

Esotericism in Practice: Sources, Methods, Theories

2018 ESSWE Thesis Workshop
Stockholm University

Date: February 20, 2018

Place: Stockholm University; Room U29, Geovetenskapens hus

Description:

Western esotericism is usually encountered in texts and images and studied in its ideational and aesthetic aspects. We know a lot about esoteric ideas, worldviews, and aesthetic conventions; but what were the people engaged in esoteric ideas *doing*? From magic and alchemy to mediumship and channeling, esotericism has an emphatically practical orientation. Accessing and analyzing esoteric practice, however, invites challenges that are rarely addressed in the field.

This year's ESSWE Thesis Workshop will focus on the methodological and theoretical challenges of studying esoteric practice. What kinds of textual and non-textual sources can we use to address practices of the past? Can we access practice through philology? How do we conduct responsible ethnographic work with contemporary esoteric groups? Can we connect historical research with social science methods? What sort of theoretical frameworks might help us grasp esoteric practices, past and present? How does one write a thesis about esoteric practices? The workshop will address these and other questions through a combination of (I) masterclasses with three specialists focusing on different historical periods, and (II) thematic discussion groups where MA students and PhD candidates get the opportunity to talk about their own work with leading scholars in the field. The workshop also includes a career advice session led by a panel of early-career esotericism researchers.

Workshop organizer: Egil Asprem (egil.asprem@rel.su.se)

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ESSWE
European Society for the
Study of Western Esotericism

SCHEDULE

OPENING

09.00-09.15: Registration and Coffee

09.15-09.30: Welcome by ESSWE President + Workshop organizer

PART ONE: ORATORY (Masterclass lectures by invited speakers)

09.30-10.15: Masterclass 1: Dr. Emmanouela Grypeou (Stockholm University)

Accessing Esoteric Practice in Late Antiquity

10.30-11.15: Masterclass 2: Dr. Liana Saif (Oxford University; Warburg Institute)

Accessing Esoteric Practice in the Middle Ages

11.30-12.15: Masterclass 3: Dr. Kennet Granholm (independent scholar)

Problems and Challenges with accessing Contemporary Esoteric Groups

12.30-13.30 Lunch at the Faculty Club (Manne Sigbahnvillan, Frescativägen 22)

PART TWO: LABORATORY (Thematic discussions in expert groups w/board members)

13.45-15.00: Group discussions in expert groups. Each student gets to present their research topic and formulate questions to the group. Confirmed participants from the ESSWE board: Andreas Kilcher (ETH, Zurich), Boaz Huss (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev), Egil Asprem (Stockholm University), Henrik Bogdan (Göteborg University), Wouter J. Hanegraaff (University of Amsterdam), Bernd-Christian Otto (University of Erfurt), Christine Ferguson (Stirling University), Yuri Stoyanov (Warburg Institute), Nemanja Radulovic (University of Belgrade), and Olav Hammer (University of Southern Denmark).

15.00-15.15: Plenum Session: Each group summarizes the most important challenges and topics that surfaced during their discussions.

15.15-15.45 *Coffee break*

PART THREE: PhD and Early Career Advice

15.45-16.30: Per Faxälv and Manon Hedenborg-White lead a discussion of job/career related issues (application processes, job opportunities, alternative career paths) relevant to early-career scholars.

16.30-16.45: Wrapping up and formal end to workshop

16.45-17.15: ESSWE Members' Meeting

18.00: Visit and wine reception at the Swedenborg Memorial Church and Swedenborg Research Library (Tegnérslunden 7)

19.45: Dinner and drinks at Babajan Bar (Katarina Bangata 75) – *N.B. at own expense!*