

## Sex, Law, Theology and Occult Russia

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#### Editorial Appraisals:

Some qualified reviewers offer their own brief evaluation of the book. Otherwise most of our content represents the authors'-editors' own words as a preview to their approach to the subject, their style and point-of-view. <>

[Hermes Explains: Thirty Questions about Western Esotericism, Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the centre for History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents at the University of Amsterdam](#) edited by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Peter J. Forshaw and Marco Pasi [Amsterdam University Press, 9789463720205]

Few fields of academic research are surrounded by so many misunderstandings and misconceptions as the study of Western esotericism. For twenty years now, the Centre for History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents (University of Amsterdam) has been at the forefront of international scholarship in this domain. This anniversary volume seeks to make the modern study of Western esotericism more widely known beyond specialist circles, while addressing a range of misconceptions, biases, and prejudices that still tend to surround it. Thirty-one major scholars in the field respond to questions about a wide range of unfamiliar ideas, traditions, practices, problems, and personalities that are central to the field. By challenging many taken-for-granted assumptions about religion, science, philosophy, and the arts, this volume demonstrates why the modern study of esotericism leads us to reconsider much that we thought we knew about the story of Western culture.

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### Excerpt: Introduction: Thirty red pills from Hermes Trismegistus

Ten years ago the Centre for History of Hermetic  
Philosophy and Related Currents (HHP) of the  
University of Amsterdam celebrated its first  
decennial anniversary by publishing a memorial  
volume. Paying playful homage to the legendary  
Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistus, who stands at  
the origin and symbolic centre of the field of  
research nowadays known as "Western  
esotericism," it was titled *Hermes in the Academy*.<sup>1</sup>  
Hermes had finally arrived! Never before, at any  
university worldwide, had there been a teaching  
program and a research group devoted  
specifically to the large and enormously  
complicated field of interrelated historical currents  
in Western culture known by such terms as  
hermetism, gnosticism, neoplatonic theurgy,  
astrology, alchemy, natural magic, kabbalah,  
rosicrucianism, Christian theosophy, illuminism,  
occultism, spiritualism, traditionalism, neopaganism,  
new age, and contemporary occulture.<sup>2</sup> Since the  
beginning of this century, scholars in the humanities  
have become used to an unprecedented flood of  
scholarly literature in these domains, and this makes  
it easy to forget how innovative and controversial it  
still was for academics to study such topics seriously  
at the time when HHP was created in 1999.

With hindsight it is evident that the Amsterdam  
Centre came exactly at the right moment. Riding a  
new wave of scholarship that had been gathering  
energy since the early 1990s, HHP was able to  
assume a leading position in establishing new  
paradigms for the study of Western esotericism in

the academy and stimulating its professional development on an international scale. During the twenty years of its existence, new teaching programs have developed at various universities in Europe and the United States; a European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE) was established in 2005 and keeps generating new semi-autonomous networks focusing on specific regions and themes; alternating with its American counterpart, the Association for the Study of Esotericism (ASE), the ESSWE has already organised seven international biannual conferences, of which the latest one (Amsterdam 2019) coincides with the twenty-year anniversary of HHP and the publication of this volume; two peer-reviewed academic journals have been running successfully since 2001 and 2013 respectively; various major academic publishers now have their own monograph series in the study of Western esotericism; and more generally, it is simply no longer possible for any scholar today to keep up with all the literature, all the conferences, and all the other academic initiatives that are devoted to this field and the various aspects of it.

It is therefore safe to conclude that the battle for academic legitimacy has been won, or at the very least that the Rubicon has been crossed. Nevertheless, while Hermes may have arrived, he still has a lot of explaining to do — hence the title of this second anniversary volume. Every specialist of Western esotericism knows from personal experience how difficult it can be to explain in casual or professional conversations with interested outsiders (friends, family members, colleagues, journalists) what the field is all about and why it is important. At almost every step, beginning with the very term "esotericism" itself, one has to count with deeply ingrained assumptions, misconceptions, and prejudices. Much of the elementary background knowledge that scholars of esotericism take for granted is by no means obvious to non-specialists and needs to be explained over and over again. This is why we have decided for the present volume to take thirty such typical "journalistic" questions as our point of departure. Some of them sound quite serious while others have a ring of naivety about them, but they all provide scholars with an opportunity to take a deep breath and respond with some variation on "well... actually... it might be

a bit different than you think, perhaps a bit more complicated too..." Explaining things that are less than perfectly understood is, of course, the quintessential task of the teacher. One could do worse than doing so under the auspices of Hermes Trismegistus, the ancient model teacher of esotericism par excellence who was once believed to have invented entire academic disciplines, such as arithmetic, geometry, or astronomy — not to mention the art of writing itself.

Readers of this volume will discover quickly that, paradoxical as it may sound, studying esotericism means much more than just studying esotericism. What makes this field so exciting is not just the fact that it broadens our horizons by introducing us to strange and unfamiliar ideas or traditions or practices — although that is certainly part of its appeal. Even more important are its deep implications for the humanities as a whole, deriving from the fact that (to put it mildly) these materials have not been integrated very well in standard textbook narratives about Western culture and its various dimensions, whether in the history of religion, philosophy, science, or the arts. This, of course, is the reason why journalists and the general public keep asking the kinds of questions that are central to the volume you are holding in your hands: none of us learns about these things at school! Studying esotericism means being introduced to new materials and new ideas from new theoretical perspectives that ultimately force us to rethink all the most central themes of "Western culture" (including even that very concept) in the broadest sense of the word.

The attentive reader will discover that this is no exaggeration. The effect of being introduced to Western esotericism can be somewhat similar to that of swallowing the famous "red pill" in the blockbuster movie *The Matrix*, which happened to be released in the very year when HHP was created: to put it in a nutshell, one wakes up to the fact that the dominant grand narratives on which we rely for making sense of our world cannot be trusted at face value. Formulated in the movie's neo-gnostic language, many foundational stories that structure our taken-for-granted assumptions about the world turn out to be little more than elaborate mental illusions or delusions that prevent

us from questioning the claims of dominant discourses and perceiving the realities of our world at a deeper level of complexity. Of course, to question widely accepted truths rather than just accept them at face value is what the search for knowledge is and should be all about, whether in the academy or anywhere else. In short, dear reader, you are kindly invited to swallow thirty red pills... While you may find some more potent than others, and none is exactly the same, each single one is a portal to new worlds of knowledge that might challenge much of what you hold to be true. We hope you will enjoy the experience!

As HHP gets ready to move into its third decade, and the study of esotericism continues to expand and develop in ever new directions, it is appropriate to look back and give thanks to those who made it all possible. Readers of our first anniversary volume can learn from it how Hermes arrived in the academy in 1999, thanks to the initiative and the efforts of a small but dedicated group of people around Rosalie Basten, who came up with the idea of founding an academic chair for History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents and made its realisation possible. In her own words, one little stone thrown in a pond will produce a ripple effect that is potentially unlimited; and it is true that today, twenty years after that first plunge, the circles still keep extending further into the world and into the future. Without mentioning any further persons specifically by name — for one would not know where to begin or where to end —, as staff members of HHP we want to express our deep gratitude both to the founders of the program and to all members of the ever-expanding community of scholars who have made the study of Western esotericism into a continuing adventure.

### Aren't we living in a disenchanted world? by Egil Asprem

It may be easiest to begin with a common assumption: that being modern means being rational. The modern person has a scientific mindset, a pragmatic attitude, and trusts technology to solve our every problem. "Rationality," in this common view, is the antithesis of being superstitious, believing in magic and spirits, or relying on quackery and pseudoscience.

Rational moderns have left all that behind. Let's take a closer look at those assumptions.

That modern civilisation is a disenchanted one can seem intuitive. If we look at our major institutions, evidence of it is not hard to find. The guiding principles of economic life are efficiency, productivity, and profit. Healthcare and medicine are, for the most part, held to strict scientific standards of evidence. The legal system is built on a presumption of innocence according to which a prosecutor must make rational arguments based on evidence, credible testimony, and sound interpretation of law. In everyday life, we trust our engineers to create better smartphones, safer cars, and more efficient public transportation through advances in technology. Faced with global crises such as climate change, most of us now rely on the evidence of scientists and hope that new technologies can give us cleaner and more efficient sources of energy. In short, rational principles are key to how modern society is structured. There is little room for petitioning the spirits or consulting horoscopes to solve society's challenges.

No doubt: modern society is built primarily on science and technology rather than "magic," broadly conceived. Nevertheless, something crucial is missing from this description: namely, the individuals who inhabit modern societies. Polls consistently show that a significant share of the population (usually around 40-50%) in putatively modern, post-industrial societies such as the United States or the United Kingdom, believe in "supernatural" phenomena such as ghosts and haunted houses, or "occult" powers such as telepathy and clairvoyance.<sup>1</sup> In popular culture, filmmakers, TV scriptwriters, and authors of bestselling fiction cater to a huge audience hungry for storylines with occult themes — so much so that some speak of a "popular occulture" at the heart of modern society. Books that teach you how to attain success through positive thinking or "the law of attraction," such as Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret* (2006), become international bestsellers. It seems that the modern attitude to enchantments is one of fascination rather than outright rejection. How can we explain this two-sided picture, and what does it really tell us about the modern world and its inhabitants?

The idea that modernity is characterised by the disenchantment of the world is associated with the theories of German sociologist and economic historian Max Weber (1864-1920). In a lecture to students at the University of Munich in 1917, as Germany was exhausted by war, Weber proclaimed that disenchantment was "the fate of our times." The understanding that magic, mystery, and sacrality were vanishing from a world increasingly dominated by industry, technology, and expanding bureaucracies was not new: it resonated with deep-seated stereotypes that can be traced back at least to the early Romantic movement and had found powerful expressions in the works of Novalis, Friedrich Hölderlin, Friedrich Schiller and others. For Weber, however, disenchantment was more than a poetic expression of the *Zeitgeist*. It was a historical phenomenon with specific consequences for how we live our lives.

What did disenchantment mean for Weber? Above all it was a shift in mentality. Reflecting on the impact of science and technology on people's everyday lives, Weber saw that modern people do not necessarily have more knowledge about their world than inhabitants of simpler societies do of theirs. Precisely because of the increasing reliance on rational technology and bureaucratic organisational structures, modern people usually have no clue at all about how the things they rely on every day really work. We can trust our smartphones to show us around a new city without any knowledge of electronics, GPS satellites, or coding, and we can trust money to buy us coffee without knowing the intricacies of global economics. What is distinctive, according to Weber, is that moderns expect the world they inhabit to be in principle understandable. If one so wishes, one can learn how satellites work, or why money sometimes buys more coffee and sometimes less. This means that, to modern people, there are no "mysterious, incalculable powers" in the world: anything can in principle be explained rationally. This, Weber held, is the key difference from living in an "enchanted" world, where ancestral spirits protect the tribe from misfortune and capricious gods must be placated through sacrifice.

There are many facets to the process of rationalisation that, as Weber saw it, led to the

disenchantment of the world. The increasing prominence of technological and scientific solutions in economic life, and rational principles of association in organisations and government, were but the latest and most important part in a story that ran much deeper in history. It had started, in fact, as a theological process. With the invention of monotheism in the ancient world came pressures to conceive of divinity in radically transcendent, otherworldly terms — together with a suspicion of any "mysterious, incalculable powers" capable of causing changes in the world in response to incantations, charms, or spells. The anti-magical polemic of Jewish and Christian authorities, along with the broader shift away from temple-based sacrifice to an internal "care of the self" turned the emphasis of religion away from external powers in nature towards individual moral conduct. While it has been common to view this shift as inherent to the "Abrahamic" monotheisms, the end of sacrifice arguably started with philosophy, and especially with Platonism. However this may be, it intensified in Northern Europe in the sixteenth century with the Protestant Reformation, which saw an increased scepticism towards rituals and "pagan" survivals on the whole, fuelling renewed sanctions and prosecutions against "magic."

In this sense, the disenchantment narrative that Weber suggested has close links with the polemical history that led to the formation of esotericism as a category of "rejected knowledge." To Weber, however, the explicit attacks on "magic" and paganism were not as important as the change in conduct that Protestantism inculcated: what mattered was that people increasingly thought that salvation was something between God and the individual, linked to the following of rules of pious behaviour. The result was an "inner-worldly asceticism," in which the emphasis is on methodical conduct in everyday life — a shift in mentality that Weber famously connected to the emergence of modern capitalism in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905).

When we talk about living in a "disenchanted world," then, we are talking about a mentality and a pattern of behaviour. What are people's assumptions about the world, and what actions do they prefer to take when confronted with a

problem? The key assumptions of a disenchanted world, as Weber saw it, can be divided into three areas, all having to do with the strict separation between God and the world:

- 1) Humans can in principle explain and control the world. This is the task of empirical science and technology.
- 2) Humans cannot know deeper aspects of reality. Metaphysics is beyond the empirical, and only an act of (unverifiable) revelation can grant insight into it.
- 3) Humans cannot extract any knowledge about how to live their lives from studying nature. Values and morality are provided by religions and philosophies, but since they cannot be validated empirically they are ultimately a matter of individual choice.

This has profound implications for the place of religion in society, but also for the domain of esotericism and magic. The separation of facts from values, as well as the separation of metaphysics from empirical knowledge, means that religions are tolerated to the extent that they do not interfere with the domains of science and technology. Vice versa, science goes bad when it presumes to speak of values and ultimate causes. "Magic" becomes intolerable — along with all religions that stress some form of immanence — because it breaks the neat divide between a rational, explicable world and a wholly transcendent realm of meaning and metaphysics.

The problem for a historian of religion is that this very period of disenchantment — the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — is characterised by a tremendous interest in precisely the sort of ideas that blend religion and science, facts and values. This is the period when spiritualism and modern occultism take shape, and spread rapidly around the globe. It is the time when educated middle- and upper-class people join the Theosophical Society en masse, and even scholars and scientists find spiritualist phenomena fascinating and serious enough to investigate with the empirical methods of "psychical research" — the beginnings of the discipline now known as parapsychology. If we

follow the disenchantment narrative, we must explain these phenomena as irrational and illegitimate deviations from the main line of modernity. Indeed, Weber himself dismissed those scientists of his day who found God in nature as "big children," and saw nothing but "humbug and self-deceit" in the new eclectic spirituality gaining popularity among middle-class people. Seeing that the big children in question include key contributors to the science and culture of modernity, even several Nobel laureates, this seems unsatisfactory. So what are the alternatives?

One alternative is that disenchantment never happened. This is what Jason Josephson-Storm argues in his book *The Myth of Disenchantment* (2017). According to him, disenchantment is a myth in two different senses. It is a myth in the colloquial sense that it didn't happen. People still believe in all manner of supernatural, occult, and magical phenomena, even though they may no longer be referring to exactly the same phenomena as before. However, it is also a myth in the sense of a grand narrative that modern people, and especially academics and scientists, have built their identity around. The idea that we have gotten rid of magic and superstition is a core element in the stories we tell about who we are, where we came from, and how we are different from the people of the past (the "dark middle ages") and people in other parts of the world ("primitives"). We sense this grand narrative in triumphalist histories of the Scientific Revolution, the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the progressive political movement toward democracy and prosperity.

The myth of disenchantment works as what Josephson-Storm calls a regulative ideal. It offers a normative view of what we moderns ought to believe and, especially, what is to be expected of a modern scientific discipline. The latter is important because Josephson-Storm sees disenchantment as a foundation myth for the new human sciences that emerged during the nineteenth century. By proclaiming that magic was an anachronistic thing of the past, and that its retired concepts were now becoming objects of study for disciplines such as anthropology, folkloristics, sociology, or history of religion, these disciplines reinforced the myth of disenchantment while boosting their own claim to

"modern" scientific status. In short, the new human sciences associated a rational disavowal of anything occult with "proper science." At the same time, as Josephson-Storm painstakingly demonstrates, pioneering scholars developed their public statements from often deep personal fascination with the occult currents of the nineteenth century.

While I agree that disenchantment has functioned as a grand narrative, and hence a foundation myth of modernity, I think it is too simplistic to dismiss it as a myth in the sense of something false. When Weber suggested that the rationalisation of society has consequences for how people think and act, and that these consequences make themselves felt in the realm of religion and spirituality, he was on to something important. The question is what these consequences really were, and more fundamentally, how we should think about them. The statement that rationalisation has rendered the world disenchanted is also too simple an answer.

