposition of probes of Polish critics presented in the first and in the second part of my paper will lead me to depict a conceptual framework which could be used in Literary Studies or in Film Studies for inquiring works of fiction by the usage of Gnostic notions. I will base my theoretical model on several suggestions proposed by Czerwiński and Kwosek and complement them by my own ideas.

**Fryderyk Kwiatkowski** is PhD candidate in Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University. His dissertation is devoted to the reception of Gnosticism in contemporary pop-culture.

David William Mac Gillavry **Rethinking Esotericism: A Cognitive Science account of Western Esotericism and Occultism**

It is often assumed that people have a natural tendency to tell the truth and reveal their secrets. However, recent advances in social psychology and the cognitive sciences call this assumption into question and with it, the conventional theories of religious secrecy. Instead of an unequal exchange in which a secret keeper is compelled by his nature to open up to a passive receiver, secrecy communications necessitate a reciprocal relationship between the secret keeper and receiver. It can thus be assumed that secrets are revealed either when a secret keeper and a potential receiver are both willing to accept the obligations which come with secrecy communications or when the need for secrecy subsides.
In this paper I will demonstrate that people often perceive supernatural, concealing agents in cases of naturally inaccessible information (What happens after death? Why are we here? etc.) or information which is naturally difficult to access (the precise workings of nature). The act of presenting religious knowledge as secret or esoteric therefore facilitates the formation of concepts which involve a personal relationship with the divine agent who supposedly revealed that knowledge. Wouter Hanegraaff has already argued that a doctrine which involves experiential knowledge of God is a prerequisite for a philosophy to be defined as esoteric and the following argument aims to support this claim. However, this paper goes beyond Hanegraaff’s study in that it analyses the concept of a personal relationship with God through the cognitive structures which underpin the secrecy communications which lie at the basis of esotericism.

David William Mac Gillavry obtained MA degree in Western esotericism at University of Amsterdam. He is PHD student at Masaryk Univeristy (Prague) specializing in the same field.


Philip K. Dick (1928-1982) was one of the most enigmatic and prolific science fiction writers of the 20th century. His many works not only influenced other popular writers, such as Jonathan Lethem, William Gibson and Ursula K. Le Guin but were also adapted into Hollywood blockbuster films, such as Blade Runner (1982), inspired by his 1968 novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, Total Recall (1990), based on his 1966 work titled We Can Remember It for You Wholesale, and Minority Report, which first came out as a short story in 1956. However, while his stories captured the imagination of popular audiences worldwide, it was his own mystical experiences and visions that shaped not only his writings, but his cryptic metaphysical world view. Dick also drew many ideas from occult thinkers, such as Paracelsus (1493-1541), Jakob Bohme (1575-1624), Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), and from various esoteric traditions, such as Hermeticism, alchemy, magic and Kabbalah. Up until now, his works, as they relate to the traditions of western esotericism, have not received much scholarly attention. This paper examines some of the esoteric themes that are incorporated in Dick's corpus. In particular, this
study explores the connection and influence of the 13th century kabbalistic mystic Abraham Abulafia (1239-1291), the father of ecstatic Kabbalah, and the VALIS trilogy, an unfinished novel set that Dick claimed was written in collaboration with Abulafia. By examining the Abulafian literature and Hebrew based corpus as well as Dick's biography, theosophical writings and novels, this paper argues that although some affiliation does exist between Dick's writings and ecstatic Jewish esotericism, the themes presented are most likely based on general popular material available to him at the time, most notably, Gershom Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.

**John M. MacMurphy** is currently a guest researcher at the University of Amsterdam, where he recently graduated from the Research MA program in Religious Studies (Western Esotericism) focusing on ecstatic Jewish esotericism (RMA thesis: “Abraham Abulafia and the Academy: A Reevaluation”). His primary research interest includes the reception of ecstatic or prophetic Kabbalah within western esotericism.

