

Esotericism and Deviance

Aries Book Series

TEXTS AND STUDIES IN WESTERN ESOTERICISM

Editor-in-Chief

Marco Pasi

Editorial Board

Jean-Pierre Brach
Wouter J. Hanegraaff
Andreas Kilcher

Advisory Board

Allison Coudert – Antoine Faivre – Olav Hammer
Monika Neugebauer-Wölk – Mark Sedgwick – Jan Snoek
György Szőnyi – Garry Trompf

VOLUME 33

The titles published in this series are listed at *brill.com/arbs*

Esotericism and Deviance

Edited by

Manon Hedenborg White and Tim Rudbøg



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Cover illustration: La Licorne or The Unicorn (1884–1885), Painting by Gustave Moreau (1826–1898).
Source/file link: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustave_Moreau_-_La_Licorne.jpg (visited 25 May 2023). In the public domain according to wikimedia commons (see above link).

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Hedenborg White, Manon, editor. | Rudbøg, Tim, editor. |

International Conference of the European Society for the Study of
Western Esotericism (6th : 2017 : Erfurt, Germany)

Title: Esotericism and deviance / edited by Manon Hedenborg White and Tim
Rudbøg.

Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, [2024] | Series: *Aries* book series,
1871-1405 ; volume 33 | Includes index. |

Summary: "The concept of deviance has been central to the academic study
of (Western) esotericism since its inception. This book, being the
proceedings of the 6th Biennial Conference of the European Society for
the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE), explores the relationship
between esotericism and various forms of deviance (as concept, category,
and practice) from antiquity until late modernity. The volume is the
first to combine incisive conceptual explorations of the concept of
deviance and how it informs and challenges the study of esotericism
alongside a wide range of empirically grounded case discussions"—
Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023039818 (print) | LCCN 2023039819 (ebook) |

ISBN 9789004549746 (hardback ; acid-free paper) | ISBN 9789004681040 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Occultism. | Occultism—History. | Deviant behavior. |
Esoteric astrology.

Classification: LCC BF1411 .E75 2024 (print) | LCC BF1411 (ebook) |

DDC 130—dc23/eng/20231019

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023039818>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023039819>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1871-1405

ISBN 978-90-04-54974-6 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-68104-0 (e-book)

DOI 10.1163/9789004681040

Copyright 2024 by Manon Hedenborg White and Tim Rudbøg. Published by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden,
The Netherlands.

Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Schöningh, Brill Fink, Brill mentis,
Brill Wageningen Academic, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Böhlau and V&R unipress.

Koninklijke Brill NV reserves the right to protect this publication against unauthorized use. Requests for
re-use and/or translations must be addressed to Koninklijke Brill NV via brill.com or copyright.com.

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

Contents

List of Figures IX

Notes on Contributors X

Introduction

Or, What We Talk about When We Talk about Deviance 1

Manon Hedenborg White and Tim Rudbøg

PART 1

Theorizing Deviance

- 1 On the Social Organization of Rejected Knowledge

Reassessing the Sociology of the Occult 21

Egil Asprem

- 2 On the Concept of a Deviant Movement 58

Olav Hammer

- 3 Disrupting Sanctified Deviance

The Benefits of Boredom 70

Jay Johnston

- 4 “The Judges of Normality Are Everywhere”

Has Esotericism and the Ideas of H. P. Blavatsky Ever Been Normal? 83

Tim Rudbøg

PART 2

Historical Cases

- 5 Constructions of Religious Deviance in the Greek and Roman Worlds 107

Richard Gordon

- 6 The Deviance of Toz

The Reception of Toz Graecus and Magical Works Attributed to Toz in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries 129

Lauri Ockenström

- 7 Forgotten Knowledge, Deviance and Esotericism
The Eternally Burning Lamps of Fortunio Liceti 155
Martin Mulsow

- 8 Strategic Deviance and Conflicting Loyalties
The Spiritualist Interests of Bishop Ghenadie Petrescu (1836–1918) 173
Ionuț Daniel Băncilă

- 9 Jewish Kabbalah, Christian Onomatodoxy (*Imyaslavie*) and Theological Flexibility in Russia at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century 202
Konstantin Burmistrov

- 10 Vasily V. Nalimov – A Scientist, Philosopher and “Mystical Anarchist” from Komi 225
Birgit Menzel