In my book *The Problem of Disenchantment*, I have suggested a different approach. Rather than viewing disenchantment as a process that produces disenchanted minds, we should view it as a problem faced by modern subjects. The rapid spread of technical education and philosophical attitudes along Kantian lines produced pressures among those receiving formal education to conform to a disenchanted world picture. They were taught that matter is devoid of meaning and the world a giant mechanism, and these views were increasingly experienced in politics and in everyday life through technologisation and the pursuit of pragmatic efficiency. Now, as long as these views are thoroughly internalised and seem plausible to individuals, there is no problem. The trouble is that this world picture violates deep-seated intuitions about agency, values, and causation that, even among the most highly educated, make it tempting to resist and formulate alternative worldviews. While humanity is a cognitively flexible species, it remains the case that our psychological foundations evolved to survive a very different environment from the one we now inhabit. Viewing living things as machines does not come easy for us; thinking about ourselves and those we love in the same mechanistic terms much less so. In fact, we naturally

tend to err on the side of attributing more rather than less life, mind, and agency to phenomena we encounter in the world. This is true even for trained scientists. To the extent that religious attitudes tend to revolve around mysterious agents such as gods, spirits, or ancestors, this means that "religion is natural and science is not "

When we look at disenchantment as a problem to which people can respond in various ways rather than as a mentality that is simply taken for granted, we can acknowledge both i) that rationalisation did happen and did produce cultural pressures on how people view the world, and 2) that the wide variety of "enchanted" positions that were developed in response are integral to modernity rather than irrational deviations from it. Moreover, since the problem of disenchantment is a predominantly cultural one, we should expect that it is first and foremost those with some education and the luxury to ponder "big questions" that will be bothered by it. For this reason, it is not surprising that the academic world has generated some of the most influential frameworks for new spiritualities in the twentieth century.

In *The Problem of Disenchantment*, I call these frameworks "new natural theologies," and identify five different schools that emerged in the first decades of the twentieth century. The best-known today is probably the field known as "quantum mysticism." Contemporary spirituality is flush with references to the "mysteries" of quantum mechanics, which are often seen as supporting the idea that mind creates matter, or that the natural world displays counterintuitive properties such as that a particle can be in two places at once. That non-scientists would co-opt what they take to be scientific fact for their own purposes is not surprising; the point here, however, is that these sorts of "overblown" speculations about the spiritual implications of quantum physics did not start with New Age hippies, but with the first generation of quantum physicists. People like Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976), Niels Bohr (1885-1962), and Wolfgang Pauli (1900-1958) all flirted with broad worldview implications of their scientific work, breaking explicitly with the "disenchanted" dictum

not to conflate facts with values, or keeping science apart from metaphysics.

Many other enchanted ideas were developed by academics. Vitalism is a recurrent case: the view that life is not reducible to "matter," but instead propelled by some other, mysterious and largely incalculable force was suggested by turn-of-the-century biologists such as Hans Driesch (who spoke of "entelechy") and popular philosophers such as Henri Bergson (who popularised the term *élan vital*). Such ideas have proved popular among those who value both science and spirituality. Moreover, the notion of an irreducible life force has frequently been connected to psychic powers and spiritualist phenomena, creating a link between heterodox biology and heterodox religion.

The "psychic enchantments" associated with parapsychology and so-called psychical research have historically been closely linked with vitalism, but also with quantum mysticism. The collaboration between Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) and Wolfgang Pauli resulted, among other things, in a perceived link between microphysics and psychic phenomena. Another founding figure of quantum mechanics, Pascual Jordan (1902-1980), connected physics with parapsychology, a vitalistic view of organisms, and an "organistic" right-wing view of politics and society. In recent years, connections between vitalistic biology and psychic phenomena have been spearheaded by Rupert Sheldrake (b. 1942), a Cambridge-trained biologist turned best-selling author of spiritual non-fiction.

Sheldrake illustrates another aspect of this field of speculation: while it springs from the sciences, it rarely fails to develop a polemic against what it sees as "dogmatic" and "reductionist" tendencies in the same natural sciences." It would thus be easy or even tempting to dismiss this tendency as anti-scientific. Doing so would require us to ignore the fact that the discourse created by these authors is itself a product of the modern sciences, articulated by PhDs and working scientists who often, though certainly not always, stay true to what they consider proper scientific values of free inquiry, theoretical speculation, and empirical explorations of elusive phenomena. It seems more convincing, then, to view the new natural theologians as individuals struggling with the problem of

disenchantment, choosing to respond to it by challenging the current scientific world-picture rather than abandoning their deeply seated intuitive understandings of life and nature. In that sense, the new scientific enchantments are integral parts of modernity. <>

[Islam, Christianity and the Realms of the Miraculous: A Comparative Exploration](#) by Ian Richard Netton [Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture, Edinburgh University Press, 9780748699063]

Presents a comparative approach to miracles in Islam and Christianity. Organised around five groups of miracles: food, water, blood, wood and stone, and cosmology. Case studies include miraculous feeding miracles in Islam and Christianity; Lourdes and healing; Zamzam and healing; the miracle of Bolsena; the Passion of Al-Hallaj; the Ark of Gilgamesh and Noah/Nuh; the miracle of the sun at Fatima; and the splitting of the moon in the Qur'an.

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Excerpt: The subject of miracles has seized both popular and scholarly imaginations from early times to the present. The year 2017 provided added interest with a major, and much-praised, exhibition and a major workshop. The exhibition, entitled *Madonnas and Miracles*, was held at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge from 7 March to 4 June 2017.<sup>1</sup> In the words of the catalogue, the exhibition 'reveal [ed] the significance of the home as a site of religious experience in the period. From visionary "living saints", who conversed with the divine in their chambers, to ordinary laypeople who prayed the rosary before bed, to those who read heterodox books by the hearth, men, women and children practised religion in the home in a variety of ways.' As the exhibition showed, the Italian Renaissance was in love with all things miraculous.

On 23 May 2017 SOAS, University of London, held an excellent, thought-provoking, workshop entitled *Seeing is Believing: Miracles in Islamic Thought*. This well-attended workshop was sponsored by the British Association for Islamic Studies (BRAIS) and hosted by the Department of the Near and Middle East, SOAS. Its two conveners were Dr Ayman Shihadeh and Dr Harith Bin Ramli. The workshop's subjects ranged far and wide from a consideration of what God can actually do through a discussion of the evidence for Prophetic miracles to an analysis of prophecy in Messianic times.

This present volume of mine is the third in a comparative Islamic—Christian trilogy which seeks to present and explore various major aspects of these two world religions in dynamic contrast. The first volume focused on tradition; the second

concerned itself with the mystical arena. This third volume completes the trilogy by an examination of the field of miracles in the Islamic and Christian traditions.

Bernard Lonergan's seminal work *Method in Theology* may today appear somewhat dated. Nonetheless, it was valuable, and remains valuable, in that it presented a new and coherent series of taxonomies whereby the diverse fields of Christian theology might be inspected and rigorously interrogated. It did, however, focus primarily on method as its title implies. Lonergan stressed this methodological orientation when, referring to miracles, he wrote: 'The possibility and occurrence of miracles are topics, not for the methodologist, but for the theologian.' He thereby excuses himself from a full theological investigation of miracles in this work.

This present volume of mine, as will become apparent in a reading of the text, also deploys a structural method, a narratological sieve, through which to analyse and compare the miraculous phenomena and narratives of which it treats. Thus, each chapter has a particular, and carefully structured, analytical 'shape' as follows:

- outline of the miracle event: Proto-miracle/Christian miracle/Islamic miracle
- critiques and attitudes towards the miraculous events:
  1. disbelief and scepticism
  2. caution
  3. belief
  4. memory and memorialisation:
    - a. the theme of a memory of a 'divine presence' in the world
    - b. the theme of a memory of wholeness
    - c. the motif of water or other rituals
    - d. the metatheme of faith and doubt
    - e. the metatheme of Church/Islamic authority
- the narrative arena

In terms of narrative theory, chosen aspects of which will shortly be elaborated in the main text, this volume will interrogate the miraculous phenomena and narratives with which it deals from the following perspectives:

- universality
- multifacetedness
- similarities and differences in content
- themes and metathemes (> abstract topoi) and motifs and metamotifs (> concrete topoi)
- repetition
- types and antitypes
- intertextuality
- the protagonist
- 'attitudes to the miracle
- significance of the miracle
- the narratological catalyst'

However, this volume is much more than just a dissertation on narratological method. It deploys that method to disclose the intertexts between the Islamic and Christian domains of the miraculous, and to disclose the theological grounds on which those miraculous narratives rest. Its primary focus is the literary and theological narration of the miracle, emphasising similarities and differences in motifs and themes, metamotifs and metathemes, all of which are grounded in Islamic and Christian theologies, whether those be popular, scholarly or both.

The academic perspective of this work is thus narratological, anthropological and phenomenological. The narrations of miracles are presented as if they actually occurred, whether or not they did so in historical reality. There is no 'faith perspective' nor orientation. Furthermore, the miraculous narratives treated in this volume may be said to form an intertext with each other and possibly, but not necessarily, with other 'miraculous events' outside the phenomena treated here. In this way our volume seeks to avoid essentialism.

In addition, the survey of what I characterise as the 'proto-miracles' which introduce each chapter are not intended necessarily to be the first of their kind, nor to reflect events not described in this volume; they are simply designed to be intertextual 'introductions' to the principal phenomena under discussion.

I have made various visits to places of pilgrimage and shrine, Islamic and Christian, both in Europe and in the Middle East, with a view to gaining a deeper understanding of why people associate certain miraculous events (especially healing events)

with certain shrines, and why people of both the Islamic and Christian traditions perform the rite of pilgrimage to such shrines.

On the Christian side the miraculous phenomena surveyed in this volume are drawn from the Roman Catholic tradition which, despite present-day cautions and caveats, is generally more disposed to accept the possibility of miracles. This not to deny, of course, that there may be a wide disparity of attitudes towards the possibility and reality of miracles within the Catholic community itself. As Maya Mayblin reminds us:

Although consciously self-cultivating Catholics ... do exist, it is also fairly axiomatic that Catholicism as a marker of identity is not always and everywhere primarily about 'belief or even practice over belief .. . Catholicism is open to identifications that index aspects of personhood beyond religious belief: kinship, territoriality, ethnicity, belonging; identifications that remain variously distanced, critical and uncertain with regard to Catholicism's key propositional content.

Of course, the same kind of wide diversities are easily apparent in the Islamic tradition/s as well. Thus the caveats and cautious approaches of both Christianity and Islam, often in 'official mode', will be noted throughout this volume. The Catholic tradition with regard to miracles contrasts mightily, of course, with the Protestant attitude, epitomised in the writings of the famous German theologian Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) who sought to 'demythologise the New Testament', thereby denying the possibility of Christ's miracles."

This volume of mine makes no such claims nor, conversely, any 'faith statements' either. It is solely concerned with the narrative of miracles, and an analysis of those miracles, from a phenomenological perspective together with an examination of how such narratives have become embedded in popular, and sometimes official, aspects of Islamic and Christian theology and culture.

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Different scholars in their diverse disciplines — theological, anthropological, historical or other —

favour different taxonomies whereby to classify, assess and interpret the phenomena of their chosen specialisms. Clarity of understanding is, or should be, the telos of all such divisions and complex taxonomies can be the foe of clarity. By 'drilling down' as in the magisterial work of Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, a lucid taxonomy may profoundly illuminate the anthropological, theological or other endeavour.' Thus Lonergan, for example, in his own quest for theological clarity and illumination identifies 'eight functional specialities in theology, namely, (1) research, (2) interpretation, (3) history, (4) dialectic, (5) foundations, (6) doctrines, (7) systematics, and (8) communications.

Throughout this volume we have adopted (1) a phenomenological and anthropological perspective, and constructed (2) a simple taxonomy of miracle narratives comprising food, water, blood, wood and stone and cosmology, while (3) deploying an elevenfold narratological sieve as a critical tool by which to identify major themes, motifs, metathemes and metamotifs. Islamic and Christian miracle traditions have been surveyed and analysed in tandem, thereby highlighting similarities, analogies and differences.

Thus our elevenfold narrative sieve interrogated its material from the perspectives of universality, multifacetedness, similarities and differences in content, themes and motifs, repetition, types and antitypes, intertextuality, the protagonist, attitudes to the miracle, significance of the miracle and, finally, the narratological catalyst which furnishes the 'engine' of the narrative.

Each chapter has begun with what I have termed a 'proto-miracle' before outlining a key pair of Islamic and Christian miracle narratives focused upon a single anthropological topos. The miracles chosen in all three sections are designed neither to be inclusive nor exclusive. Each chapter concludes with an assessment 'in the narrative arena'. Attitudes surveyed in the text to putative miracles include those of the 'insider' and the 'outsider'. Memory and memorialisation play a massive role in most of the miracle narratives which have been treated in this text.

The final taxonomy with which we shall conclude this narratological investigation into the realms of the miraculous in the two traditions of Islam and Christianity comprises a trio of this role of memory and hope together with the theme of Divine Presence.

Every miracle — real, perceived, alleged, false or invented in the eyes of the observer or interlocutor — partakes of the field of memory. It is built from elements which have gone before. This is not just the case with the Eucharistic miracles in the Christian tradition which we have surveyed, though these may certainly be said to be archetypes of memorialisation in narrative theory as it pertains to liturgy in particular and theology in general.

Memory, all memories, may directly reflect, or unconsciously model, past events, persons and structures. The metathemes of the power of God, healing and the agency of Jesus, Mary and the Prophet Muhammad, together with the metamotifs of angels and light as dynamically articulated and displayed in the miracle narratives which we have analysed, constitute an interlocking intertext of memory and memorialisation.

Memory may thus justly be accounted a metatheme par excellence in any consideration of the narratology of miracles.

Above all, narrative itself is memory. In the context of the miraculous, the memory of the past is encapsulated and enshrined in the present miracle — real or alleged — which in turn may signal a future salvation. Memory in the narrative of the miraculous thus embraces a past, present and future.

Every miracle narrative is also a narrative of hope, regardless of its actuality in the present world or merely in the mind of the visionary. This is because every miracle, fundamentally, seeks to bolster, confirm or even just initiate, faith of some kind or another.' Hope is present, for example, in searches such as those for Atlantis or the final resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. Some might say that in such endeavours it would be the discovery of such ancient places and artefacts that would constitute the miracle for the myth would be transmuted into an astonished reality. Hope is thus sustained by the

metatheme of historical memory and both are integral to the domain of the miraculous.

In these miraculous realms, the final metatheme on which we will focus is that of the divine presence in the world which is exhibited so powerfully in the miracles surveyed in this volume. This divine presence reflects the real agency of the miracle both theologically and narratologically. For the believers a miracle is a species or aspect of actual theophany. For the sceptics it is a symbol of theophany to which they cannot relate. Miracles are divine signs or signals which point to a world beyond this world and to which all are summoned in Christianity and Islam. That summons, of course, may be freely accepted or freely rejected.

George Bernard Shaw once famously remarked that 'a miracle is an event which creates faith'. He went on: 'That is the purpose and nature of miracles. Frauds deceive. An event which creates faith does not deceive: therefore it is not a fraud, but a miracle.' For Shaw, it was 'life itself which was 'the miracle of miracles'. Narratologically, the description or proclamation of a miracle at the very least creates a space for reflection.

I will leave the last word to St Augustine of Hippo (354-430) as we consider the meaning and significance of miracles and also their narration. For in the latter they are multifaceted and multivalent:

Let us interrogate the miracles themselves ... Let us not delight ourselves with the mere outside, but also explore its depth. This [miracle] which we admire on its outer side, hath something within ... If we were anywhere inspecting a fair piece of writing, it would not be enough that we should praise the writer's skillful hand, that he formed the letters even, equal and graceful, unless we should also read what he by them would make known to us; so, he who does but look at the thing done in this miracle, is delighted by the beauty of the deed, and moved to admiration of the Artificer; but he who understands does, as it were, read it."

For the phenomenologist and anthropologist, as for the believer to whom Augustine addresses the above words, the realms of the miraculous constitute a world of signs which phenomenologist

and believer alike may 'read and understand', albeit in very different ways.

The Qur'an succinctly concurs. <>

[Ottoman Baroque: The Architectural Refashioning of Eighteenth-Century Istanbul](#) by Ünver Rüstem [Princeton University Press, 9780691181875]

A new approach to late Ottoman visual culture and its place in the world

With its idiosyncratic yet unmistakable adaptation of European Baroque models, the eighteenth-century architecture of Istanbul has frequently been dismissed by modern observers as inauthentic and derivative, a view reflecting broader unease with notions of Western influence on Islamic cultures. In [Ottoman Baroque](#)—the first English-language book on the topic—Ünver Rüstem provides a compelling reassessment of this building style and shows how between 1740 and 1800 the Ottomans consciously coopted European forms to craft a new, politically charged, and globally resonant image for their empire's capital.