Sergej Macura. *The Bride of Night: An Esoteric Journey in Against the Day*

The paper discusses the events experienced by Cyprian Latewood, the only character in Pynchon’s novel who “lacks the conventional marriage resolution demanded by the author’s pastiche” (Jarvis 2013) and finds peace at a Bogomil monastery located in the seclusion of the Balkan Range, in the midst of the First Balkan War. Owing to the laws of constructing a fictional world in which semi-fantastic picaresque occurrences are acceptable in all the corners of the globe, and also to the fact that there is scarce evidence of the actual early historical development of the Bogomil sect in those parts of the peninsula, the author could dispense with the historian’s accuracy, thus inventing links between Orpheus, Pythagoras, Asiatic dualism, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the sometime prohibited Lydian mode and the Interdikt line across Thrace, all figuring as equally important critical issues of the highly volatile world of early-twentieth-century espionage. The research focuses on the so-called underground esoteric currents that form the tributaries to Cyprian’s final decision to take holy orders, after spending his youth as a sexually ambivalent person (Yashmeen Halfcourt being his Euridice, from the secret society
called the True Worshippers of the Ineffable Tetractys), and serving as a politically dominated low-ranking spy during the Great Game. As the novel revolves around the topos of spatiotemporal bilocation and abounds in Doppelgängers, the subject matter includes: influences of Orphism on the Pythagorean religion, Protean identity change over longer historical spans, the “unyielding doubleness of everything” (Pynchon 2007: 1074), an alternate view of Night as preceding the creation of the universe, the Orphic descent/return myth, and the opposition of gnosis to the totalising dominance of science and technology, all set in parodically connoted Manichaean structures.

Sergej Macura works as a senior language instructor in the English Department at the Faculty of Philology University of Belgrade; he wrote his M.A. thesis on Henry James’s views of drama and the theatre (revised into a book and published in 2009), and is currently working on a Ph.D. thesis on the narrative techniques of Thomas Pynchon.

Tancredi Marrone. Franz Bardon: Techniques of Self-Narrative. Initiation into Hermetics, Practice of Magical Evocation

In this paper I will connect the works of Franz Bardon with the template of the monomyth and selfidentification narratives. In his books (Initiation into Hermetics and The Practice of Magical Evocation) Bardon details a training procedure which takes the willing reader through exercises and practices to develop occult powers, transforming the latter into a magician. These abilities, Bardon explains, can be acquired only through hard work and correct mental attitude (Bardon 1956). The second concept I will work with is narration as an integral part of self-identification. The creation of a narrative self when language is acquired is inevitable and incontrollable (Dennet 1991). Through language, words and stories, virtual selves are created (Daniel Dennett 1991) in turn generating narrative selves (Gallagher 2003). Moreover self-narratives are connected with the narratives of others (Ricoeur 1984). The processual element of self-narration will be provided by the concept of monomyth. Otherwise known as the Hero’s Journey, it is a template which describes the development of a subject who leaves a condition of stability to venture into the unknown, overcoming an obstacle or enemy and returning home however
fundamentally changed by the experience (Campbell 1949) (Schwartz 1969). I will first analyze whether following the magical practices as described by Franz Bardon fulfills the characteristics of the monomyth, thus creating for the practitioners a story of transformation comparable to that of the Hero’s Journey. Subsequently, I will identify whether following the practices described in the books, thus understood as a personal narrative transformative experience, contributes to the formation of a self-identification with the role of a magician.

Tancredi Marrone is M.A. student from the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen specializing in ethnographic fieldwork and cognitive sciences as methodology with contemporary Hermeticism and ceremonial magic as primary research interest.

Jiří Michalík Paracelsus and the beginnings of his reception in 16th-century Bohemia

Paracelsus visited Bohemia in 1530’s and during this stay he finished Astronomia magna, one of his most influential works. His intellectual and scientific reception started in Bohemia shortly in 1560’s. The key figures in the early adoption of paracelsian ideas in Bohemia were astronomer and scientist Tadeáš Hájek z Hájku (Thaddaeus Hagecius ab Hayek) and alchemist Bavor Rodovský z Hustřan. Hagecius and Bavor determined two major branches of the reception, namely the scientific-hermetical reception and the alchemical-hermetical one. During last quarter of 16th century Paracelsus’ ideas were being constantly present in both versions, it means just not only in Prague at Rudolf II’s court, but also at the courts of magnates like Rosenberg’s.

Jiří Michalík studied philosophy and history at Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic. He also studied at Universität Konstanz and Universität Regensburg. His major field of study is the late Renaissance hermeticism and its fruitful interaction with early modern science. He wrote a book (revised PhD theses) on the Kepler-Fludd discussion and now is working on the book concerning J. Kepler’s encounter with contemporary paracelsians.
Snežana Milinković. *Morgante and Malagigi as a personification of poetic creativity in Luigi Pulci’s epic in the context of the last decades of the XV century in Florence.*

Although Luigi Pulci’s epic *Il Morgante* has long since been read in the light of the author’s peculiar attempt to engage a dialogue with the neoplatonic circle, gathered at first at Cosimo’s, and later at Lorenzo Medici’s court, around the unquestionable authority of Marsilio Ficino, only recently – thanks to Annalisa Perrotta’s inspiring paper – have both the protagonist (after whom the epic was given the name, acclaimed by the public), and Malagigi (in the tradition of *cantari* well known Rinaldo’s brother and Orlando’s cousin) been interpreted as two opposed and antithetic narrativised symbols of general poetic creativity as well as of the author’s individual creativity, in a direct dialogue with Ficino’s Christian-theological reading of Plato’s ideas on poetry. The author of this paper will try to point out not only the basic themes of that “dialogue”, led through the text that during the process of writing, but also Pulci’s attempt to adjust his conception of poetry and literature to Ficino’s, already dominant in Florence in the eighties of the XV century.