- 11 Haṭhay=oga as “Black Magic” in Early Theosophy and Beyond 243
Keith Edward Cantú

- 12 Philology as an Epistemological Strategy to Claim Higher Knowledge
Translational Endeavors within the Theosophical Society; A Case Study of Annie Besant’s Bhagavad-Gita 269
Yves Mühlematter

- 13 “I Would Not Have Left Your Platform Had I Not Been Compelled”
Annie Besant’s Exclusion from the National Secular Society (1891) 297
Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière

- 14 Dismissing the Occult
The Links between Esoteric Currents and French Homeopathic Medicine during the First Half of the Twentieth Century 322
Léo Bernard

- 15 The Devil’s Popess
The French Reception of Maria de Nagłowska (1883–1936) in the Early 1930s 348
Michele Olzi

- 16 Confessions of a Persian Opium Smoker
Sadegh Hedayat, Esotericism, and The Blind Owl 374
Kurosh Amoui

- 17 Fernando Pessoa's Multiple Esoteric Deviances 400
Fabio Mendia

PART 3

Concluding Remarks

- 18 Afterword
Rejected Knowledge as a Liberal Art 419
Joscelyn Godwin
- Editors' Conclusion 434
Manon Hedenborg White and Tim Rudbøg
- Index 439

Figures

- 1.1 Truzzi's model of credibility mobility resulting in an "occult hierarchy." Credibility flows in one direction (top down), but the boundaries of legitimate science are moveable 44
- 1.2 Deviance maintenance as a two-way process, vis-à-vis multiple authorized discourses 45
- 7.1 Liceti, De lucernis, title page 160
- 7.2 Obscene roman bronze lamp, found at Pompeji, Naples, National Archaeological Museum 161
- 7.3 Roman oil lamp in Bartoli/Bellori, Le antiche lucerne 162
- 15.1 Frontispiece of Pierre de Ruynes and Jehan Sylvius, *La Papesse du Diable* 350
- 15.2 Photo of Surrealist writer Ernest de Gengenbach (1903–1973), Maria Emanuela Raffi, *Autobiographie et imaginaire dans l'oeuvre d'Ernest de Gengenbach* 351
- 15.3 Photo of Jewish composer and violinist Moše Hopenko (1880–1949) 353
- 15.4 Photo of Hopenko's second wife, Lina Krishevsky 354
- 15.5 Photo of Le Café de La Coupole, 1938, *1900 l'art nouveau*, last time accessed January 30, 2018: http://paris1900.lartnouveau.com/paris14/bd_montparnasse/la_coupole.htm 359
- 15.6 Man Ray, "Portrait of Rrose Sélavy", 1921, *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art*, last time accessed January 30, 2018: <https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/2003.184> 360
- 15.7 Photo Preliminary Golden Mass celebrated on February 5, 1935 at the Studio Raspail, Stéphane Pizella, "L'Amour Magique", *Voilà – L'Hebdomadaire du Reportage*, V, 203, February 1935, 7 361
- 15.8 Portrait of Camille Spiess (1878–1965), Camille Spiess, *Le sexe androgyne ou divin – Essay psycho-synthétique sur la régénération de l'individu ou de la race* 367

Notes on Contributors

Kurosh Amoui

is PhD (ABD) at York University, Toronto, Canada. His research brings together frameworks of World Literature and Comparative Literature with the Study of Esotericism. He has contributed to Brill's forthcoming *Dictionary of Contemporary Esotericism*, and is currently writing on the esoteric and the Islamicate in works of Sadegh Hedayat, Jorge Luis Borges, and the cut-up collaborations of William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin.

Egil Asprem

PhD, is Professor in the History of Religions at Stockholm University. He is the editor-in-chief of *Aries* and a long-term board member of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism.

Ionuț Daniel Băncilă

PhD, is a scientific researcher at the Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy (Bucharest). He studied Orthodox Theology in Sibiu (Romania) and received his PhD at Humboldt University, in Berlin, with a dissertation on Mandaeism and Manichaeism. He was a research associate at the University of Erfurt and Fellow of the Einstein Center "Chronoi", in Berlin. He has published extensively on Gnosticism, Western esotericism in Eastern Europe and Orthodox Christianity. His latest publication is "Esotericism in Romanian Religious History", published in *Aries* journal 23 (2023).