Rüstem reclaims the label "Ottoman Baroque" as a productive framework for exploring the connectedness of Istanbul's eighteenth-century buildings to other traditions of the period. Using a wealth of primary sources, he demonstrates that this architecture was in its own day lauded by Ottomans and foreigners alike for its fresh, cosmopolitan effect. Purposefully and creatively assimilated, the style's cross-cultural borrowings were combined with Byzantine references that asserted the Ottomans' entitlement to the Classical artistic heritage of Europe. Such aesthetic rebranding was part of a larger endeavor to reaffirm the empire's power at a time of intensified East-West contact, taking its boldest shape in a series of imperial mosques built across the city as landmarks of a state-sponsored idiom.

Copiously illustrated and drawing on previously unpublished documents, [Ottoman Baroque](#) breaks new ground in our understanding of Islamic visual culture in the modern era and offers a persuasive counterpoint to Eurocentric accounts of global art history.

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Excerpt: It is fair and accurate to say that this beautiful building and gladdening house of worship—all of solid marble and so charming—has no like or counterpart not only in the capital [Istanbul], but indeed in [all] the lands of Islam. — AHMED EFENDÎ, CONSTRUCTION ACCOUNTANT OF THE NURUOSMANIYE MOSQUE

The mosque that Sultan Mahamout had built is, without doubt, the most beautiful that one can see in the Empire, after one has seen St. Sophia. — JEAN-CLAUDE FLACHAT, FRENCH MERCHANT AND RESIDENT OF ISTANBUL

Written of the mid-eighteenth-century Nuruosmaniye Mosque by authors contemporary with its construction, these statements may surprise the modern observer (fig. i). So conditioned are we to locate the heyday of Ottoman architecture in the sixteenth century—and above all in the works of Sinan (d. 1588)—that it is difficult to credit that a later building could have excited such praise. If the first statement might be dismissed as mere hyperbole on the part of an Ottoman official involved in the mosque's construction, the second—penned by a Frenchman with no connection to the project—cannot be so easily disregarded.

Indeed, the widespread acclaim that greeted the Nuruosmaniye bespeaks a momentous shift in the history of Ottoman architecture, one embedded in, and itself constitutive of, far-reaching sociopolitical developments. The modern focus on the period

before 1600—what has come to be known as the Ottoman classical age—has obscured the decisive role of the eighteenth century in (re)shaping the Ottoman Empire's image, especially as embodied in its capital, Istanbul. Abandoned by the court

during the preceding decades in favor of the empire's second city, Edirne, Istanbul was restored as the seat of government in 1703, after which it became the site of lavish architectural patronage intended to reinscribe the sultans' presence. This campaign culminated in two distinct but related outcomes that were both loudly announced with the erection of the Nuruosmaniye between 1748 and 1755. Not only did the building reestablish the dormant tradition of the sultanic (imperial) mosque complex, with other examples soon to come, but it was also the first truly monumental example of a brand-new architectural style heavily informed by European models: the so-called Turkish or Ottoman Baroque. Denigrated by later commentators as decadent and foreign, the style was in its own time a remarkable success, dominating the architectural output of Istanbul between the 1740s and early 1800s and earning the appreciation of locals and foreigners alike.

This twofold process—the revival of the sultanic mosque and the rise of a widely admired new building manner—is the central concern of the present study, which examines the resultant architecture in terms that confront long-held unease about the late Ottoman Empire's artistic and political standing, particularly in relation to Western Europe. Bernard Lewis summed up a common attitude when he said of the Nuruosmaniye, "When a foreign influence appears in something as central to a culture as an imperial foundation and a cathedral-mosque, there is clearly some faltering of cultural self-confidence." While rejecting the charge of degeneracy, newer interpretations have in their own way continued to discuss the Ottoman Baroque as a predominantly decorative approach lacking the gravitas and import of the earlier classical manner. I wish to turn Lewis's assumption on its head and propose that it is precisely because the new style was employed—and, moreover, applauded—in the most esteemed of contexts that it cannot be understood as an index of insecurity, nor as a loosening of

architectural decorum. Any failure to ascribe purpose to the style is, in short, irreconcilable with its essential role in the imperial mosques, buildings that demand to be taken seriously as expressions of state ideology.

The potential of these monuments for rethinking the Ottoman Baroque and its wider implications has remained strangely unexplored. Though scholars have long acknowledged that the new style coincided with a resurgence of imperial religious foundations, few have considered the two phenomena in tandem, and the more recent revisionist literature in particular has largely overlooked the mosques in its discussion of the period's architectural changes.<sup>1</sup> Such neglect is curious given the Ottomans' own privileging of the sultanic mosque as the building category par excellence, and all the more so in light of the type's conspicuous eighteenth-century comeback.<sup>2</sup> The Nuruosmaniye was followed in swift succession by the mosques of Ayazma (1758-61), Laleli (1760-64), Beylerbeyi (1777-78), and Selimiye (1801-5), not to mention reconstructed versions of the mosques of Fatih (1767-71) and Eyüp Sultan (1798-1800). These buildings had a profound and transformative effect on the landscape of Istanbul, spreading the new style along the city's thoroughfares and waterways. Their importance lies not only in their status and number, but also in their value as uniquely revealing case studies. To talk of an imperial mosque really means to talk of a whole complex that includes such additional elements as a school, library, public kitchen, royal pavilion, tomb, and fountain. By bringing together these various kinds of buildings ranging from the utilitarian to the palatial, royal mosque complexes functioned as microcosms of what was happening more generally in the architecture of the capital. They therefore provide us with some of the richest and fullest information available about the visual culture to which they belong, and it is in treating the mosques as emblematic of the Ottoman Baroque at large that I hope to give a more convincing account of the style's impetus and consequences.

It is my belief that the Ottoman Baroque—far from being a lightweight ornamental mode born of cultural atrophy or artistic whim—was a sophisticated and conscious strategy to reaffirm the

Ottoman state's position in an age when older aesthetic idioms had lost their relevance. Centered on the capital, the message was designed to speak both to the empire's own subjects and to the surrounding world, and it is this comprehensiveness of aim that explains the architecture's characteristic incorporation of Westernizing elements. If older scholarship has grossly exaggerated the Ottoman Baroque's relationship to European models, recent revisionist arguments have misleadingly underplayed it, ignoring what is plain to see with the eye. The style's patent adaptation of Western forms has become something of an elephant in the room, when it should be regarded as one of the clearest reasons for the Ottoman Baroque's success and appeal. Always creatively recast according to local concerns, such borrowings allowed patrons and artists to refashion Istanbul as a modern city boasting a globally resonant yet recognizably Ottoman mode of architecture. The project was a cornerstone of a much larger rebranding effort whereby the Ottomans—responding to new political realities at a time of heightened East-West contact—sought both to consolidate their power on the world stage and to put themselves on a more diplomatic footing with their European neighbors. This international perspective will be key to the argument that I shall here develop.

### Ottoman Baroque and Its Discontents

Until relatively recently, scholars and connoisseurs have been none too favorable in their view of eighteenth-century Ottoman art and architecture. The tone of the discourse was established as early as 1873 by the *Usûl i Mi'mârî i 'Osmânî* (Fundamentals of Ottoman Architecture) or *L'architecture ottomane*, an illustrated treatise with texts in Turkish, French, and German prepared by the Ottoman government for the Vienna World Exposition. Both a history and a defense of Ottoman architecture, the *Usûl* tells a by-now familiar tale in which the tradition reached its peak during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, particularly under Sinan, whose manner was perpetuated, though not bettered, in the decades that followed his death. With the mid-seventeenth century came stagnation, and then, during the reign of Ahmed III (r. 1703-30), a short-lived reflowering. Notwithstanding this positive start, the

eighteenth century soon took an unhappy turn, for "engineers and hydraulic architects, having been called from France for various works, brought in their wake other artists, sculptors, painters, and decorators who soon altered the stylistic purity of Ottoman architecture to the point of complete debasement, as we see most strikingly from the examples of the Nuruosmaniye and Laleli Mosques." This bastardized and alien style, the text continues, was to last into the 1860s, when a revival of the "classical" manner began under Abdülaziz (r. 1861-76), the sultan during whose reign the *Usûl* was written. Ironically, the main author of the treatise, Victor Marie de Launay, was himself a French expatriate working for the Ottoman government, and the buildings he hails as exemplars of the incipient "renaissance" are eclectic works that have little to do with traditional models.

Despite its contradictions, the *Usûl* proved highly influential among those who would found the field of Ottoman art history. The prolific Celâl Esad Arseven (d. 1971), son to a grand vizier and a politician in his own right, closely paraphrased the *Usûl*'s description of the eighteenth century in his first book, an architectural history of Istanbul published in French in 1909. Here—perhaps for the first time—the maligned foreign influence is explicitly labeled "Baroque." Another proponent of the rise-and-fall view, and likewise a grand vizier's son and politician, was Ha il Ethem Eldem (d. 1938), an important figure in early Turkish museums who wrote on various art-related topics. Eldem, whose father, Ibrahim Edhem Pasha (d. 1893), had supervised the preparation of the *Usûl*, helped to carry the treatise's characterizations into the nationalistic literature of the young Turkish Republic, declaring, "Our style of architecture took on a defective form and fell into the hands of foreigners."

Such a stance is representative of a broader and still popular narrative of Ottoman decline, which holds that the empire entered into a long and ultimately fatal degeneration after its sixteenth-century zenith.<sup>1</sup> This well-worn account—widespread in both Western and Turkish historiography—needs little recapitulation, but it bears remembering that the eighteenth century,

give or take a few decades, serves as the tale's extended turning point. Events may be summarized as follows. After the failed second siege of Vienna in 1683, the Ottomans suffered a spate of territorial losses at the hands of a Habsburg-led coalition, eventually admitting defeat with the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699. The ensuing century was marked by a series of attempts at reviving the empire's fortunes through European-inspired military reforms, but a combination of ineptitude, reactionary opposition, and Russian expansionism stopped these efforts from bearing fruit. In 1807, the progressive Selim III (r. 1789-1807, d. 1808) was toppled, signaling the end of the Ottoman eighteenth century. Although Selim's successors would follow his reformist example, the Ottomans' fate was already sealed, and the Sick Man of Europe, as the empire came to be dubbed, would die in 1922. The artistic dimension of this process was as pitiable as the rest: in their visual culture just as in their military and politics, the Ottomans succumbed to European hegemony and tried, with poor results, to ape the ways of the West.

Over the course of the twentieth century, several art-historical approaches arose to challenge this dominant interpretation. The first was simply to treat the material as worthy of study to begin with. Arseven, who continued to publish (mainly in Turkish) until his death in 1971, came to look less dismissively on the eighteenth century in his later writings.<sup>2</sup> While he always considered the buildings of this period to be frivolously ornamental when compared with classical Ottoman works, he stopped viewing them merely as copies of Western models and recognized their distinctively local quality, such that by the 1950s, he was arguing for their acceptance as part of "our national history of Turkish art." This change in thinking came about in the volatile political climate of the young Turkish Republic, whose explicitly Westernizing policies in many ways undermined the traditionalist basis of the previously leveled criticisms.

As early as 1928, when he published the first edition of his famous survey of Turkish art, Arseven laid down what was to become the standard art-historical periodization of the eighteenth century. He followed the *Usûl* in distinguishing the reign of Ahmed III from what came after it, though he was

now able to give the period a name: the "Tulip Era" (Laie Devri), a term whose significance I discuss in chapter 1. This was a time when, according to Arseven, Ottoman architects rejuvenated their art by looking to Seljuk and Persian sources before finally turning to European models. Following the "Tulip Era," and as a logical outgrowth of it, came the Turkish Baroque (Türk Baroku), which was to last until the beginning of the nineteenth century, and which saw the proliferation of forms derived from Western Baroque models. As Arseven writes, "this Baroque did not exactly resemble its European counterpart. Turkish artists included details specific to a Turkish taste, and a Turkish Baroque took shape."

Though foundational, Arseven's ideas on the so-called Turkish Baroque would not become better known until they were synthesized and given monographic treatment by the architectural historian Dogan Kuban, whose short 1954 book, *Türk Barok Mimarisi Hakkında bir Deneme* (A Study on Turkish Baroque Architecture), first popularized this subfield." Kuban's book is essentially a survey of buildings produced in Istanbul between about 1725 and 1825, and its stated philosophy, elaborating Arseven's, is that "most of [these works] must be given an honorable place in our art history." For Kuban, the decline of the empire is an accepted fact, but while he sees the Turkish Baroque as part of a change in attitude that was forced on the Ottomans by their weakened position vis-à-vis Europe, he is largely positive in his judgment of the result:

Despite the continuing decline of the empire's political and economic situation, and the lack of favorable conditions for the emergence of great artists, eighteenth-century Turkish artists were able to absorb outside influences and recast them in a completely original mold. They produced attractive works using the possibilities they were given, conforming to the spirit of the time."

Kuban thus explains the Turkish Baroque as a tradition that was hampered by rather than symptomatic of the empire's deterioration, and he further vindicates it with reference to parallel phenomena in the West, arguing that "if eighteenth-century Turkish architecture did not

bring about works to be compared with those of earlier periods, ... it can be said of Europe that after the Renaissance, no works equal to those of the Renaissance were produced."

Kuban's spirited, if apologetic, defense of the Ottoman Baroque marked an important shift in the scholarship, and notwithstanding its patriotic overtones, his study is among the first to emphasize the extensive role played by Greek and Armenian artists in this variety of "Turkish" architecture. While doing much to redeem the material, however, Kuban also solidified the notion—often perpetuated by later scholars—that the Ottoman Baroque was really a Rococo style, involving surface decoration rather than any substantive architectural innovations:

Leaving aside the resemblance of motifs, this decoration ... differs from the [Western] Baroque in the weakness of its plasticity. In the Baroque, decorative motifs merge with the architecture to form a whole. But in our case, the decorative motifs, even at their most plastic, are additions to the architecture.... We do, on the other hand, possess the same kind of surface decoration that is essential to the Rococo.

Elements of this characterization may well be true, but, as I shall later demonstrate, the tendency to view the Ottoman Baroque as something that remained on the buildings' surface has led to an analogously superficial understanding of how the style, ornamental or not, might have been read by those who observed it.

Whatever its shortcomings, Kuban's monograph secured the legitimacy of eighteenth-century Ottoman architecture as a field of inquiry and was followed by a number of studies—some more sympathetic to the material than others—covering the subject, particularly from the 1970s onward. It was in this decade that the topic first gained prominence in English-language scholarship, as exemplified by Godfrey Goodwin's classic *History of Ottoman Architecture*, where, in a chapter devoted to the Baroque, he defends the *Nuruosmaniye* as "a work of considerable interest ... by an architect with inventive and assimilative powers." Goodwin stops short, however, of really challenging the established art-



historical schema, and he makes little attempt to hide his preference for the earlier monuments. Typical for its time, such ambivalence continues to reverberate today in the more traditionally framed literature.

Perhaps the only old-school scholar to have developed an entirely comfortable relationship with the material is Kuban himself, whose monumental survey of Ottoman architecture—published in Turkish in 2007 and in English in 2010—returns to the issues raised in his much earlier study. The author's once qualified appreciation for the later buildings has here turned into all-out praise for what he now deems a "great legacy" whose monuments are examples of an "imported, eclectic architecture" even as they are "in fact truly indigenous." According to this assessment, late Ottoman architecture becomes a thriving sign of (Westernizing) modernity, one that "arose in line with the desire for innovation manifested by the ruling classes" and proceeded "quite independently of the political background, even in the most difficult and unfavourable conditions." Already anticipated by his 1954 study, this argument sees the architecture emerge triumphant while leaving the broader decline paradigm firmly in place, and Kuban is forced to artificially sever the buildings from their political context in order to maintain his position. Moreover, the Ottoman Baroque remains a largely superficial and self-referential entity, speaking of the resilience of artistic expression but having no real import beyond its aesthetic merit.

Only in the work of a newer generation of scholars has serious headway been made in advancing other, more persuasive ways of situating later Ottoman architecture. Paralleling the endeavors of political and social historians, art and cultural historians have discarded the old decline paradigm and reassessed the late Ottoman Empire as a still robust and adaptable entity, one whose visual culture, while different from its classical counterpart, was no less creative or significant. The resultant perspectives go well beyond the rehabilitative efforts of the earlier scholarship, which sought to improve the material's reputation without proposing alternative conceptual frameworks divested of assumptions of Ottoman

decay and Westernization. With this change in thinking, the term "Ottoman Baroque" has increasingly fallen out of favor.