*Snežana Milinković* is an Associate Professor of Italian Literature at University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology. Her research interest involve: history of the genre *novella* and the importance of Boccaccio’s *Decameron*; *il poema epico-cavalleresco* (Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto); cultural and literary concept of love in Italian poetry from the XIII to XVI century.

Eszter Molnár. *The influence of theosophy and Eastern mysticism in the works of the Hungarian poet Sándor Weöres*

Sándor Weöres (1913-1989) was one of the best Hungarian poets in the 20th Century. All the experts believe that he was a real genius. My lecture tries to uncover a special spiritual interest of the poet, namely theosophy and Eastern mysticism. As the monographer of Weöres, Zoltán Kenyeres pointed out that Sándor Weöres had already taken part in theosophical meetings in his early childhood. The violinist Karl Baltz and his wife Ilona Molnár often visited the poet’s mother Mária Blaskovich who was an educated woman with a refined taste. Among these friends
Sándor Weöres and his mother participated in theosophical gatherings in Csőnge, a village located in Western Hungary where the Weöres family lived and ran a farm.

Henry Steele Olcott, an English colonel was the founder of theosophy in the 1870’s. The main goal of this community was making contact between various religions and philosophical systems. „There Is No Religion Higher Than Truth” – we read on the shield of the Theosophical Society. We can be sure that Sándor Weöres read the works of Annie Besant (1847-1933) who was also a member of the Society and the popularizer of the Eastern mysticism. The poet’s childhood readings included a book ’A sors törvénye’ written by Besant. The first Hungarian theosophical novel ’Az újraélők’ by József Pásztor which probably was also an inspirative reading for the poet is also worth mentioning. Béla Hamvas and Nándor Várkonyi, philosophers and writers – friends of Sándor Weöres – also exerted an influence on the poet’s cast of mind by introducing him to the world of Traditionalism. According to Zoltán Kenyeres „the influence of occult studies and mystical philosophies can be detected in his image-creating fantasy even decades later.”

Eszter Molnár is a Ph.D candidate. She attended to the Doctoral Programme of Modernism in Literature at Eötvös Loránd Science University, Budapest (Hungary). The title of her dissertation is ‘Magical images and magical language of Hungarian Literature and Fine Art at the 20th Century interwar period’.

Tomasz Niezgoda. Poland as warrior messiah in the works of Adam Mickiewicz

Mickiewicz remains one the most well regarder poets of the romanticism. While there was some concern about this matter, most of the scholars assume the so called messianism, embraced fully in metaphor Poland as Christ of Nations, of polish poet was not just literary ornament created to amuse readers, but rather an expression of genuine religious experience. His Works – „Forefathers’ Eve” and „The Books of Polish People and of the Polish Pilgrimage” – are permeated with the idea that Poland is nations choosen by God, ever faithfull to Christ, and therefore has significanct religious mission.

According to Mickiewicz Christ revealed to the world that the its history telos is to spread freedom not only to every man, but also to every nation. And for time mankind act according to
it, but in the medieval ages European kings afraid of loosing their power, made false idols, and therefore rejected Christ and his teachings. The only nation remaining faithful to Christ was Poland and thus rulers of „unholy trinity” – that is rulers of Russia, Prussia and Austrian empire – anointed Poland. But for Mickiewicz Poland is the Christ of Nations and so eventually will be not only resuscitated, but also will defeat those evil empires and introduce the millenaristic realm of freedom.

In my paper I would like to show and discuss from the phenomenological perspective the relation between Poland and Christ. Firstly I would discuss the concept of Poland as messiah suffering under partitions and scapegoat of the mankind taking on it’s shoulder sins of European nations. Secondly I will move toward the concept of eschatological violence, as through suffering Poland is changed into warrior messiah destroying in the warfare evil nations.

Tomasz Niezgoda is PhD candidate at Institute for Religious Studies, Jagiellonian University, Poland. He wrote several articles about messianism of Adam Mickiewicz.