Léo Bernard

is Postdoctoral fellow in history at the *Institut Francilien Recherche Innovation Société* (IFRIS). He holds a PhD in History and Religious Studies from the École Pratique des Hautes Études. His doctoral thesis (defended in 2021) focused on the relations between esoteric currents and medical holism in France during the interwar period. His research lies at the crossroads of Religious Studies and the History of Science and Health. He is the co-founder and current president of the Association Francophone pour l'Étude Universitaire des Courants Ésotériques (FRÉSO).

Konstantin Burmistrov

PhD, is Deputy Director for Research and senior researcher at the Department of Philosophy of the Islamic World of the RAS Institute of Philosophy. Since 2000, he has lectured on the history of Jewish mysticism and philosophy at

a number of Russian universities. In 2005, he defended his PhD thesis on the history of Jewish alchemy. The topics of his research are Jewish and Christian Kabbalah, Jewish Alchemy, the influence of Kabbalah on Freemasonry and Western esotericism. He is the author of three monographs and about eighty papers on the history of Christian and Jewish Kabbalah.

Keith Edward Cantú

PhD, is a Postdoctoral Fellow at FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg, where he is researching connections between occultism and yoga as part of the project “Alternative Rationalities and Esoteric Practices in a Global Perspective.” He was previously Assistant Professor (Postdoc) at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and Teaching Assistant at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he received his PhD. His monograph *Like a Tree Universally Spread: Sri Sabhapati Swami and Śivarājyoga*, will be published with Oxford University Press in 2023. He also has published work related to the Bāul Fakirs of Bengal and Sanskrit alchemy.

Joscelyn Godwin

PhD, is Professor of Music Emeritus at Colgate University, Hamilton, New York. His publications include *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth*, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, *Arktos: the Polar Myth*, *The Pagan Dream of the Renaissance*, *L'Ésotérisme musical en France 1750–1950*, *Atlantis and the Cycles of Time*, *Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World*, *The Greater and Lesser Worlds of Robert Fludd*, *Upstate Cauldron*; translations of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz*, the Ur Group's *Introduction to Magic II and III*, and Hans Kayser's *Orpheus and Akroasis*. He contributed to the first seven ESSWE conferences.

Richard Gordon

PhD, is honorary professor in the Department of Religious Studies (Religionsgeschichte der Antike) and associate fellow of the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Social and Cultural Research at the University of Erfurt. His main current research interest is the social history of Graeco-Roman religion and magic, on which he has published widely. Recent co-edited volumes include *Beyond Priesthood: Religious entrepreneurs and innovators in the Imperial era* (De Gruyter, 2017) and *Choosing Magic – Contexts, Objects, Meanings: The archaeology of instrumental religion in the Latin West* (De Luca Editori d'Arte 2020).

Olav Hammer

PhD, is Professor of the Study of Religion at the University of Southern Denmark. He has specialized in 'alternative' forms of religion in the contemporary West and has published extensively on such subjects as New Age religion, movements in the Theosophical tradition, esotericism, and alternative archaeology. He has in particular investigated the ways in which spokespersons for such currents interact with the dominant discourses of mainstream society. His publications include *Alternative Christs* (edited volume, Cambridge University Press, 2009), the *Cambridge Companion to New Religious Movements* (ed. with Mikael Rothstein, Cambridge University Press, 2012), and *Western Esotericism in Scandinavia* (ed. with Henrik Bogdan, Brill, 2016).

Manon Hedenborg White

PhD, is Associate Professor in History of Religions at Malmö University, specializing in the study of modern Western esotericism, new religious movements, alternative spirituality, gender, sexuality, and authority. Her recent publications include *The Eloquent Blood: The Goddess Babalon and the Construction of Femininities in Western Esotericism* (Oxford University Press, 2020) and the special issue "Rethinking Aleister Crowley and Thelema" in *Aries* journal. She is co-founder of the Esotericism, Gender, and Sexuality Network (ESOGN) and serves on the board of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE).

Jay Johnston

PhD, is Professor at the University of Sydney. She is well-known for her contributions to scholarship on subtle bodies and aesthetics of religion, particularly developing Esoteric Aesthetics as a field of inquiry. Most recently she is author of *Stag and Stone: Religion, Archaeology and Esoteric Aesthetics* (Equinox, 2021) and editor of *Drawing Spirit: The Role of Images and Design in the Magical Practices of Late Antiquity* (de Gruyter 2022).