Of the new breed of scholars, Tülay Artan has played a pioneering role in shifting the terms of the debate. Her writings are especially significant for demonstrating how the eighteenth-century Ottoman court was able to reassert its presence in Istanbul by erecting a string of new palaces along the city's waterways. This endeavor, Artan asserts, turned the Bosphorus into a new ceremonial axis for the sultans and their circle to display themselves before the populace, who emulated the elite by likewise building in and retreating to the shoreline suburbs. The growing participation of nonroyals in the cultural and architectural life of the city only encouraged the sultans in their patronage, which aimed "to remind the people of the enduring nature and rich magnificence of the Ottoman dynasty." Artan thus explains the architectural changes of the eighteenth century with reference mainly to the empire's internal dynamics, and she also widens the scope of inquiry to consider the role of nonelite Ottomans in this altered climate.

These same ideas have been taken up by perhaps the most influential proponent of the revisionist approach, Shirine Hamadeh, whose key work, published in 2008, is tellingly titled *The City's Pleasures*. Hamadeh holds that the eighteenth century ushered in a new attitude of what she terms *décloisonnement*, "opening-up," in the architectural culture of the Ottoman capital. First, the concept describes an opening up of patronage, whereby the court's earlier predominance in this regard came under increasing challenge as a broader spectrum of society acquired the means to commission buildings and determine tastes. Second, *décloisonnement* denotes an opening up in the realm of style, with Ottoman architects and patrons becoming increasingly receptive to forms drawn from outside sources, including, but not limited to, the European Baroque. This openness to new motifs was due, Hamadeh argues, to a growing emphasis on artistic novelty and visual spectacle, which marked a shift away from the more sober and imperially led stylistic norms that had characterized earlier classical tastes. Bridging these two types of *décloisonnement* was a new aesthetic sensibility

that came to redefine Istanbul, rendering the built environment "a perpetual source of sensory pleasures." Under these changed conditions, the city became a locus of exteriorized activity, with a proliferation of public spaces in which growing numbers of middleclass Ottomans could be seen out and about picnicking and promenading, all against the backdrop of a new and diversified architecture.

In short, Hamadeh's eighteenth-century Istanbul emerges as a vibrant, revitalized locale whose architecture, far from being in decline, bespeaks the continuing ability of the Ottoman Empire to reformulate its visual culture on its own terms. Central to Hamadeh's argument is her insistence that the Ottomans were not beholden to European influence, and that the new kind of architecture was more eclectic than it was Westernizing. She points to the fact that while Ottoman commentaries, together with inscriptions on the buildings themselves, often refer to the architecture's stylistic novelty, they do so without mentioning Western models. Moreover, the contemporary fashions in Europe for chinoiserie and turquerie show that the West was not immune from making its own cross-cultural borrowings.

Hamadeh's seminal work has greatly advanced our understanding of later Ottoman visual culture, countering many long-held prejudices and offering rewarding alternative viewpoints. But even in this new framework, the architecture risks being seen as a lighthearted departure from tradition—pleasurable, less hierarchical, and without the semiotic charge of earlier classical buildings. The criterion of Westernization, meanwhile, is rightly questioned without being adequately accounted for, as the blanket ascription of eclecticism to the whole period ignores the dramatic stylistic realignment of the 1740s. A significant step in addressing some of these issues would be to turn to the very buildings that have been least touched upon by corrective efforts: the imperial mosques.

### Ottoman Baroque Reclaimed

While deeply indebted to recent scholarly analyses, my own reconsideration of eighteenth-century Ottoman architecture will argue for a new interpretative approach that problematizes certain revisionist trends. The admirable campaign to

debunk old misconceptions has taken on a defensive and sometimes obscurantist cast, with "decline" becoming what Cemal Kafadar has dubbed "the d-word," shunned simply because it seems the incorrect thing to say rather than as a well thought-out critical perspective." The same is true of the terms "Westernization" and "Europeanization," which are likewise bugbears inherited from earlier assessments. It is obvious enough that the decline paradigm is an untenable way of discussing an empire whose size and importance remained considerable into the twentieth century, and I have already indicated my aim to treat the mosques as the products of a still-vital culture rather than of listlessly received influence. Nevertheless, we should not shy away from accepting that the period after the late seventeenth century witnessed various Ottoman attempts to rejuvenate the empire, and that many of these were modeled on institutions and concepts originating in Western Europe. The contemporaneous adoption of European artistic motifs cannot be unrelated to this shift, notwithstanding scholarly discomfort with the notion.

How, then, might we address these issues without sidestepping them or returning to older perspectives? The first task is to dissociate Western-inspired borrowings from the baggage carried by the idea of "Westernization": that is, such borrowings need not have been—and indeed were not—motivated by a pursuit of Westernization per se. In the case of political and military reforms, the Ottomans looked to Europe with a pragmatic and resourceful eye, importing models only insofar as they served, and could be modified to suit, the empire's own traditions and needs. Nor should an openness to foreign ideas be understood as an admission of impotence and hence a diagnostic of degeneracy. To be sure, Ottoman commentators had spoken of the empire's being in decline since as early as the last decades of the sixteenth century, but this anxiety, as Kafadar has discussed, was to some extent a conventional discourse. That the Ottomans continued to develop policies to bolster the state shows that they were far from truly believing that their days were numbered. Not all of these measures bore fruit in the long term, and it is largely because of the nineteenth-century image of the empire for one

of my chief contentions is that the Ottoman Baroque's advent and unfolding were historically contingent processes that must be evaluated as such if their intents and effects are to be understood.

Chapter 1, which focuses on the reign of Ahmed III, takes as its starting point the return of the court to Istanbul in 1703 after prolonged periods of absence in Edirne. The nearly three decades during which Ahmed ruled initiated a concerted campaign to remodel the city and promote royal self-display, entailing new artistic trends and significant changes in the architectural profession. These developments coincided with, and were inflected by, intensified diplomatic and commercial activity with Europe. Although this period—traditionally discussed under the heading "Tulip Era"—predates the phenomena that are my main topic, it nevertheless introduced many of the concerns and conditions that would shape the rest of the eighteenth century.

It was under Mahmud I (r. 1730-54), whose reign is addressed in chapter 2, that the city's architectural transformation was set on a more novel and enduring course. In the wake of important military victories that ushered in an unprecedented period of peace on the empire's Western front, Mahmud and his elite oversaw the formation of a triumphal new Baroque style during the 1740s. Crucial to this process were the increasingly prominent communities of Ottoman Greek and Armenian artists, who used their European—and especially Italian—connections to create an altogether original mode of architecture that readily lent itself to symbolizing state vigor.

The earliest products of this new style were generally of smaller scale or limited application, but the innovative repertoire they established was soon channeled into what was to be the Ottoman Baroque's monumental public debut: the Nuruosmaniye Mosque, the subject of chapter 3. Begun by Mahmud I and completed by his brother and successor, Osman III (r. 1754-57), the Nuruosmaniye struck a remarkable balance between reviving and revolutionizing the imperial mosque as a building type. The result spoke simultaneously to native and outside audiences, concretizing the sultan's ceremonial dominance over Istanbul and tying the Ottomans' visual culture to the globally prestigious Baroque mode.

Covering the reign of Mustafa III (r. 1757-74), by which time the Ottoman Baroque had achieved canonicity, chapter 4 considers his three major mosques—the Ayazma, Laleli, and Fatih—as buildings that show a sophisticated awareness of the style's morphology, syntax, and historical and cultural contexts. Especially notable is the architecture's inclusion of numerous references to the Byzantine past, whereby the Ottomans could stake their own claim to the same antique heritage on which the European Baroque was founded. Such demonstrations of stylistic consciousness provide telling evidence of the Ottomans' largely unwritten architectural theories and discourses.

Chapter 5 focuses on the use of religious architecture by Abdülhamid I (r. 1774-89) and Selim III to establish a new paradigm of engagement that brought them into heightened visual and conceptual proximity with their subjects, reasserting sultanic power in the face of renewed international warfare. Their endeavors yielded a number of regenerative modifications to Istanbul's streetscapes and suburbs, including two new mosques—the Beylerbeyi and Selimiye—that combined earlier innovations with

an original kind of palatial façade. Accompanying a surge in royal patronage along the shores, the introduction of this palatial feature boosted the efficacy of the mosques in monumentalizing the ruler's presence and spreading his image—by now fully recognizable in the Baroque style—across the city.

So effective did this model prove that it became exemplary for the future, with several new pavilion-fronted mosques erected throughout the nineteenth century. These I discuss in my conclusion, where I also consider the afterlife of the Ottoman Baroque itself. Like the imperial mosques for which it was utilized, the style had ramifications well beyond its own time, setting the ambitiously cosmopolitan tone that would continue to define Istanbul's remaking until the end of the empire.' <>

[Islam, Modernity and a New Millennium: Themes from a Critical Rationalist Reading of Islam](#) by Ali Paya [Routledge, 9781138087750]

As the world becomes increasingly globalised Islam faces some important choices. Does it seek to

"modernise" in line with the cultures in which it is practised, or does it retain its traditions even if they are at odds with the surrounding society? This book utilizes a critical rationalist viewpoint to illuminate many of the hotly contended issues in modern Islam, and to offer a fresh analysis.

A variety of issues within Islam are discussed in this book including, Muslims and modernity; Islam, Christianity and Judaism; approaches to the understanding of the Quran; Muslim identity and civil society; doctrinal certainty and violent radicalism. In each case, the author makes use of Karl Popper's theory of critical rationalism to uncover new aspects of these issues and to challenge post-modern, relativist, literalist and justificationist readings of Islam.

This is a unique perspective on contemporary Islam and as such will be of significant interest to scholars of Religious Studies, Islamic Studies and the Philosophy of Religion.

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Excerpt: Modernity, from an ontological point of view, is a vast and complex 'social' entity (in the rich sense of the term 'social') whose time and location of emergence can only be approximately and to some extent, arbitrarily, defined. Since its appearance, this entity has constantly evolved and undergone various changes and has assumed various forms and shapes. Different writers have suggested different starting points for this phenomenon. Thus, for example, Milan Kundera, the Czech novelist, says that the modern period started when Don Quixote left his home and began his knight errantry (Kundera, 1980). Others have regarded the publication of Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus* ([1543] 1978) as the starting point of the modern world. However, the common thread among all these various suggestions is that modern times, and hence by implication the phenomenon of modernity, have emerged in Europe around the sixteenth century.

From an epistemological point of view, the very notion of 'modernity', as used by different writers, denotes a set of stories or models or narratives created to account for and give meaning to a huge number of complicated and complex events, processes and activities which cropped up in a certain space-time. Since then and from there its influences have touched almost all corners of the globe. These events, processes and activities were the results of interactions between various social actors with each other and with their surroundings. Among various models of modernity, those which subscribe to the ideals of the Enlightenment differ from those which reject the role of reason and have succumbed to the 'seduction of unreason' (Wolin, 2004). However, all of these models of modernity share some fundamental ideas. These ideas are, to some extent, captured in the following three mottos introduced by three influential architects of modernity, namely, Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche. The mottos in question are as follows: "Sapere aude! -Have courage to use your own intellect!" (Kant, 1784), "All that was solid melted into air" (Marx and Engels, [1848]1967: p. 83), "Human, All Too Human (Nietzsche, [1878]1994)."

In discussing the phenomenon of 'modernity' it is also important to distinguish 'modernity' from either 'modernism' or 'modernisation' notwithstanding the common aspects shared between these three concepts.

Modernism is a name for a period in the history of art. It emerged around late 1880s in Europe and America and lasted (more or less) until the Second World War. Modernism is underpinned by a number of values. These include "a propensity to create 'culture shock' by abandoning traditional conventions of social behaviour, aesthetic representation, and scientific verification; the celebration of elitist or revolutionary aesthetic and ethical departures; and in general the derogation of the premise of a coherent, empirically accessible external reality (such as Nature or Providence) and the substitution of humanly devised structures or systems which are self-consciously arbitrary and transitory." (Craig, 1998)

Modernisation, on the other hand, is a social process which seeks to make changes in the social, political and economic institutions and relations so that they become more harmonised with and amenable to the requirements of the modern, rationalised age. The process of modernisation is almost always technologically-driven (in the extended sense of the term technology). Large scale programmes of modernisation, especially in the third world, tend to give rise to undesired and unwanted consequences which are contrary to the expectations of those who have planned and engineered the changes.'

### Muslims' responses to modernity

In the course of the ongoing encounter between Muslim societies and 'modernity', a number of Muslims stood above the rest and through their visions, thoughts and deeds introduced new responses to 'modernity' or made refinements, elaborations or radical changes to the existing responses. In doing so, they developed new discourses between various understandings of Islam and 'modernity'. These 'discourses' could be regarded as 'projects' for effecting 'appropriate' changes in Muslim societies in order to equip them with the means required to respond to 'modernity'. Even a cursory glance at the history of Muslim countries and communities, in this regard, reveals a

trend towards developing ever more sophisticated reactions and behaviours on the part of Muslims.

It is true that understanding this trend and acquiring detailed knowledge of the ways in which Muslims have responded to modernity (or to be more accurate, modernities) is necessary for making sense of the present state of Muslim societies and possible paths which they may take in the future. However, this is, inevitably, a rich landscape making it extremely difficult, if not almost impossible, to produce a comprehensible list of the names of all those actors who have played significant roles in the drama which has been unfolding since the later part of the eighteenth century. It would be equally impossible to produce detailed accounts of the ideas and achievements of these individuals. Nevertheless, as the great Persian poet, Rumi, has advised:

If it is impossible to drain (drink) the Oxus  
One cannot deny one's self as much  
(water) as will slake [one's] thirst.  
(Rumi, 1933: Book VI, Verse 66)

In other words, although doing complete justice to the details of a two-hundred-and-fifty-year history of the encounter between Muslim societies and 'modernity' is not possible, it seems even a brief discussion of a small selection of Muslim responses in the introduction of the present volume is not without some merit.

Perhaps the first step towards producing a brief account of Muslims' responses to 'modernity' is to introduce effective categories for classifying these responses. However, problems arise even at this preliminary stage. This is because, as was hinted above, there is no standard, agreed upon system of classification among the scholars who study the phenomenon of the encounter between Muslims and 'modernity'. It would not be an exaggeration if it were claimed that there are, more or less, as many such classificatory systems as there are researchers in this field.

For example, one writer has suggested the categories of "secular, conservative (or traditionalist), neo-revivalist (or fundamentalist), and neomodernist" to represent the diversity of Muslims' responses to modernity (Esposito, 2000). He has described the characteristics of these categories in the following way:

Secularists advocate the separation of religion and politics.... The conservative or traditionalist position is that of the majority of mainstream ulama [religious scholars], who believe that Islam is expressed quite comprehensively and adequately in classical formulations of Islamic law and doctrine ... conservatives emphasize the following of past traditions or practices and are wary of any innovation that they regard as "deviation" (bida).... Neorevivalists or Islamists, often popularly referred to as "fundamentalists," share much in common with conservatives or traditionalists. They too emphasize a return to Islam to bring about a new renaissance.... Like conservatives, they attribute the weakness of the Islamic world primarily to the westernization of Muslim societies, the penetration of its foreign, "un-Islamic" ideas, values, and practices. In contrast to conservatives, however, they are much more flexible in their ability to adapt to change.... [Neomodernists ... seek to bridge the gap between the traditionally and the secularly educated. They too are activists who look to the early Islamic period as embodying the normative ideal. Although they overlap with neorevival-ists or Islamists ... neomodernists are more flexible and creative in their thought.... They emphasize the importance of "Islamic modernization and development." ... Islamic neomodernists do not reject the West in its entirety; rather, they choose to be selective in [their] approach... . Contemporary Islamic reformers or neomodernists also stress the need to renew Islam both at the individual and the community levels. They advocate a process of Islamization or re-Islamization that begins with the sacred sources of Islam, the Quran and Sunna of the Prophet,' but that also embraces the best in other cultures.... In contrast to neorevivalists, neomodernists are more creative and wide-ranging in their reinterpretation of Islam and less tied to traditional interpretations of the ulama.

Another researcher has proposed the following categories for classifying Muslim responses: "The Isolationist Approach of Conservative Ulama", "The Early Modernist Approach", "Revivalist Islam" and "The Contemporary Modernist Approach". He has

defined his proposed categories in the following way:

The Isolationist Approach of conservative Ulama was based in the institutions of traditional Islamic scholarship, and was characterized by an absolute unwillingness to interact with the modern West. The Early Modernist Approach considered the modern West as a place of enlightenment, progress, and prosperity, and as the ideal to which Muslims must aspire. Revivalist Islam represents an attempt to reform Islam from within so that it is better able to respond to the Western challenge.... The Contemporary Modernist Approach is an attempt to annul those Islamic practices and obligations that are deemed incompatible with modern thought and institutions.