Pavel Nosachev. The influences of Western esotericism on Russian rock poetry of the turn of the century

Russian rock music of the 1980s - 2000s by the opinion of many scholars has become a phenomenon largely formed by the religious interests of its creators. For example, the fascination of one of the classics of Russian rock Boris Grebenshikov for Buddhism, Christianity and Hinduism is well known. But scholars rarely raise the question not about religious, but about esoteric influences in the works of Russian rockers. In the paper, we plan to review key influences of the esoteric teachings on the formation of Russian rock music of the turn of the century. This overview will examine in details the works of bands Va-Bank, Nautilus Pompilius, the Orgy of the righteous, Rada and Ternovnik, Civil defense and performers Sergei Kuryokhin, Vasily Shumov, Psuy Korolenko. It is possible to highlight several key questions that are important to the review: which of the representatives of Western esotericism inspired Russian musicians; what images, teachings, theories they used in their music and songs; how conscious was their appeal to esotericism; was it a tribute to fashion, artistic technique or an expression of
personal opinion. The answers to these questions will help to reveal the specific nature of the influence of Western esotericism on the Russian rock and to show its originality or maybe even its uniqueness.

Pavel Nosachev is associated professor of the Department of Cultural studies in the National research university Higher school of economics in Moscow. His PhD thesis was devoted to the semiotics of Umberto Eco.

Stanislav Panin. The role of poetry in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian esotericism: a case of Ian Koltunov

The paper is dedicated to the study of poetry as an instrument of transmission of esoteric ideas in late Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. For centuries, poetry have been playing a prominent role in esoteric currents. One can remember such figures as W. B. Yates or A. Crowley when it comes to esoteric poetry. However, in Soviet Russia, where atheism was an official ideology, the role of poetry was especially important, because poetry, together with science fiction, were two main spheres where esoteric ideas can survive. From famous activists of late Soviet “mystical underground,” like Eugenii Golovin, to relatively unknown authors, Soviet seekers of esoteric shared their insights in the form of poetry.

In the paper, the author analyzes books of Ian Koltunov – a Soviet rocket engineer who created in 1980s a doctrine of “Cosmic Self-Programming” (Russian: Космическое Самопрограммирование) and expressed it in a series of books in a form of poetry with extensive commentaries. The case of Ian Koltunov is interesting, because he can be regarded as a representative example of late Soviet esotericist. As many other esotericists of that time, he was an engineer who looked for spiritual answers and found them by means of creation of an original esoteric doctrine that incorporated some ideas of cosmism, yoga and Chinese martial arts. Further study of such typical cases can lead us to better understanding of spiritual atmosphere of late Soviet Russia.
Stanislav Panin is Associate Professor at D. Mendeleyev University of Chemical Technology of Russia, Department of Philosophy and board member of the Association for the Study of Esotericism and Mysticism.

Nikola Pešić. New age healing in Marina Abramović’s art

In this paper it is argued that New Age healing is a recurring component in work of Serbian performance artist Marina Abramović. Healing is generally understood as one of the crucial aspects of New Age religiosity. Whereas official western medicine is engaged in curing diseases of the body, New Age healing is concerned with obtaining/preservation of health understood in holistic terms as perfect harmony between body, mind, soul, and spirit. Different aspects of New Age healing in Abramović’s art, from the beginning of her career in 1970’s up to the present are taken under consideration. After a short review of Abramovic’s early performances, that have been often interpreted as ritualistic ordeals of the modern artist-shaman-healer, a special attention is given to series of “Transitory objects”. Abramović has been producing these sculptural artworks since 1989, using different crystals, minerals, and metals — natural materials considered by her to be naturally imbued with different “energy vibrations,” or occult healing powers. Abramović’s recent exhibitions “The Artist is Present”, “512 Hours” and “Generator” are also taken under consideration as specific manifestations of New Age healing ideas in contemporary art context. The importance of Abramović’s esoteric experience during her recent visit to the Brazilian spiritist medium and faith healer João de Deus (John of the God) in Abadiânia, described in her “512 Hours” exhibition catalogue, is analyzed. Finally, attention is given to future “Marina Abramović Institute” in Hudson (NY) and “The Abramović Method” — a syncretic series of exercises presented by Marina Abramović as designed “to explore boundaries of body and mind.” It is proposed that “The Abramović Method” could be interpreted as idiosyncratic vision of meditational practice for mind healing, or “brain spa” — as artist herself refers to it.

Nikola Pešić is contemporary artist from Serbia. He obtained his B.A. and M.A. degrees from
the Faculty of Visual Arts in Belgrade. He is currently working on his PhD thesis on esoteric and occult in Marina Abramović’s Art, at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade.

Spyros Petritakis. “Throughout the Dark, the Light”: mapping out the networks of Theosophists in interwar Athens through the case study of Frixos Aristeas (1897-1951).