Fabio Mendia

is PhD in Religion Science at the Pontificia Universidade Católica, São Paulo, Brazil (PUC-SP) and is a member of the NEO study group on contemporary spirituality at the same institution.

Birgit Menzel

PhD, is Professor Emerita of Russian Literature and Culture at the University of Mainz in Gernersheim, where she teaches at the Faculty for Translation and Interpretation. She has published 9 books, two monographs and seven (co-)

edited volumes on 20th and 21st century Russian Culture, including: *Russian Literary Criticism in the Perestroika* (Burgerkrieg um Worte, 2001), *Late and Post Soviet Popular Literature, The New Age of Russia: Occult and Esoteric Dimensions* (Verlag Otto Sagner, 2012). She has also published on altered states of consciousness, parapsychology and transhumanism in Russia. Her current research projects are *Soviet-American Citizen Diplomacy to End the Cold War* and *New Religious Movements in Late and Post-Soviet Russia* (see: newageru.hypotheses.org/ and www.academia.edu).

Yves Mühlematter

PhD, is an expert on Theosophy, especially on Theosophical education with a focus on Annie Besant's pedagogy. He has a strong interest in postcolonial theory and translation studies. He is also an educator and has expertise in teaching methodology. He is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Zürich and a lecturer at the PHBern. His latest publication *Accelerating Human Evolution by Theosophical Initiation* (De Gruyter, 2023) is available as an open access publication. He is currently working on a project about the non-hegemonic history of pedagogy and alternative futures in education.

Martin Mulsow

PhD, is Professor of Intellectual History at the University of Erfurt and Director of the Gotha Research Center for Early Modern Studies. From 2005–2008 he was Professor of History at Rutgers University, USA. He was a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin and is member of several academies. He has written extensively on Renaissance philosophy, radical enlightenment, secret societies, practices of scholarship and global intellectual history, e.g. *Enlightenment Underground. Radical Germany 1680–1720* (University of Virginia Press, 2015), *Knowledge Lost. A New View of Early Modern Intellectual History* (Princeton University Press, 2022) and *Überreichweiten. Perspektiven einer Globalen Ideengeschichte* (Suhrkamp Verlag, 2022).

Lauri Ockenström

PhD, is currently working as a university researcher at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. His research focuses on image magic and visual symbols in medieval and early modern culture. He received his doctorate in Art History in 2014 from the University of Jyväskylä. His post-doctoral project (IMAFOR 2016–2019) focused on magical imageries transmitted in Latin manuals between 1100–1600. Since 2016, Ockenström has been leading a group translating and providing a commentary on Vitruvius' *De architectura*.

Michele Olzi

received his PhD degree in Medical Humanities from the University of Insubria (Varese) in 2019. His research project focused on the life and work of the Italian psychoanalyst Emilio Servadio (1904–1995). He collaborates with the chairs of Political Theory and Sociology of Political Processes at the University of Insubria. His interests include new religious movements, the connection between religions and the media, the analysis of political myths, neo-Gnosticism and techno-Gnosticism, historico-ideological and political interactions of the notions of the sacred, power, and eros. He edits the peer-reviewed, online journal *La Rosa di Paracelso*. He serves as secretary and annual conference organizer of FSA Gaetano Massa.

Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière

PhD, is Senior Lecturer in British Civilisation (Victorian studies) at the English Department of Sorbonne University. She is the author of *Les Actrices victoriennes, entre marginalité et conformisme* (L'Harmattan, 2004), based on her doctoral dissertation on the social status of Victorian actresses. She is currently researching the links between the late-Victorian socialist movement, the contemporaneous fight for women's rights, and the spiritual and occult revival. Her biography *Annie Besant (1847–1933): Struggles and Quest* was published in London in 2017.

Tim Rudbøg

PhD (Exon.), is Associate Professor and Director of the Copenhagen Centre for the Study of Theosophy and Esotericism (CCSTE) at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. As a professional historian of religions, Rudbøg has taught many university courses and published widely on an array of topics, but he has primarily specialized in the study of esotericism, Helena P. Blavatsky and The Theosophical Society. More recent publications include the two co-edited volumes *Imagining the East: The Early Theosophical Society* (Oxford University Press, 2020) and *Innovation in Esotericism from the Renaissance to the Present* (Palgrave, 2021).