A third researcher has explained Muslims' responses to modernity in terms of the following three types of reactions. She writes,

The first reaction, total embrace of Western-style modernity, has been identified with the new and expanding elites educated in the West and later also in Western style educational institutions. The total modernizers viewed Islam as practiced and implemented in the educational and judicial spheres of their respective countries as a major cause of Muslims' decline.... The second, rejectionist response was represented by the uneducated masses and the clerical establishments. From their perspective, the main cause of Muslims' decline had been the erosion of Islamic values and piety, and the failure to manage and govern society according to Islamic law. ... The third reaction ... has been that of synthesis. The adherents of this trend maintain that Islam is not a hindrance to scientific and other progress and have worked hard to validate their views.... They advocated a kind of reform in Islam close to the second definition of the term noted earlier,' namely the restoration of Islam's rationalist and scientific spirit and the interpretation of its basic tenets in ways more suited to Muslims' current conditions and needs.

The above list of classificatory systems could be extended almost at will.' For my part, I prefer to

use my own categories for the purpose of discussions and critical assessments in this volume. The system which I have adopted may have, indeed has, some overlaps with the categories suggested by some other researchers, including the above three writers. I suggest Muslims' reactions to modernity could be studied in terms of the following categories,' with the following caveat that the doctrines identified with each of the categories introduced below should not be regarded as rigid designators; they constitute a spectrum of ideas in which many types of the 'variations on the same theme' and 'overlaps between categories' can be found:

- Followers of Orthodoxy
- Traditionists ('Traditionalists')
- Rejectionists (peaceful and militant)
- Fundamentalists
- Assimilationists
- Modernists
- 'Late-Moderns'/Critical Rationalists/'Reformists'
- Post-Modernists
- Secularists

Ideally, in discussing each and every one of the above categories, it would be useful if one could deal with the position of the representatives of the above categories with regard to the following issues: religion, the Quran and Sunnah; political systems, good governance, democracy and anti-colonial struggles; rights, including women's rights and the rights of minorities; civil society, citizens' participation, the role of the elite and of intellectuals; the rule of law, social justice and various types of freedom; identity, culture, modes of development (indigenous and otherwise) and globalisation.

However, due to space limitations, in what follows I will not be able to do justice to the rich output of each of the above categories with respect to the above issues. The most I can hope for is to introduce a general account of the main distinguishing features of each of the above categories and very briefly, in a line or two, to discuss the views of some of the better-known representatives of each of them.

The followers of orthodoxy (also known as traditionalists due to their adherence to traditional rituals) represent the largest group among Muslims. They subscribe to an interpretation of Islam which can be regarded as 'the belief system of the ordinary Muslims'; an interpretation which is represented in the teachings of official religious authorities such as imams, muftis and ayatollahs. The followers of orthodoxy observe a commonsensical code of moral conduct and try to stick to the letter of sharia<sup>9</sup> law. They have no qualms about making use of Western consumer goods and while they regard many aspects of social life in the West, and their echoes in their own countries, as decadent, they do not go out of their way to fight against them. They are apolitical and usually are not organised in political institutions like political parties; however, they can be mobilised for mass activities, for example, street demonstrations by religious leaders who are regarded as established authorities. When it comes to the defence of Islam vis-à-vis non-Islamic ideas, the followers of orthodoxy usually adopt an apologetic/ syncretic approach.

Traditionism (also known as traditionalism, though not to be confused with the approach of the followers of orthodoxy despite a degree of similarity between the two positions) is an elitist trend. Traditionists maintain that the faculty of intuition (in the classic sense of the term) provides the believer with a surer and more effective means than the intellect and senses, for extracting the truth of the Book and the Tradition (Sunnah). Traditionists subscribe to the view that Divine wisdom is found in all ancient religious traditions in the form of a metaphysical system of thought called perennial wisdom. In this sense they advocate some sort of selective pluralism. For traditionists the "main objective of religion is to care for the spiritual needs of the faithful and not to create a heaven on earth". Like the followers of orthodoxy, traditionists, while critical of many aspects of the modern Western secular civilisation, may choose to live and work in the Western countries. Although traditionists too are apolitical, they express their displeasure of what they regard to be the misguided adventures of modern man in active ways through peaceful means. Perhaps the best-known representative of traditionism in our time is Seyyed Hossein Nasr

(1933—). The main elements of Nasr's project can be summarised as follows: promotion of a true understanding of Islam, which in his view is based on traditionism; rejection of fundamentalist, modernist and post-modernist interpretations of Islam; rejection of modernity and of the modernisation of Islam. By contrast he favours pursuing Islamisation (in the sense of traditionist Islam) of all aspects of modern life, including modern science and technology, and combating the distortion of the history of scientific achievements of Muslims by earlier generations of orientalist and historians of science.

Rejectionists, as their name implies, are against, at least on the face of it, all things Western. They maintain that all that Muslims need has already been provided for them by the Quran and ahadith (hadiths). Rejectionists usually subscribe to a literalist reading of sharia law. Some rejectionists are quietist and peaceful in their approach, in that they limit their activities to the peaceful preaching of their views and avoid whatever is 'Western' in their private spheres or within their own closed communities. Other groups of rejectionists are combative and militant in their approach, in that they support taking action against 'whatever is Western'. Groups like Al-Qaeda, Daesh (i.e. the so-called Islamic State), Jihadists and Takfiris are representatives of this militant and hardline trend of rejectionism. In between the above two extremes, other types of rejectionists can be found who are, to varying degrees, politically active, but pursue their aims through spreading their ideas and not by violent means. Shaykh Fazlullah Nouri (1843-1909) in Iran, who was an ardent advocate of the thesis of mashru'a (priority of the Shari'ah law) over mashrutah (constitutionalism) during the period which led to Iran's Constitutional revolution in 1906, is a case in point.

Fundamentalists have something in common with traditionists but also differ with them over other finer doctrinal issues. Like "traditionists, they reject the authority of reason in revealing the truth of the Book and the Tradition. However, contrary to traditionists, they strictly follow a literal reading of these sources". They also share traditionists' criticisms of modernity and the misguided views of modern man. "However, their position in this respect

is much stronger than traditionists' position in that they regard it as not only corrupt and degenerate but also deeply hostile to Islam.". Fundamentalists endorse, in a general sense, traditionists' call for developing 'Islamic sciences' and like them do not regard the use of modern, Western technologies for their own purposes to be un-Islamic.

Fundamentalists also have many things in common with militant rejectionists and may even be identified with them. They maintain that the aim of religion is to take care of all aspects of the lives of the believers in this world and the next. This means, among other things, that for fundamentalists establishing a religious state is a necessity. Fundamentalists, contrary to traditionists, are against religious and political pluralism. Two well-known examples of fundamentalist projects are the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt (founded in 1928), especially in the earlier stages of their development which were shaped by the views of Hassan al-Banna (1906-1946) and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), and Jama'at al-Islami (founded 1941), which is still deeply under the influence of its founder Abul 'Ala Mawdudi (1903-1979).

Assimilationists maintain that the only way forward for Muslims in modern times is to adopt (fully or to a large extent) all things Western. Assimilationists are ardent advocates of all projects of modernisation. For them religion belongs to the private sphere and has no place in the public arena. A large number of technocrats in Muslim countries subscribe, to varying degrees, to this 'creed'. Some assimilationists, while pushing the agenda of imitating Western models of modernity, would try to introduce these models in ways which appear to be compatible with traditional ways of life and rituals. A case in point is Mirza Malkum Khan, a political activist and a courtier in the second half of the nineteenth century. In a lecture entitled "Persian Civilisation" delivered to the Asian Society in London in 1890, Malkum Khan, commenting, among other things, on the subtle task of communicating new ideas to a traditional society, emphasised that

We have found that ideas which were by no means acceptable when coming from your agents in Europe were accepted at once with greatest delight when it was proved that they were latent in Islam. I can



assure you that the little progress which you see in Persia and Turkey, especially in Persia, is due to this fact that some people have taken your European principles and instead of saying that they come from England, France or Germany, they have said, "We have nothing to do with Europeans; but these are the true principles of our religion (and indeed, this is quite true) which have been taken by Europeans!" That has had a marvellous effect at once.

Other assimilationists may treat such rituals as 'museum pieces'. They usually maintain that religion and religious rituals belong to the private sphere and should not play any role in the public arena. Kemal Ataturk (1881-1938) the founder of modern Turkey could be regarded as an 'assimilationist par excellence'.

Modernists aim to demonstrate that religion and modernity are compatible and maintain that while modern reason can be used in the service of developing better understanding of religion, religious values and religious life styles can greatly enrich the project of modernity. Modernists are active in the political arena. They believe in peaceful coexistence with the West and are not against religious or political pluralism so long as they do not pose threat to their own project. They also believe in the power of modern institutions and are in favour of 'piecemeal social engineering' for the sake of educating the public and improving their socio-political and economic situations. Modernists are in favour of the project of Islamic revivalism and in particular would want to produce 'Islamic' models of all modern institutions, including educational system, banking system, modern science. Some modernists, though not all, welcome revolutionary changes and are in favour of establishing an Islamic state with a liberal outlook. Seyyed Jamal al-Din Asadabadi (aka: al-Afghani-1838-1897), Fazlur Rahman Malik (1919-1988), Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (1921-1986), Mehdi Bazargan (1907-1995) and Amina Wadud (1952—) are among the well-known representatives of the modernist project.

"While in view of modernists reason, notwithstanding its utmost importance, must be regarded as subservient to the Revealed Message,

for late-moderns/critical rationalists reason is autonomous in its deliberations and does not recognize any higher authority" (Paya, 2011b: p. 134). In view of the late-moderns/critical rationalists, all types of understanding, including understanding of the Quran and the Sunnah, are subject to interpretation, and since individuals' understanding is fallible and subject to improvement, the process of interpretation is never-ending. For critical rationalists/late-moderns, politics — as a tool and technology which can help to make the world a better place for all — is important. They maintain that religious teachings and values could inform and enlighten the arena of politics; however, religion and religious teachings should always be introduced to the realm of politics through the channel of critical reason and never in a literal, un-interpreted manner. Critical rationalists/late-moderns are pro religious and political pluralism and not in favour of ideological states. When it comes to the welfare of citizens of their societies, improving their lives, and creation of a fairer and more equitable society, they support well-thought piecemeal reforms introduced by rational and reliable institutions. They also maintain that systems of governance in which plans and policies are developed through a deliberative process with the help of 'public reason' are better than systems which aim to find and appoint the most pious individuals as leaders and decision-makers. Fatima Mernissi (1940-2015), Nasr Hamed Abu Zayd (1943-2010), Muhammed Arkoun (1928-2010) and Abdolkarim Soroush (1945—) are some typical representatives of this approach.

I discuss further aspects of the views of critical rationalists below.

Post-modernists, by and large, subscribe to the views introduced by their namesakes in the West and try to promote the same ideas among fellow Muslims in their societies. They challenge many of the accepted norms and beliefs among Muslims. They are advocates of a thoroughgoing pluralism. However, contrary to critical rationalists, they maintain that pluralism and relativism go hand-in-hand. In their view truth is relative and all narratives need to be constantly deconstructed, and all authorities ought to be rejected; they regard religion as something which belongs to individuals'

personal and private spheres, something which provides them with psychological comfort. Perhaps Hassan Hanafi (1935—) and Shahab Ahmed (1966-2015) could be regarded as two representatives of the postmodern trend among Muslim writers. In his latest book, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (2016), which was published posthumously, Ahmed begins with an anecdote that captures the essence of his approach:

Some years ago, I attended at Princeton University where I witnessed a revealing exchange between an eminent European philosopher who was visiting from Cambridge, and a Muslim scholar who was seated next to him. The Muslim colleague was indulging in a glass of wine. Evidently troubled by this, the distinguished don eventually asked his dining companion if he might be so bold to venture a personal question. "Do you consider yourself a Muslim?" "Yes," came the reply. "How come, then, you are drinking wine?" The Muslim colleague smiled gently. "My family have been Muslims for a thousand years," he said. "during which time we have always been drinking wine." An expression of distress appeared on the learned logician's pale countenance, prompting the further clarification: "you see, we are Muslim wine-drinkers." The questioner looked bewildered. "I don't understand," he said. "Yes, I know," replied his native informant, "but I do."

Secularists do not represent a unified category. Some are fiercely anti-religion, while others are not against religion and welcome it in the private spheres of individual believers. They may themselves be religious. As for the role of religion in the public sphere, while the first group of secularists totally reject it, the second group maintain that religious ideals and values could inspire and inform policies and practices. But they also emphasise that religious views should not be used, in an un-interpreted and literal sense, as policies or trump considered decisions made by means of the deliberative processes of each society. Some secularists are also fiercely anti-Western, in the fashion of Marxists or non-European ultranationalists, while others welcome

many of intellectual and material products of the West. Nagib Mahfuz (1911-2006), Orhan Pamuk (1952—) and Nawal El Saadawi (1931—) are three better-known representatives of the secularist trend among Muslims.

This book, however, is about a critical rationalist reading of Islam. While different aspects of this particular interpretation of Islamic teachings, creeds, ideals and ideas will be discussed in various chapters of the book, it would be useful to introduce its main tenets here. This will provide a common platform for developing the principal arguments of the book.

### About the present volume

Various chapters of the present volume aim to introduce a critical rationalist understanding of Islam. Each chapter deals with a topic which, it is hoped, to be of interest to researchers in the field of Islamic Studies, and in particular, to those who are interested in the relationship between modernity.

Although, as was stated above, each chapter of the book deals with a particular problem, a common thread binds them together, and collectively they present a unified picture of a critical rationalist approach to understanding of Islam. Chapter 2 introduces a critical rationalist approach to studying the Quran. The chapter begins by introducing a short account the importance of the Quran for Muslims (Section I). This is followed by a brief discussion of a cluster of closely connected notions, namely, 'algorithmic compressibility', 'complex systems' and 'logical depth' which have direct bearing on the study of all sorts of texts including the text of the Quran. Taking stock from this discussion, I argue in Section III that the Quran is a complex system with a significant logical depth and that its message can be best understood with a critical rationalist approach. In Section IV possible similarities between the critical rationalist approach and one of the best-known approaches to the Quran, known as the method of *istintaq*<sup>45</sup> (interrogation) of the Quran are explored. In Section V some possible criticisms of the critical rationalist approach to studying the Quran are considered. The chapter closes (Section VI) with a recapitulation of the main arguments introduced in the chapter.

In an interview, conducted by Rabbi Edward Zerin in 1969, concerning the views of the Austrian philosopher, Karl Popper, on God, Popper had stated, among other things: "Some forms of atheism are arrogant and ignorant and should be rejected, but agnosticism — to admit that we don't know and to search — is all right." In Chapter 3 I focus on this interview to argue that while agnosticism is an approach which some critical rationalists, like Popper, have chosen towards religion, it is possible to develop, within the framework of critical rationalism, an approach which is consonant with the sensibilities of a Muslim believer. I argue that this view on religion, and the framework of critical rationalism in general, provide the best theoretical approach for reform-minded Muslims who wish to produce viable syntheses of modernity and tradition acceptable to both conservative and progressive Muslims.

The focus of Chapter 4 is the programmes of producing 'Islamic Science' (cIS) and 'Islamisation of Science/Knowledge' (IoK) which are popular among many groups of Muslims and in many Muslim countries. The main argument of the chapter is that all such programmes are doomed to failure. First, I explain that the advocates of the programmes of producing cIS or IoK subscribe to mistaken images of science that are shaped by either a positivist or outmoded culturalist/interpretivist theories of science. Next, drawing on the distinction between 'science' and 'technology', introduced earlier, I argue that while creating 'Islamic' or 'indigenous' sciences is impossible, constructing 'Islamic' or 'indigenous' technologies is, in principle, feasible. However, I further explain that even in the case of 'indigenous' technologies, non-indigenous users can, with some adjustment, use the indigenous technologies in other contexts and even for purposes different from the purposes of their original inventors. Lastly, I turn to some of the more recent works on creating/constructing cIS and/or IoK. I try to show that none of the arguments introduced by the advocates of the projects of cIS/IoK is tenable.

Chapter 5 deals with a critical assessment of the epistemological status of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). Drawing on the main characteristics of engineering as well as differences between

science and technology, I argue that although Muslim scholars like Farabi and Ghazzali consciously placed fiqh in the category of "applied science", it seems that many of the fuqaha" (Muslim jurists/jurisprudents) and other Muslim (or even non-Muslim) scholars have not fully appreciated the significance of this point. The result, as I argue, has been epistemic confusion on the part of many fuqaha and perhaps other Muslim scholars who have equated fiqh with *ilm* (knowledge/science) and fuqaha with ulama (men of knowledge/science). Equating a faqih, who is a practical problem-solver par excellence (i.e. an engineer), with an alim (man of knowledge/scientist), who deals with theoretical ideas, has helped the fuqaha further consolidate their dominant position in the ecosystem of Islamic culture. In turn, this has paved the way for the dominance of legalistic/instrumentalistic/pragmatic approaches, in contrast to truth-oriented activities, in traditional centers of learning in Muslim societies.