From the end of 19th century onwards, heterodox religious trends have exhibited in Greece a momentum that culminated in the pre-Balkan Wars period. Theosophical, decadent, occult and Buddhist discourses, mingled in the same pot with Socialist, Marxist and other reformative ideas, were disseminated in the intellectual milieu of Athens that appropriated and infiltrated them through the lens of more prevailing narratives, such as the ideal of ancient Greek heritage, of Orthodoxy etc. However, the institutionalization and concretization in formal forms of these tendencies takes place during the 1920s, when a network of spiritualists is established that promulgates via journals and lectures its message to the Athenian public.

After having studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, Frixos Aristeas established himself in Athens where he frequented certain circles of intellectuals, critics and writers, whose books, heavily inspired from occultism and Theosophy, he often illustrated. Among them the cases of the novelist and play writer Polybios Demetrakopoulos (1864 – 1922) or the founder of the Society of Psychical Research in Athens (1923), Aggelos Tanagras (1877-1971), are the most well known, yet still being inadequately researched. Moreover, at that time Aristeas began writing an unusual treatise on “etheric colours” titled “Throughout the Dark, the Light”, which draws heavily on theosophical ideas and ether physics.

I will work my paper into two directions: First, I will sketch out the way these occult/theosophical networks were operating in Athens in the 1920s and early 1930s, a period when this colorful mosaic of spiritual ideas served to the artists and literates as the seedbed in order to cultivate new ways of artistic expression or construct unconventional tools of social critique. On the other hand, I will particularly focus on the case of Aristeas and his interconnections with important novelists, who appropriated Theosophical discourses in their work. If indeed Aristeas’ work harbors within it various theosophical ideas, how then could we understand the meaning communicated through it? How has his work been apprehended in its
critical reception and in what way did it assimilate or interact with mainstream ideological narratives or versions of modernity in this particular cultural environment?

Spyros Petritakis studied history, archaeology and music. Currently he is Ph.D. Candidate in Art History, University of Crete, Greece (thesis: Music and Visual Arts in the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th (1880-1914): Ideological premises and realizations of scientific discourses on colour-music in the networks of Symbolists and Theosophists).

Róbert Pölcz. Spiritual Alchemy in Gábor Bódy's Narcissus and Psyche

The life and oeuvre of neo-avantgarde video artist, filmmaker and film theoretician Gábor Bódy has remained an unsolved puzzle since his early death at the age of 39 in 1986. He left behind some of the most brilliant, puzzling and provocative films of Hungarian cinema including three features, multiple longer video works and dozens of experimental shorts. Although his extraordinary visual talent and cutting edge theoretical insights are often subjects of film studies publications, there has little been said about the mystical and occult aspects of his works. This is probably due to the overwhelming complexity of the subject, as acquaintance with intellectual history, film and media theory, art history and esotericism are all required to be able to decipher the complex issues upon which he builds his filmic experiments. In this paper I propose to examine Bódy's work from this perspective, and argue that the esoteric and the occult as an organizing principle takes a central role in most aspects of his later work, including dramaturgy, character formation, narration, sound design and visual imagery. To prove this assertion I will take a closer look at one of his most important filmic epos, Narcissus and Psyche, and highlight the system of alchemical symbolism that form the backbone of the work. I will also examine a few of the filmic devices he uses to establish the presence of the supernatural on the screen. I will use his own film theory together with contemporary works in occult esthetics as a theoretical framework for the study.
Róbert Pólcz obtained his degrees in history and English at University of Szeged and degree in religion at Debrecen Reformed Theological University. He is currently PhD student at University of Szeged (Doctoral School for Literature).

Rafał T. Prinke. **Michael Sendivogius as a literary antihero.**

Apart from being the most frequently published early modern alchemical author Michael Sendivogius (1566-1636) is also the historical alchemist most often pictured in literary fiction. There are numerous literary texts (novels, dramas, short stories) for both adults and children, in which the Polish alchemist is the protagonist, and also some where he is a secondary character. Written in Polish, Czech and German, most of those works depict him in negative light, as a dishonest person, with morally suspect motifs. The roots of such attitude may be traced back to mid-17th century, when the black legend of Sendovogius, later treated as historical truth was created. Another group of literary works shows more creative approach, inventing new plots and sometimes representing the alchemist as a proto-scientist.

Rafał T. Prinke holds an MA in English Studies (1977) and a PhD in History (2000), both from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. In 2015 he received the "doctor habilitatus" (dr hab.) degree from the Institute of the History of Science, Polish Academy of Sciences. He is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Tourism at Eugeniusz Piasecki University, where he teaches informatics and does research on the theory and history of tourism and sociology of travel. The other areas of research which he pursues largely as an independent scholar cover history of science, intellectual history and that of esoteric currents, with special interest in alchemy, as well as genealogy and heraldry.