In Chapter 6, "A Critical Assessment of the Method of Interpretation of the Quran by the Quran, in the light of Allameh Tabatabaei's Magnum Opus, Tafsir al-Mizan", I begin by presenting a brief history of the application of what has been referred to as 'the method of the interpretation of the Quran by the Quran' among Shi'i and Sunni commentators, and then introduce the main aspects of Allameh Tabatabaei's approach and his own account of this method. Next, I critically examine the strengths and also the possible weaknesses of Allameh Tabatabaei's approach. The chapter argues that the so-called method of the interpretation of the Quran by the Quran is not what its name implies. It is not a way of interpreting the Quran by the Quran. It is instead a method of applying the exegetes' favourite theoretical models/theories to make sense of the Quran. The success of the outcome of such exercises is directly linked to the theoretical richness and methodological effectiveness of the models/theories in question. In the last section of chapter, and in the light of the discussions in the preceding sections, I briefly and critically assess the views of two other authors who also have tried to critically discuss Allameh Tabatabaei's method of the interpretation of the Quran.

The aim of Chapter 7 is to critically assess the basic tenets of a powerful anti-intellectual trend in modern Shi'i thought known as the Tarkiki School. Following a short introduction to some anti-rational trends in the history of Islamic thought, and a brief historical background on the emergence of the Tarkiki School, I discuss the main epistemic claims made by the best and most articulate expositor of the School, Ustad Mohammad Reza Hakimi. I also briefly explore possible socio-political consequences of the wider promulgation of the views of the Tarkikis among the younger generations of the Shi'a Muslims. My basic argument is that while the Tarkiki School offers a powerful anti-intellectual model which appeals to the religious sensibilities of some groups of the faithful, it operates within a particularist and elitist methodological/epistemological framework which renders its epistemic claims either invalid or inaccessible to critical scrutiny in the public arena. In short, the epistemological model propagated by the Tarkikis is not conducive to a healthy growth of knowledge. Moreover, the School's anti-rational teachings could encourage intolerance and aversion to the use of dialogue in dealing with others.

Chapter 8, "Islamic Philosophy: Past, present, and Future", is dedicated to a critical assessment of the present state of Islamic philosophy. However, since such a study requires some knowledge of past developments of philosophical thought among Muslims, the chapter briefly, though critically, deals with the emergence and subsequent phases of change in the views of Muslim philosophers from the ninth century onward. In this historical survey I also touch upon the role played by other Muslim scholars, such as theologians, mystics and jurists, in shaping Islamic philosophy. The chapter ends with consideration of two possible scenarios for the future of Islamic philosophy.

The main argument of the next chapter of the book (Chapter 9), "Doctrinal Certainty: A Major Contributory Factor to 'Secular' and 'Religious' Violence in the Political Sphere", is encapsulated in its title. The conjecture I advocate is that individual and group certainty with regard to doctrinal dogmas, whether of secular or religious types, could prepare the ground for the act of violence against 'the other'. Those who are certain about the

truth of their doctrinal dogmas consider all others who do not share their views and even those who share them but not with the same degree of fervour and zeal as epistemologically 'unjustified' and doctrinally misguided. Doctrinal certainty therefore gives those who embrace it a sense of superiority and entitlement vis-à-vis the other. Individuals and groups who are certain with respect to their doctrinal dogmas would regard themselves to be 'justified' in their position and in the ways they choose to treat the other. Or to put it more accurately, it is this justificatory attitude (better known as 'justificationism') which gives rise, among other things, to doctrinal certainty. To further develop this argument, I critically examine, from the point of view of doctrinal certainty and justificationism, some cases of violence perpetrated in the name of secular or religious doctrines in the political sphere. Following this assessment, I further argue that a powerful antidote to doctrinal certainty and justificationism is epistemic humility. In the last part of the chapter I argue that an effective way to institutionalise epistemic humility as a supreme value in secular and religious communities is provided by critical rationalism. I show that other models of rationality, including various types of 'postmodern' models, fall short of producing efficacious strategies for combating violence due to doctrinal certainty and justificatory attitudes in the political sphere.

The three Abrahamic faiths have had a rather uneasy relationship over the past centuries. Even today, many of the major conflicts in the four quarters of the globe have their origins in the conflicting views of the followers of these three major faiths. Against such a background, in Chapter 10, entitled "Islam, Christianity, and Judaism: Can they ever live peacefully together?", I argue that the ground for peaceful coexistence, both at a theoretical level and at the practical level of living together in the same society, is reasonably within the reach of the adherents of these faiths. My argument will be focused on both the possibility of an honourable and peaceful coexistence and the desirability of genuine efforts to achieve it.

In a world in which the degree of interdependence and interconnection among nations, cultures and civilisations is ever-increasing; the necessity of

creating efficient global institutions for managing global affairs has become more urgent than ever. However, what makes the task of constructing such competent institutions rather difficult is that interconnectivity and common concerns are not the only factors responsible for shaping the future of our societies. Diversity in the form of plurality of value systems/belief systems also plays an important role in this respect. The problems we are faced with are exaggerated types of the age-old universal-particular or global-local dichotomy and the apparent incommensurability of rival paradigms. To be able to create efficient global institutions, in this case a well-functioning global civil society, we ought to take into account the diverse concerns and sensitivities of local communities and cultures. For Muslim countries to be able to contribute meaningfully to the construction of such a global civil society, a prior condition is the establishment of effective local models of civil society which are in tune with the sensitivities of these communities. Such models could play a significant role in educating and training members of the Muslim communities for full and constructive participation in shaping a desirable future global civil society. This is of particular significance at a time when Muslim societies, by and large, are suffering from acute forms of "identity crisis" syndrome. The aim of the last chapter of the book is to propose the outline of a dual-purpose model of civil society, which could be adopted by Muslim societies and communities. This model, while fulfilling the standard functions of civil societies, could also, prepare the ground for the participation of the societies which have adopted it in the creation of efficient global civil society. <>

[The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Physics and Cosmology](#) edited by Dag Nikolaus Hasse and Amos Bertolacci [Scientia Graeco-Arabica, De Gruyter, 9781614517740]

Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) greatly influenced later medieval thinking about the earth and the cosmos, not only in his own civilization, but also in Hebrew and Latin cultures. The studies presented in this volume discuss the historical and philological circumstances of the Avicennian tradition and the reception of prominent Avicennian theories: on

motion, time, vacuum, causality, elements, substantial change, minerals, floods and mountains.

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Excerpt Avicenna discusses physical and cosmological issues in many of his writings, and

most pertinently in all of his great summae. The most comprehensive treatment can be found in the section on natural philosophy of the summa al-Sifā' (The Cure), which contains treatises on physics, on the heavens and the world, on coming to be and passing away, on actions and passions of elementary qualities, and on minerals and lofty impressions, i.e., on meteorology (besides psychology, botany, and zoology). Research on the influence of these sections and of the other summae is only at its beginning. The present study does not aim at providing a complete overview, but is meant to stimulate the field by presenting papers on current research on Avicenna's influence on key figures or topics of the Arabic, Hebrew and Latin philosophical traditions. It combines philological studies on the transmission of Avicenna's works with historical and philosophical interpretations of texts and authors influenced by Avicenna.

Some findings of the present book concern the Arabic transmission of Avicenna's works in the Islamic East. It is well known that Avicenna's late work al-Isārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt (Pointers and Reminders) had a broad manuscript transmission and a rich commentary tradition in Arabic; recent scholarship is progressively showing that the same applies to Avicenna's earlier al-S', which is likewise transmitted in hundreds of manuscripts, although the massive bulk of this work prevented its commentary tradition, until the Safavid epoch, to pass from the form of glosses to the form of independent commentaries. The reception history of the Isārāt is visible also in terminology. An example of this is Avicenna's phrase hikma muta `āliya, 'philosophy of the supernal world', or simply 'cosmology', which from the thirteenth century onwards received a transcendent interpretation meaning 'exalted philosophy' (see the article by Gutas). Given the well-documented influence of the Isārāt, but also the attested use of the Sifā' by commentators on the Isārāt as a reference work for the clarification of doubtful or controversial issues, it is not too surprising that Fahr al-Din al-Rāzī in the sections on place and directions of his Mabāhit al-masriqiyya relies much more heavily on the Sifa' than on the Isārāt. Rāzī's sections are a patchwork of silent quotations from Avicenna's Sifā', Nagāt, Dānesnāme and Hudūd, while the influence of the

Isārāt is limited to a single chapter. This wide recourse by Rāzī to works of Avicenna other than the Isārāt is remarkable, and shows the full-fledged acquaintance with the Avicennian corpus by a prime exponent of post-Avicennian philosophy and theology, especially since Rāzī, as a commentator on the Isārāt, knows this text very well (see the article by Janssens).

In Andalusia and the Maghreb, Avicenna's philosophy was mainly known via the Si', as is confirmed by the sources on which Averroes drew when attacking Avicenna. There are indications that Averroes was also acquainted with the Nagāt, for instance with the passage on the doctrine of a celestial cold emanating from the stars (see the article by Cerami). The Andalusian philosopher Ibn Daud may have been acquainted with the physics part of the Nagāt too, but his main sources in physics were clearly Avicenna's al-Sifa' and al-Gazālī's Avicennian Maqāsid al falāsifa (Intentions of the Philosophers) (see the article by Fontaine). The broad reception of the various parts of Avicenna's al-Sifa' in Andalusia is reflected also in the many Latin translations from al-Sifā' that were produced on the Iberian peninsula. While a good number of al-Sifa' translations carry the name of the translator, three of them are anonymous. Stylistic analysis shows that the Physics I—III and Isagoge sections of al-Sifā' were, in fact, translated by Dominicus Gundisalvi in the later twelfth century, while 'On Floods' (De diluviis), i.e., chapter II.6 of the meteorological part of al-Sifa was translated, in all likelihood, by Michael Scot in the early thirteenth century (see the article by Hasse and Büttner).

As to Avicenna's transmission in the Latin West, it is well known that the high point of Avicenna's influence in psychology was reached in the middle of the thirteenth century and that his authority in this field decreased afterwards. It is noteworthy that changing attitudes towards Avicenna can be observed also in physics, as a comparative analysis of Albertus Magnus' commentaries on the Physics and the Metaphysics shows, which date from ca. 1250 and ca. 1264 respectively. In the commentary on the Physics, Albertus defends Avicenna openly against the criticisms of Averroes, whom he accuses of aggressiveness towards

Avicenna. In the later commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Albertus now silently follows Averroes on many issues debated between Avicenna and Averroes. Albertus' respect for Avicenna is still high, which is why he does not criticize him directly and tries to explain and excuse Avicenna's opinions when they diverge from Averroes', who seems to have replaced Avicenna as the main doctrinal authority after Aristotle (see the article by Bertolacci).

The Latin reception of Avicenna's meteorology, in turn, differed much from other areas of Avicennian philosophy. Only sections from Avicenna's meteorology of al-Sifa ' were translated early enough to influence the scholastic discussion: 'On Minerals' and the above-mentioned 'On Floods'. The translator of 'On Minerals', Alfred of Sharesill, inserted the text at the end of Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, with the effect that Avicenna's standpoint was not known primarily through his own meteorology, which traveled under the name of Aristotle, but through other sources and mainly via Averroes' attacks on Avicennian doctrines. The full Latin translation of Avicenna's meteorology by the Burgos translators in 1274-80 apparently came too late and received hardly any diffusion (see the article by Mandosio).

As to the Hebrew tradition, hardly anything of Avicenna's works on physics and cosmology was translated into Hebrew. An exception is Todros Todrosi's translation of the physics and metaphysics parts of al-Nagāt (The Salvation), which, however, was made late, around 1334-40, and had a very meagre reception. Instead, readers got acquainted with Avicenna's physics and cosmology in other ways: by reading Avicenna in Arabic or by reading other authors such as al-Gaza-lī in Hebrew, whose *Maqāsid al falāsifa* transport much Avicennian philosophy, also on physics. An example of a Hebrew writer reading Avicenna in Arabic is Samuel ibn Tibbon, who discusses Avicenna's theory of the emergence of dry land and of the generation of species by way of natural processes. This theory was attractive to naturalist interpreters of creation like Ibn Tibbon, especially since it was embedded in a global scientific doctrine of the earth and the cosmos. But while many parts of the doctrine were known and cited in Hebrew sources

of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, its naturalist character proved an obstacle and an irritating challenge for many Jewish thinkers (see the article by Freudenthal).

The physical and cosmological doctrines covered in the present volume are in no way representative of the breadth of Avicenna's reception by later thinkers. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the studies shed light on a good number of doctrinal issues which were discussed vividly in the Arabic, Hebrew and Latin world. Motion and time are such issues. Avicenna inherits a distinction between four different kinds of motion to his successors, based on the criteria volitional / non-volitional and uniform / non-uniform. Only natural motion is defined as being non-volitional and uniform. This fourfold distinction is adopted, for instance, by the Jewish philosopher Ibn Daud (see the article by Fontaine). Avicenna's notion of nature as being non-volitional or 'serving' reappears also in the Latin West in William of Auvergne's discussion of causality (see the article by Fischer). Another peculiarity of Avicenna's theory of motion is the notion of 'positional movement', such as the movement of a spinning orb, which Avicenna adds to the traditional three movements of quality, quantity and place. This is an addition which Averroes polemicizes against in his commentaries (see the article by Cerami).

Avicenna, in the footsteps of Aristotle, defines motion as the emergence from potency to act and differentiates between motion which exists extramentally in reality and motion as a mental object. Both the definition and the distinction resonate with subsequent thinkers. One issue of discussion concerns the primacy of motion over time: if the emergence from potency to act is described as gradual, as in Avicenna's definition, does this not presuppose a notion of time, which we need for the definition of graduality (see the article by McGinnis)? This danger of circularity was addressed by many Arabic and Latin thinkers. The theory of gradual emergence found enough adherents nevertheless, among them Roger Bacon (see the article by Trifogli). As to the Islamic East, it is noteworthy that Avicenna's influence on doctrines of motion is paramount in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but continues to be felt in Safavid and

even nineteenth-century sources. The studies devoted to Fahr al-Din al-Rāzī and al-Amidī in this volume (by Janssens, Adamson and Lammer) demonstrate that the thinkers of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Islamic East need to be interpreted with much methodological awareness: It is only by unpacking their sources and by outlining the structure of the entire many-page argumentation that one can isolate the position which Rāzī and Amidī themselves adopted. At the same time, these thinkers are impressive for their sophistication and their enthusiasm for arguments.

With respect to the notion of time, it is noteworthy that the real or mental existence of time, and its priority or posteriority to motion, became major topics of Eastern Arabic philosophy. Aristotle and Avicenna had defined time as dependent on motion, namely, as the measure or magnitude of motion, with Avicenna's more refined definition being: time is the possibility associated with moving a certain distance at a certain speed. Abū l-Barakāt al-Bagdādī did not follow this line, but developed a metaphysical notion of time in which time is the magnitude of existence. Fahr al-Din al-Rāzī, in turn, discusses the question of the existence of time in a way that is incompatible with definitions of time as the measure of motion. That fits well with his allegiance in other places to what he calls a Platonic (and, hence, non-Avicennian) theory of time, in which time is a self-subsistent substance. Al-Amidī, in contrast, rejects the notion of time as a substance and develops his own position, albeit not openly expressed, in the form of an analysis of Avicenna's definition of time in terms of speed and distance (see the articles by Adamson and Lammer).

Many Avicennian doctrines about the earth and the heavens receive attention by Arabic, Hebrew and Latin readers. It is well known, and underlined by the present studies, that Avicenna's theory of the spontaneous generation of human beings was widely and controversially discussed by Averroes and many Latin authors. Another major source of controversy was Avicenna's doctrine of elementary mixture, according to which it is not the forms of the elements that are mixed in the compound, but the qualities of the elements. Averroes objected against this theory of the permanence of the

substantial forms of the elements, and thus did many Latin readers, especially those who wanted to defend the possibility of alchemical transmutation, which Avicenna did not believe to be possible (see the article by Mandosio). It is apparent that Averroes, against his own purpose, helped to distribute knowledge about Avicenna's philosophical positions: his refutations of Avicenna's theories of the colours of the rainbow, of thunder, or of the inhabitability of the 'torrid' equatorial region were cited and discussed



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Excerpt: A well-established fashion among scholars of Sufism during recent decades is to mark the early phase of Sufism, before the fourth/tenth century, as a period of individualism, self-marginalization and a radical life of renunciation, while marking Sufism after that period with clear social and communal impact and formulations. Some important communal aspects of early Sufism, integrated with certain personal and interpersonal aspects in the lives of Sufi personalities, have been underestimated in earlier scholarship. My argument here is that the fabric of early Sufism, prior to the fourth/tenth century, included many more community-based elements than previously thought and that there were stronger communal tendencies in early Sufism than many scholars have shown. This project seeks to explore such tendencies.