Noel Putnik. **Occultism, Politics and Public Imagination in Post-Communist Serbia**

In all ex-communist European countries, the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a tremendous growth of public interest in esotericism. In Serbia, this interest was to a considerable
extent related to the socio-political and cultural environment of a society faced with major challenges. The curious nexus between esotericism and politics was additionally fostered by the atmosphere of war and regional enmities, in which extraordinary circumstances often called for extraordinary approaches. The public sphere was saturated with psychics, prophets, astrologers, etc. who felt obliged to interpret reality and educate the endangered nation. A remarkable trait of this phenomenon was (and to some extent still is) a widespread belief in the links between occultism and various intelligence and secret services employing people from the esoteric milieu for their own ends. In some instances, such as the case of the well-known paramilitary Group 69, there are indications that appear to support this belief.

In my paper I will examine the main elements and examples of this peculiar mode of “re-enchanting the disenchanted world” in the broader context of the socio-political situation in post-communist Serbia. Taking into account the role of the various re-emerging national and supranational myths, I will attempt to delineate the conceptual framework within which this particular type of notions has developed and gained deep roots in public imagination.

Noel Putnik holds a BA in classical philology from Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia, and an MA in medieval studies from Central European University, Budapest, Hungary. In his ongoing PhD research project (CEU) he examines the work of the German humanist Cornelius Agrippa and his attempted synthesis of various spiritual doctrines in the broader context of Renaissance syncretism. He is also increasingly interested in modern forms of esotericism, which has recently become another field of his academic involvement.

Nemanja Radulović. Romanticism, Orthodoxy and Esotericism in The Ray of Microcosm by P. Petrović Njegoš

Petar II Petrović Njegoš (1813-1851), Prince-Bishop of Montenegro, is considered as one of the greatest Serbian poets, mostly due to The Mountain Wreath, a national epic characteristical of Romanticism. Beside this canonical work, in 1845. he published The Ray of Microcosm, usually described as a philosophical-religious long poem, of Miltonian inspiration. Although Njegoš was bishop of Orthodox church, main themes of the poem stirred interest and controversy
among researchers because of their heterodox nature. The poem describes human beings as angels who committed sin in preexistent state, by joining Satan in his rebellion. Earth and material bodies were created as prison and place of expiation, while, as an act of God’s mercy, remembrance of preexistent angelic nature was taken from human memory.

Research was focused on finding the sources of Njegoš’s themes and they were traced respectively to Platonism; Origenism; Bogomilism; some images were contributed even to Kabbala and Freemasonry; contemporary poetry (Byron, Lamartine, Russian poets of 18th century). However, we argue that the main subject of the poem stems from esoteric Christianity of 18-early 19th century (like Martinesism) where preexistence has important place.

Nemanja Radulović is associate professor of folk literature at Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade. He also writes about influence of esotericism on Serbian literature and culture.

Mauro Ruggiero. **The influence of Western Esotericism on the poetry of the Czech poet and essayist Otokar Březina.**

Otakar Březina, pseudonym of Václav Ignác Jebavý (1868-1929), was a Czech poet and essayist considered the greatest of Czech Symbolists. Březina's poetical expression was rich in metaphors, parables, religious and mystical elements. During his life, the poet was influenced by esotericism, mysticism and occultism and was member of esoteric societies and very active on the Czech esoteric scene between the end of the 19th century and the first part of 20th. Březina's first collection of poetry, *Tajemné dálky* (mysterious distances), appeared in 1895 and was followed by four more volumes of mystic, highly imaginative verse. Březina is considered one of the greatest of Czech poets and in his works he always tries a deep exploration of the mystical links between art and life and between visible and invisible world. Some of Březina’s poems appeared also on the very famous Italian esoteric magazine: “Ur-Krur” directed by Julius Evola in 1929.

Mauro Ruggiero is Ph.D candidate in the Department of Romance Literature at Charles IV University in Prague (Czech Republic). His Ph.D. thesis is: “Esotericism in
the Italian Culture and Literature at the Beginning of the 20th Century”. He was the organizer of the international convention: “Esotericism, occultism and fantasy in Italian Literature from the fin de siècle to avant-garde” (Prague, Czech Republic, April 13th-15th 2016).

Vitalii Shchepanskyi. *Hermes Trismegistus in Slavia Orthodoxa: The Written Tradition*

The appearance of the first Hermes Trismegistus’ texts in cultural space «Slavia Orthodoxa» falls on XV century: in Serbian literature Konstantin Filozof’s «Žitije despota Stefana Lazarevića» (Vita of Despot Stefan Lazarević) and in old Ukrainian "Palais Krekhivsky" described by Ivan Franko. Serbian version contains only few lines, but Ukrainian includes individual and very complete section on Hermes Trismegistus’ life. It provides the information on the origin of Hermes, on the story of his father, and on his studying of secret alchemical knowledge in Egypt. Separately is Hermes understanding of the Trinity divine nature allocated.

Orthodox literature of XV century is mostly apophatic. Following the Christian thought of first centuries, which in the face of pseudo-Dionysius Aeropahit stated, that the description accuracy of God is in denial terms only and that our language is not developed enough to express the divine essence. Such statements can be found in the Slavic texts of Hermes. God’s Hermes nature is also stated in apophatic style that is consistent to intellectual atmosphere of Orthodox Slavs. So the scribes were able to tailor the Hermetism founder’s image to their needs, concerning questions on the nature of the Holy Trinity being. In general, it did not contradict to Hermetism, which believes that the more there are meanings contradict to each other, the more obscure the words are used, the more expressed is shown in confusing characters, the more they are suitable to describe the Absolute.

**Vitalii Shchepanskyi** obtained his degree at The National University of Ostroh Academy, Ostroh, Ukraine. He is PhD-student and research assistant in Philosophy (Religious Studies) at the same university. His research interests include archaic forms of religious believes, Shamanism, history of Western esotericism and esotericism in the region of *Slavia Orthodoxa.*
Roman Shizhenskiy. **The question about source basis of the Russian Pagan diaspora (according to field research).**

The topic of the paper is the social composition of the participants of *Kupala* celebration (based on field research) and their “narrative base” (the basis of the adherents’ worldview).

According to the self-description formulars, the average participant of *Kupalo* holiday in 2014. is male, 31 years old, highly educated, working as a professional and living in big federal city. What is characteristical for contemporary Pagan communities is importance of diaspora. Certain seclusion of “Russian Pagan world” is expressed through massive rejection to share second-grade personal data (e-mails). The works of community leaders is reffered to as scholarly literature which confirms the division of the world in “own” and “alien”. Finally, quite superficial answers of informants regarding their sources used for “immersion into tradition” can testify to certain marginalization of the group researched. Indirectly, that shows the closed character of “rodnoverny” groups. This thesis is supported by dominance of answers where narrative genres are being merged: scientific works, publicistics, fiction and pseudoscholarly works are enlisted irerespectively.

Roman Shizhenskiy is leader of the research project *New Religious Movements in contemporary Russia and Europe*. He is head of the department of Russian history and auxiliary historical disciplines of State Paedgogical University K.Minin of Nizhniy Novgorod. His research interests include contemporary Russian and European Paganism where he conducts field work since 2008.

Olaf Stachowski. **The Art of Howling: a history of European spirit evocation practice and its possible Hellenic roots**

The words „Goetia” and „goetic” nowadays usually refer to manuscript called the *Ars Goetia* of Solomon the King. This text, being a manual of evocation of demonic spirits, has been a centre of both fearful and fascinated attention from diverse groups of occult scholars and practioners at least since its unintended popularization through the teachings of the Golden Dawn order and later Aleister Crowley. However, this particular text is but one example of an
extremely interesting and under-researched, while historically very influential tradition, stretching as far back as pre-platonic Greece and into contemporary times, being one of the most hotly disputed aspects of the Western Esoteric tradition on-line. In this paper I am going to present a history of the practice, its suspected Hellenic roots and its many transformations that have ultimately changed a religious funeral practice into a much maligned form of magic. It is my intent to present it as a striking example of the changing attitudes towards and conceptions about religious cosmology, as well as the transgressive and the occult at large in Europe. I also intend to relate the current issues surrounding that topic, being mostly centred around the discussion of the tradition’s unclear religious and philosophical background and its place within the body of Western Esoteric thought.

**Olaf Stachowski** is a student of the Inter-faculty Individual Studies in the Humanities at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, completing the courses of Comparative Religion Studies and Psychology. His main fields of interest are the Western Esoteric tradition, Indian religious traditions and altered states of consciousness, especially experienced within the bounds religious practice.

Oksana Aleksandrovna Stein. **Ascetic practice of Hesychasm: A hermeneutial interpretation**

Hesychasm may be regarded as basis for Christian Orthodox spirituality with ascetic practice. Such experience is closely associated with mysticism. Sergey Sergeyevich Khoruzhy, one of the most prominent and widely known modern scholars of Hesychasm, wrote much against attempts to interpret Hesychasm as an esoteric practice. He philosophically explains the practice of Hesychast Organon as "implementation of ontological mission of a person". The aim of the paper is to deepen Khorunzhy's idea. I shall apply both primal sources and philosophical texts, particularly by Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), to whom Khoruzhy refers.