The paradigmatic attempt of distinguishing early Sufism with individuality and later Sufism with communal tendencies should be replaced by a multifaceted viewpoint, according to which both individuality and communality are relevant to each phase in the development of Sufism. Early Sufism, thereby, should be treated as a crucible of various modes of personal and spiritual life, as well as of diverse human concerns, interpersonal relationships and conflicts.

It is true that the process of establishing the collective identity of the Sufis reached its peak by

embodying the boundaries of Sufi activities and doctrinal systems in the framework of detailed manuals and compendia during the fourth/tenth century. Meanwhile, the earlier stage could also witness certain constituents of this identity. Different forms of connection, interaction and networks between early Sufi figures in undertaking certain kinds of ascetic exercises were not uncommon according to the available sources.

The established scholarly fondness of narrating the story of hostility between Sufi and non-Sufi parties — that could very often become fraught with ideological controversies, polemical interchanges and codes of persecution and violence — presupposes by its very essence the existence of such a coherent group of pious men in the early medieval Islamic landscapes called *sūfiyya*. As a result of this presupposition, *sūfiyya* became distinguished with clear collective features, and no room was given to detailed discussions of the individual cases of those personalities who acted within the boundaries of that group and had different ambitions, codes of behaviour, life choices and destinies.

Articulating the inter-Sufi confrontations and friction points could, more than the narrative of 'Sufi vs. anti-Sufi confrontation', help us establish our argument that early Sufism was, since its very beginnings, founded on personal differences beside certain communal activities that led to distinguishing the early Sufis as a group.

I am looking to make two basic assumptions here: The first is that more communal and collective operations could be traced to early Sufis, and those should be surveyed and examined, and the other is that the very feature of individuality in reference to early Sufism needs to be redefined. When we refer to individuality in Sufi studies, we directly think about the quietest mode of piety, which is believed to have been undertaken by the early Sufis of Iraq. I would suggest introducing other components to the concept of individuality in this context. In addition to particular individual modes of piety and the quietest undertakings, individuality also had to do with questions like how early Sufis were as family members and how they managed to work their interpersonal ties, which were sometimes fraught with controversies and

conflicts in both their particular Sufi communities as well as in the wider Muslim society. Individuality in this sense should also be treated as a broad sphere of mutual influences and interactions. Individual aspects should be observed and analysed in their encounters with communal aspects, and vice versa, the communal aspects of early Sufis' lives should be also reconsidered through their interconnections with more individual aspects of life.

Early foundations of the dynamics of influence and interaction between the personal and the communal spheres of the early Sufis' lives are present in the available sources, as this study will show. Modes of operation within the boundaries of Sufis' communal lives could influence the familial engagements of those Sufis. Meanwhile, in certain cases, familial and personal aspects could leave their marks on the different forms of operation within Sufi communal commitments and engagements.

This study seeks to tell the story of early Sufis in the period between the third/ninth and seventh/thirteenth centuries, from a new perspective in the field: to place the personal and interpersonal narratives in the lives of those Sufis in the foreground, to examine their familial ties and engagements, and to provide insight into the communal dynamics and confrontations within early Sufi circles in their search for a compromise between the mystic's way of life on the one hand and the obligations of normative religion and of normative Sufi conduct and ethos on the other.

By 'personal and interpersonal narratives', I refer to early Sufi personalities within their families and to their forms of interaction with other family members, in particular women, mothers and maternal uncles. In addition, personal dynamics include issues like celibacy and marriage among early Sufis and the different forms of approaching those situations. The wish of the early Sufis to be committed to the Islamic ideal of family life led to different creative arrangements among them in order to avoid contradictions with both this ideal and the mystical ideal of seclusion and solitary life.

By 'communal dynamics', I refer to early Sufis' interactions with other Sufis and the different forms of engagement in Sufi communities. These interactions include tensions, conflicts and quarrels.

In addition to examining the personal and the communal domains of early Sufis' lives, each by itself, I intend to examine the intergraded dynamics between the two domains as they appear in the sources. The different forms of relationship between the personal lives of Sufi individuals and their wider communal lives under their Sufi communities are an additional focus of my work.

Studying Sufi personalities in their familial and close communal circles is essential for unveiling the hard core of the early Sufi movement and also central to understanding the nature of the evolution of this movement in its early phase as a whole.

### Topic and Structure

My intention is to explore Sufi writings of the period under investigation in light of the most recent results of scholarship in this field. Both Sufi and non-Sufi texts will be examined as instruments to reconstruct the individual fragments and interpersonal ties of early Sufis. My access to the primary sources is confined to works in Arabic and Persian. A survey of the different types of primary sources on which this study relied will be included in the Introduction. Among these, I would mention *ādāb* literature (Sufi rules of ethics), Sufi letters and correspondence, which I consider a good source for some personal ideas and fragments that were not included in the famous Sufi compendia and magna opera. In addition, Sufi hagiographies, autobiographies, introductory sections in Sufi writings, non-Sufi sources such as works of *adab*, chronicles, non-Sufi biographies, travel literature, anti-Sufi literature and both religious and polemic literature should also be consulted. In the underlying argument undertaken here, an attempt is presented to reconsider the scholarly value of hagiographic material as a literary basis able to embed certain social and interpersonal shifts in the actual lives of early Sufis.

The twentieth century witnessed the publication of significant monographs on prominent Sufi figures, in most of which the philological approach was undertaken. In addition, the growing interest among scholars in the history of Sufi orders has prompted an upsurge of collective monographs dedicated to particular Sufi *taraqas*, and more studies of this type have been undertaken by anthropologists. Such new studies are rarely accurate in the

treatment they offer of the spiritual life of these personalities. Individual monographs imply, by their very definition, the crucial role of distinct Sufi personalities. The starting point in these types of monographs is the suggestion that particular Sufi individuals are interesting for their uniqueness and singularity, and therefore, they deserve, more than others, detailed studies of their lives and teachings.

My book covers several early Sufi individuals. A focus is put on how the disparate personal and interpersonal tendencies within the family or the community dynamics of these individuals contributed to shaping their distinctive spiritual worldviews, each of which played a fundamental role in creating the spiritual and practical ethos of early Sufis, and in consolidating their unique identity as a distinctive spiritual group.

### The Structure of The Book

I chose to divide the study into two parts, demonstrating two sets of narratives. Part I presents an analysis of the personal narratives, while Part II examines the communal narratives and different modes of operation that were undertaken by early Sufis in the framework of their lives within Sufi communities in particular and medieval Muslim societies in general. The Introduction will briefly introduce the general climate of the period under investigation and review the modern research literature and the expected innovation of the current study; present the working hypotheses, method and design; and, finally, survey in great detail the types of sources and suggested methods to benefit from them.

This will allow me to articulate my basic argument that early Sufism was founded on personal-individual differences in addition to certain communal activities, and that individuality in this domain should not be restricted to the quietest mode of piety that is believed to have been undertaken by the Sufis of the formative phase; rather, it should involve real personal domains, like how early Sufis acted as family members and the way they managed to work their interpersonal ties in their Sufi communities and wider Muslim society.

Beginning with the personal perspective, I suggest adding to its definition the family lives and their interconnections with the communal commitments of

early Sufis. Part I, thereby, sheds light on a few cases of early Sufis whose lives reflect diversified forms of family life. Chapter 1 focuses on the roles of early Sufis as family members, spouses and providers, while seeking to re-examine questions of celibacy and working for one's living among them. I gathered here many textual notions that reflect the attempts of certain Sufis to reconcile some ascetic practices like *siyāha* (roving in the deserts without taking provisions) with family duties and others that reflect different approaches towards the ascetic ideal of the priority of celibacy over marriage. The prominent premise behind Chapter 2 is that the various dynamics to reconcile the demands of the increasingly established system of initiation into the Sufi community with family duties become more sophisticated when we approach female Sufis. I relied on Sufi and non-Sufi biographical collections to examine transformations in the Sufi approach towards women and to present an attempt to uncover, through the limited evidences offered by the sources, the different voices and options that these women had. Both Chapters 3 and 4 present additional support for my argument that the development of early Sufism could, interestingly, be narrated and viewed from the perspective of Sufis' personal lives, along the line between one's own familial commitments and that of the system of affiliation to the Sufi life, which over time gathered clear communal-collective characteristics. Chapter 3 offers stories of certain mothers who were Sufis themselves as well as mothers of Sufi figures, while Chapter 4 focuses on maternal uncles who played fundamental roles in the Sufi careers of their nephews. Studying nephew—maternal uncle relationships in early Sufi spheres, despite the problematic nature of the available material, could shed light on additional points of conjunction between the personal and the communal aspects of life on both sides. When the Sufi master is the maternal uncle, the boundaries between the family space and the Sufi space, where the devotee gets his spiritual guidance, dissolve to become one integrative unit.

Examining the diversified forms of communication that were adopted by certain Sufis with their counterparts in the framework of Sufi communal lives is the topic of Part II. It is here where the personal-individual tendencies of the early Sufis

meet the communal ethos that continued to be established throughout the first centuries of the development of Sufism. In Chapter 5, I seek to present what I call the lenient approaches of certain Sufis who introduced the idea of exempting new initiates from strict codes of behaviour and spiritual practice as a measure of facilitating broader and more solid recruitment. While this approach was not common in the early part of the considered period, it succeeded in the course of the sixth/ twelfth century in becoming one of the major traits of the Sufi practical system and actual communal life of the Sufis of Islam. In addition to Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/910-911) and his lenient approach, this chapter discusses Sufi personalities who managed to gain positions of renown and fame within their communities ('consensually acclaimed Sufis', as I called them) such as Abu Sa'īd al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899 or a few years earlier) and Abu Hafs al-Haddad (d. c. 265/878-879). In Chapter 6, a detailed discussion of the fourth/tenth century's interesting figure Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Niffari (d. c. 354/965) is presented. Niffari's marginalized case reflects a unique mode of medieval spirituality that essentially differs from what can be seen as the Sufi mainstream, which was anchored in the institution of *tasawwu f*. Beside the representatives of the Sufi ethos on the one hand and those who chose to detach themselves completely from the communal life of institutionalized *tasawwu f* on the other, Chapter 7 examines individual tendencies and personal views that generated controversies and poignant conflicts among the Sufis themselves.

While it is considered to be one of the neglected facets of the relationships between the mystic as an individual and his wider community, the critical custom of companionship with youth (*suhbat al-ahdāth*) is the topic of Chapter 8. Examining this topic could enrich our understanding of the diverse ways in which Sufis, particularly those whose names were associated with *suhbat al-ahdāth*, as well as Sufi authors, used to accommodate certain personal patterns of behaviour with a general system of thought and norms constituting the collective Sufi identity. Particular controversial figures like Yūsuf

b. al-Husayn al-Rāzī are the main focus of my discussion here.

#### Working Hypothesis, Method and Sources

According to the basic hypothesis in the book, the early phase of Sufism witnessed the appearance of a common ethos that was set to differentiate the Sufis from other religious groups in the Islamic landscape. This ethos was not explicitly formulated in any written source, and it should be sought out and reconstructed through using the available data and crosschecking the findings over different sources. This phase witnessed more communal traits and practices of the Sufis than previously suggested. Such traits and practices could reflect this ethos. The available texts of this period do not allow sufficient room for individual voices, which is why those voices could not be easily distinguished. Nonetheless, the paucity, or sometimes even the absence, of such voices does not mean that they were lacking in the cultural scene of Sufism. In anthropology, for instance, the assumption that a 'mere lack of mention of traits in ethnographic reports had been assumed to mean that such traits were lacking in the cultures' began to be challenged in the last decade. Forrest Clements argues that 'negative evidence', or the lack of a mention of data, is equally as important as 'positive data'. Certain scholarly approaches in anthropological studies adopt a cluster analysis method to reconstruct the common traits of different ethnographic groups by means of illustrating the relationships between one common cluster and the individual elements that split from that cluster through tree diagrams. This method is identified in this discipline as a 'divisive top down' approach according to which 'all objects initially belong to one cluster. Then the cluster is divided into sub-clusters, which are successively divided into their own sub-clusters'. In spite of the ontological differences between this discipline and its sources of data, on one hand, and the textual research undertaken here, on the other, it is still insightful to benefit from the general model implied in cluster analysis methods to rethink the early Sufi ethos and the individual attempts of certain personalities to release themselves from it. The word 'cluster' here, it should be noted, does not refer to one group of objects but, rather, to a group of common traits

and values that the early charismatic masters of Baghdad tried to set together and impose upon everyone who wanted to become initiated along the Sufi path as much as the circumstances in their times allowed them to do. The common traits and values were embedded into texts, personalities, manners and modes of piety. From a general perspective, those traits and values appear as one homogeneous cluster; however, inside the cluster, many 'grapes' differ in fact in their size and shape. It is not always easy for the observer to pay attention to those differences between the grapes since the pretty and fresh view of the cluster as a whole attracts the eyes more. When this ethos began to lose its authority and influence, several sub-clusters began to split away. 'Sub-clusters' in this context might imply the distinctive modes of piety that started to challenge the unity and solidarity of the mothercluster. I would argue that Sufi sources of the fourth/tenth century had already recorded the appearance of such attempts. The authors of Sufi sources invested great effort to revive the early solid ethos, as well as to celebrate its validity and essentiality. Their insistence to 'polish' the unifying features of tasawwuf could not succeed in abolishing the very existence of disparate trends.

In the course of the twentieth century, a debate was introduced by Anglo-American psychologists who claimed that the study of individual lives (idiographic studies) should be effectively used side-by-side with the 'nomothetic approach', which is based on the search for general principles or laws across individuals. The idiographic discipline is essentially concerned with what is particular to the individual case. It is concerned more with individualized traits and the identification of central themes within an individual life. The descriptive study of individuals in their particular socio-historical context can enrich our knowledge of the early phase of Sufism beside the scholarly approach in which general or even abstract processes of development control the variability of cases and spiritual experiences.

Each of the individual trends that began to be documented in the sources, albeit rarely and unfrequently in the course of the period under consideration here, preserves certain aspects of

that ethos, while differing from others. There is a crucial need, therefore, to start distinguishing such individual trends as well as their dynamic relationships and connections with that common Sufi ethos. From another perspective, each Sufi work could be also treated as a sub-cluster where many components of that original cluster-ethos as well as of previous Sufi works, which are also sub-clusters by themselves, meet together. This method can enrich our understanding of Sufi texts and enable us to examine some of their features and stylistics. The repetition of certain anecdotal structures and the frequency of certain frames of expression in reference to different names are examples of such features.

As previously noted, Sufi hagiographies constitute the main body of our sources. To be satisfied with the precept that these have nothing to provide for any scholarly endeavour on early Sufism means that we, as scholars, should reconcile ourselves to the inefficiency of all attempts to investigate early Sufism. The first working hypothesis here suggests that certain historical and interpersonal conclusions could be deduced from hagiographical material. This type of source was not entirely divorced from its cultural context. Some of the anecdotes and sayings that frequently appear in Sufi hagiographies are ascribed to different personalities. In many cases, such anecdotes take the form of what we might call a typical-paradigmatic structure which is repeated in different biographies of different Sufi figures. One example of such a typical-paradigmatic structure in the narratives of Sufi hagiographies could be as follows: A particular Sufi figure commits a fault in the presence of a great Sufi master. A fault of this kind could be, for instance, a forbidden gaze at a beautiful woman. This master who witnessed this incident warns his fellow of the upcoming punishment. At the end of this recurrent narrative structure, this punishment comes, and the Sufi becomes certain that he had to avoid making even the slightest mistake. The readers of such an episode could not be sure of the identity of the two personalities since they appear with different names on different occasions in Sufi hagiographies. However, what should be perceived as certain here is the very idea that Sufis, very often, disagreed on how Sufi theories should be practised in day-to-

day life and that certain Sufi personalities acted as sponsors to their companions and as guardians of what could be seen as the ultimate Sufi ethos.

Authors of Sufi hagiographies chose different ways to shape the biographical accounts of early Sufi personalities. The general outlines and points of emphasis in the biography of the same Sufi figure provided by different authors could illustrate the diverse personal choices of the authors as well as the different relationship dynamics each had with his environment. If we read Sufi hagiographies carefully, we come across several expressions that recur in specific biographies. One example of such is found in the biographical accounts of Ruwaym b. Ahmad. Ruwaym is repeatedly quoted as urging his fellows to avoid becoming preoccupied with the 'nonsense trifles of the Sufis'. This idea of avoiding the nonsense trifles of the Sufis (*tark al-ishtighāl bi-turrahāt al-sūfiyya*) appears frequently in the sources referring to Ruwaym as part of different sayings ascribed to him. Should we consider this reiterative form of expression as a typical call for the general ethic codes that Ruwaym wanted his Sufi contemporaries to adopt, or should we inquire into some implied personal indications that involve certain aspects of Ruwaym's life and relationships with which this expression was loaded? I would consider the latter more feasible.