**Oksana Aleksandrovna Stein** graduated from philosophical faculty of the Ural state university (Yekaterinburg) in 1996. She is associate professor of philosophy of the oldest St. Petersburg state institute of technology (Technical university).
An interesting alchemical novel was published in London, 1777, entitled *L’ Adepte moderne ou Le vrai secret des francs-maçons*. We don't know its author for sure, although Madame Leprince de Beaumont has been suspected – a prolific French writer of children's books and editor of collections of fairy tales (her most famous piece is *The Beauty and the Beast*). The novel had a German translation and in 1790 a Hungarian nobleman, Sándor Báróczi also translated it into Hungarian, thus creating the first literary piece relating to Western esotericism in his native language.

In my presentation I briefly review the novel itself, then focus on the translator-writer and his lengthy preface which is a very scholarly apology of alchemy. It documents the ambiguous status of alchemy as late as the heyday of the Enlightenment.

Báróczi was serving in the imperial guard in Vienna and his connections also throw light at the curious and multi cultural intellectual life of the Habsburg capital at the end of the 18th century.

**György E. Szönyi** is professor of English (Szeged) and cultural/intellectual history (the Central European University, Budapest). His interests include cultural theory, the Renaissance, the Western Esoteric traditions, and conventions of symbolization – early modern and (post)modern. Recent monographs: *Pictura & Scriptura. 20th-Century Theories of Cultural Representations* (in Hungarian, Szeged, 2004); *John Dee’s Occultism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, paperback 2010). In the making: *The Enoch Readers. A Cultural History of Angels, Magic, and Ascension on High; The Mediality of Culture and the Emblematic Way of Seeing*. He is board member of ESSWE and founding member of CEENASWE.

Svetoslava Toncheva. **Petar Deunov’s Esoteric Ideas of the Bulgarians’ National Culture**

The paper deals with the interaction of mainstream esoteric ideas from the first half of the XXth century and the ideas of the Bulgarian nationalism, postulated in the teaching of the
founder of the spiritual community, known as the White Brotherhood in Bulgaria – Petar Deunov. Aiming at transformation of the Bulgarian and the Bulgarian society, P. Deunov offers an esoteric vision of the origin, national characteristics and everyday culture of the Bulgarians. Receiving large popularity, his ideas have influenced the image of the Bulgarian culture and its mission among the adherents of the movement. The aim of the presentation is to discuss the relation of Deunov’s esoteric ideas with popular stereotypes within the Bulgarian culture, as well as the vision of his adepts in relation to the esoteric mission of Bulgaria in the future development of the world.

Svetoslava Toncheva is Assistant Professor in Balkan Ethnology Department, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. She works in the field of new religiosity, completing her PhD on the topic “New Religious Movements in Europe – National and Transnational Contexts” (published as book). She has specialized in Austria (with a project dedicated to the Anthroposophical movement) and Germany (Friedrich-Schiller University, Jena), offering a seminar on the topic “Spirituality and New Religious Movements in South-Eastern Europe”. She works on few international projects, dedicated to the religious identity and the religious transformations after the democratic changes in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Estonia and Russia.

Kateryna Zorya. To See and To Remember: Tolkien-Based Visionary Practices in Post-Soviet Territory

Markus Altena Davidsen's seminal dissertation The Spiritual Tolkien Milieu: A Study of Fiction-based Religion pioneered the study of Tolkien-based religion in the English-speaking world. Davidsen argues that in fiction-based religion, works that are intended by their author as literary fiction are used as authoritative texts on which religious practice is based. The semiotic content of these texts defines the possible types of practices in these new religions. In this paper, I argue that the general social context in which such a new religion appears has more impact on practices than the content of its basic texts. To support my thesis, I will use the example of post-Soviet Tolkienbased religious practice, which developed independently of similar practices in the English-speaking world. While the latter developed largely under the influence of neo-Paganism,
the former was influenced by esotericism, Far Eastern religious practices, and Catholicism. As a result, the types of practices differ significantly: whereas English-speaking Tolkien religionists most commonly cast spells while invoking Tolkien deities, post-Soviet adherents focus on communicating with elven lords, past life regression, attempting to live a life worthy of the Tolkien heroes through mundane and magical means, and receiving channeled history from parallel worlds. The fictional gods of Tolkien are rarely if ever invoked directly, while most magic is based on the innate abilities of the practitioner. Finally, Tolkien's mortal characters are seen as beacons of morality in an uncertain, often bleak daily reality, and ritual attempts to contact them serve to reaffirm the practitioner's own identity and morals.

Kateryna Zorya is a research master's student at the University of Amsterdam department of Theology and Religious studies, with a previous academic background in history of philosophy, history of culture, and ethnography. Her main research interests are the history of magic, occultism and esotericism, as well as the general theory of religion and methodology of religious studies.