Very often, Sufi hagiographies would embed segments of original letters and pieces of correspondence between early Sufi figures (*mukātabāt al-sūfiyya*). The importance of Sufi correspondence has already been pointed out by Sarrāj in his *Kitāb al-luma`*. In some early compilations, fragments of Sufis' correspondence were gathered and presented in separate sections, such as those in Sarrāj's *Luma`* and *Kharkūshī` Tandhīb al-asrār*. Sufi correspondence is a good source of some of the ideas that were not included in the famous Sufi compendia and magna opera. If the latter were originally designed to address the general concerns of the Sufis as a community, Sufi letters were able to express more personal and interpersonal emotions and interest. This component of the hagiographical material sheds light on many interesting aspects of the lives of early Sufis. Even when typical expressions recur in the main body of letters ascribed to one Sufi figure, particular

characteristics of each letter that appear to attach it to its unique context of interpersonal relationships and attitudes should be sought. Such were Junayd's letters (Rasā'il) to different addressees in his days. As well as the expressions common to all of the letters, each letter relates to one aspect of Junayd's diverse networks of relationships which came to be manifested through diverse discourse and rhetoric.

Moving from hagiographies to autobiographic material, it should be noted that the early legacy of Sufism includes only very few works of this type. The works of al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (d. circa 300/91z) and Rūzbihān Baqlī (d. 606/1zo9) are the most outspoken in this regard. Additionally, certain autobiographical sections are also included in the famous Sufi compilations and manuals. At the very rationale of the composition of Sufi autobiographical material lies the assumption that the act of unveiling the self and revealing its human fears and aspirations in public is recognized and accepted. The very existence of Sufi autobiographies is an interesting indicator of a social context in which certain Sufi personalities successfully created a literary tunnel through which they could preserve communication within their Sufi communities. Treating this material with the latter perception in mind provides us with an additional key aspect of the Sufis' personal lives and interpersonal engagements. It provides us with an important basis for tracing the ways in which the authors of these works chose to express different individual experiences and forms of self-consciousness in different socio-historical contexts.

Treating ādāb literature (Sufi rules of ethics) requires a fresh methodological approach in order to consider the contents as echoes of changing patterns in comprehending actual realities. When one author of ādāb work chooses to focus on a principle such as brotherhood (ukhuwwa) and uses available techniques to emphasize the high ethical value of ukhuwwa and chivalry (futuwwa), then we should be able to conclude that this emphasis is an echo of a reality that was not exactly free of mutual rancour and envy between figures usually expected to have acted as perfect brothers. This interpretation is not always true, we should state. Meanwhile, a shift from the iconic perception of the early Sufis, the one that portrays them in absolute

perfect terms, towards a more realistic image as far as the available sources allow, is necessary today.

Beside ādāb literature, I would point out the significance of introductions to Sufi works, generally known as muqaddima (pl. muqaddimāt) or math' (pl. matāli') in Arabic sources, and dibāchiḥ in Persian sources. The introductory sections in early Sufi works present interesting portraits of the different ways of authors to approach their realities and react to them. One common theme in the introductions of both Sarrāj and Qushayri, for instance, is the confutation of the anti-Sufi voices that frequently accused the Sufis of heresy and abandonment of religious duties. Each, meanwhile, has his own perspective. Sarrāj refers to those who attached themselves to the Sufis (al-mutashabbihūn bi-ahl al-tasawwuf) and composed many works on Sufi doctrines on behalf of the Sufis. Their statements and behaviour were manipulated by certain people who sought to defame the Sufis as a group. Based on Sarrāj's introduction, the main problem of the sūfiyya in his day was external. It related primarily to the dynamics that operated outside the Sufi community and could be utilized against its true members.

Different from Sarrāj, Qushayri clearly presents a sort of self-critique, and concentrates on forms of depravity inside the Sufi community. Differences between the respective historical contexts of the two texts could not be ignored. Qushayri states that he wrote his work in 437 of hijra and that he addressed it to the community of sūfiyya around the lands of Islam (jamā'at al-sūfiyya bi-buldān al-Islām). After praising the Sufis for being the spiritual elite of the Muslim community, he provides us with severe criticism against particular customs that have appeared among them. He explicitly states that the majority of true Sufi masters are no longer alive and that what really exists in his day was nothing but the traces of those masters. Qushayri was not able to ignore a reality that witnessed the appearance of certain antinomian customs; however, he did not intend to provide a broader description of that reality which was expected to mislead the readers and confirm the negative image of tasawwuf. Instead, he chose to allude very briefly to these customs and invest his

efforts in defending the true pattern of tasawwuf through different rhetorical, structural and thematic strategies. The *Risāla* ends with a piece of counsel that Qushayri dedicated to the Sufi novices in his days (*al-wasiyya li-l-muridīn*). The text of the *wasiyya* turns into a message addressed by Qushayri directly to his contemporary Sufis. It is where all the components of Qushayri's agenda meet in one terse but forceful textual unit. Sarrāj's discourse, on the other hand, leaves some doubt that he was entirely involved in the pressing issues of the Sufi practical system of training and guidance in his days, and his reference to the imitators of the Sufis (*al-mutashabbihūn bi-l-sūfiyya*) demonstrates an attempt to remove depravity from the *sūfiyya* and to place the responsibility for it on others!

In his introduction, Hujwiri introduces some autobiographical data. He points, for instance, to one phenomenon from which he himself suffered: Some who claimed to be Sufis in his days used to ascribe to themselves works on Sufi doctrines where the names of their authors were not clearly indicated or simply deleted. Two of Hujwiri's own works were plagiarized as such. The very existence of this phenomenon implies the prestigious position that authors of Sufi manuals could then enjoy. Like Qushayri, Hujwiri comes to the conclusion that true *tasawwuf* became obliterated (*mundaris*) and that many claimants ascribed themselves to it and tried to utilize it for their own benefits. Hujwiri went on to say that some had even tried to destroy some of his own works or, occasionally, to take parts of them and pass them off as their own in order to attract novices.

Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī Dāya (d. 654/1256) opens his *Mirsād al-ʿibād* with a long *dibāchih* in which he discusses in great detail the reasons that motivated him to compose his work in Persian as well as the rationale behind the structure that he chose. Dāya's introduction contains interesting data dealing with the religious, social and political circumstances of his time. It also reveals the author's pragmatic agenda to defend *tasawwuf* and his own perspective on the ways Sufi life integrates into the general fabric of Islam, as well as into one cosmic order where three phases of man's creation and life constitute the main structural body of the work.

Sufi introductions are, in fact, sources for the diverse personal perspectives of their authors. Sometimes, the last sections in Sufi works should be combined with the introductory sections in order to arrive at the completed structure on which each author established his own perspective and agenda. The aforementioned case of Qushayri's *wasiyya* is one example. Even though the current study does not thoroughly discuss introductions, we must point out the significance of studying introductions and concluding sections in early Sufi works in the future.

General works of *adab* refer occasionally to Sufis. An early work, *al-Muhsin al-Tanūkhī's* (d. 383/993) *Nishwār al-muhādara*, dated from the fourth/tenth century provides us with certain aspects of the anti-Sufi approach. Anecdotes about certain Sufi personalities served as one of the most effective strategies in the hands of the authors of such works to defame major Sufi principles and practices. The principle of *suhba* (companionship), for instance, was among Sufi doctrines that survived a long process of slander and pungent criticism, according to early works of *adab*. A detailed reference to Tanūkhī's defamation of the renowned Sufi master of Shīrāz, Abu ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Khafīf (d. 371/982.), for instance, will be included in our discussions of *suhba* and its implications in early Sufism. Abu Hayyān al-Tawhīdī's (d. ca. 414/1023) works, including his *al-Ishārāt al-ilāhiyya*, a collection of personal prayers and intimate conversations, provide interesting viewpoints of a distinguished Muslim author on Sufis and the fourth/tenth century institution of *tasawwuf*.

Throughout the following chapters, other works of *adab*, in addition to chronicles, non-Sufi biographies and polemic literature, will be cross-referenced with the rich variety of Sufi sources. <>

[Paolozzi and Wittgenstein: The Artist and the Philosopher](#) edited by Diego Mantoan and Luigi Perissinotto [Palgrave Macmillan, 9783030158453]

This impressive edited collection investigates the relationship between British Pop Art pioneer Eduardo Paolozzi and the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. At this time, when Paolozzi's oeuvre is in the process of being rediscovered, his long-time



fascination with Wittgenstein requires thorough exploration, as it discloses a deeper understanding of his artistic production, further helping to reassess the philosopher's actual impact on visual arts and its theory in the second half of the 20th century.

With 13 diverse and comprehensive chapters, bringing together philosophers and art historians, this volume aims at retracing and pondering the influence of Wittgenstein on the idea of art in Paolozzi, thus giving an unprecedented insight into Wittgenstein's philosophy as employed by contemporary artists.

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### An Introduction to the Artist Who "Needed" Wittgenstein by Diego Mantoan and Luigi Perissinotto

#### A Precursor in Contemporary Art and Philosophy of Language

According to a deeply rooted and still widespread belief in the artworld, it appears that the influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy on visual arts was first invoked—so to speak—in relation to Conceptual Art, both in its American matrix, as in the case of Joseph Kosuth's [Art After Philosophy](#), as well as in the English version through the artist collective Art & Language and its international magazine bearing the same name. It isn't difficult to understand the reasons for this association between Wittgenstein and the conceptual artists of the late 1960s and early 1970s, since there are at least three features derived from the writings of the Austrian philosopher that fit neatly into the purpose of this kind of art, such as: a prevailing interest in logical analysis, the methodological approach to language game and, eventually, the purpose of dematerialization. As a matter of fact, the model of linguistics introduced by the Viennese philosopher—complete with terms and phrases such as isomorphism, aspect—seeing, language—game, investigation, etc.—was immediately appealing for those British and American artists who endeavoured to further develop the field of artistic theory and practice. However, artists such as Joseph Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner in the USA, Mel Ramsden and Terry Atkinson in the UK were by no means the first who employed or applied Wittgenstein's thought in the realm of visual arts; nor do they seem the ones who succeeded in appropriately interpreting, through artistic means, the writings of the Austrian philosopher. These artists were indeed

neither interpreters nor scholarly exegetes of Wittgenstein's writings; they rather used excerpts from the texts of the Austrian philosopher. Sometimes they even manipulated them, transforming the quotes into aphorisms for their own artistic concerns, particularly in reaction to Clement Greenberg, whose influence was perceived in the mid 1960s as suffocating both for art critics and artists.

Although this book is not set to claim the presence or absence of originality and correctness in the way Conceptual Art approached Wittgenstein, it serves as a good starting point, because it immediately pictures the place and years of a peculiar encounter between an artist, Eduardo Paolozzi, and a philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein—both as a man and as far as his philosophy is concerned. Indeed, this “kind of happening” took place years before the generation of future conceptual artists had even entered art school. This metaphorical—though very real—encounter came about after the philosopher's death in 1951 and slowly worked its way up in Paolozzi's readings and imagination for an entire decade, until it reached a climax in the explicitly “Wittgensteinian” works of the British artist at the beginning of the 1960s. Not only was Paolozzi the first and perhaps still is the only artist who devoted a substantial part of his oeuvre to the Austrian philosopher, his works still impress even a philosophically qualified audience for the level of expertise and intuitiveness with which the writings of Wittgenstein are handled. For that reason, this book pursues a twofold aim: on the one side, to present the artist Paolozzi as a precursor in reading Wittgenstein in the field of contemporary art, influencing or forestalling the then-upcoming generation of conceptual artists; on the other side, to demonstrate how the reader Paolozzi may even be seen as a precursor as regards the interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Indeed, Paolozzi's rich artistic production about and with Wittgenstein is neither accidental nor spurious; on the contrary, it amounts to a true relationship, something very much like a deep friendship or a mutual partnership; that is, between two people that share certain belief and interests, lifestyles and preferences, moments and deeds. Like two people

meeting and then walking side by side for quite a bit on the path of their reciprocal lives.

Such a twofold objective can hardly be accomplished in a monocular perspective; hence, as far as methodology is concerned, the book blends different approaches and alternates scholars from various disciplines—spanning from philosophers to art historians—such as to provide an integrated view on Paolozzi's oeuvre and on Wittgenstein's view or influence on visual arts. In fact, given this complex relationship between an artist and a philosopher, we believe it is unavoidable to cover a wide array of methodological stances—ranging from language philosophy to art theory, from contemporary art history to art criticism. As might already be clear from the table of contents, each contributor pursues a particular topic as seen from his or her peculiar research field, in order to jointly deliver the various aspects of a deep and fruitful relationship, both for philosophy and for contemporary art.

### Paolozzi Featuring Wittgenstein

At a point in art history, when Eduardo Paolozzi's oeuvre is eventually being celebrated, years after his departure, thanks to his definitive studio reconstruction at the National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh

and to the first retrospective exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, it is about time to investigate the artist's predilection for Ludwig Wittgenstein—both for his writings and biography. Indeed, the articulated relationship between the British artist, credited as “godfather” of Pop Art, and the Austrian philosopher, who counts among the twentieth-century celebrity thinkers, has never been analysed thoroughly. Given the wide array of Wittgenstein-inspired works in Paolozzi's production, as well as his testimonies on the philosopher's influence on his art, for instance in the interviews with Richard Hamilton and William Lipke, it is quite surprising that no scholarly publication—neither art historical nor philosophical—has ever retraced and critically pondered the influence of Wittgenstein's philosophy on the idea of art in Paolozzi, but mostly on his artistic production over the years. As a matter of fact, the encounter with Wittgenstein—specifically with the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, as well as with writings of his

disciple Norman Malcolm—originated the well-known series of screenprints titled *As Is When* (1964–1965), of which one edition finds today its place at the Tate Modern in London. However, the following chapters argue that the British artist drew inspiration also from the *Philosophical Investigations*, such that even later works bare the marks of a direct reference to Wittgenstein's thought or biography: so for instance the sculpture *Wittgenstein at Cassino* (1963) or the collages and screenprints of the mid 1990s that were subsumed under the title *A logical picture of facts is a thought* (3) *Tractatus* '21–'22.

Besides disclosing a deeper understanding of Paolozzi's artistic production, another reason to thoroughly explore his long-time fascination with Wittgenstein lies in the insight this research may provide as regards a reassessment of the philosopher's actual impact on visual arts and its theory in the second half of the twentieth century. Hence, in discussing Paolozzi's attraction to Wittgenstein, the book examines an early example—perhaps the earliest—of the Austrian philosopher's influence on a contemporary artist, as well as the interpretation that an artist may provide of his philosophical thought. In this perspective, Paolozzi as an artist is taken as a true reader or interpreter of Wittgenstein, pursuing his theories with artistic means. In doing so, the volume eventually discloses an unprecedented perspective on Wittgenstein's philosophy applied to contemporary art, particularly his considerations on form, aspects, image and rules. The guiding star is, thus, the influence of Wittgenstein on Paolozzi, though investigated from a broader perspective than previously done. In fact, the purpose is to go beyond the mere works by Paolozzi with an explicitly "Wittgensteinian" title. Our hypothesis is that the artist remained fascinated also by the *Philosophical Investigations*, as well as by other texts and various episodes in the philosopher's biography. Compared to the state of the art, this book focuses on the entire oeuvre of Paolozzi—comprising the wide array of media and techniques employed: from sculpture to print, from film to music, from collage to environmental installations. Hence, the book aims at deepening the critical search on one of last century's most intriguing, though less analysed artists, further becoming a

privileged occasion to reflect on the possible influence of a philosopher on an artist, as well as on the interpretation that an artist may provide as regards a philosophical thought.

Conceived as a collection of essays, this edited volume exceptionally brings together philosophers and art historians of different geographic and generational backgrounds to discuss Wittgenstein and Paolozzi, giving voice to a variety of disciplinary approaches and shaping diverse topics that may arouse the interest of a twofold audience. As a matter of fact, the following chapters offer both a unique take on Paolozzi's oeuvre, reassessing his pivotal importance in the second half of the twentieth century—especially as far as medium diversity and the use of popular culture are concerned—and a convenient opportunity to explore Wittgenstein's thought related to visual arts and his influence on contemporary artists, that is, how artists received or interpreted his writings with creative means. Furthermore, the book is the result of an on-going scholarly discussion among experts on Wittgenstein and Paolozzi, selected after an international conference organised in Venice in 2016.

### The Philosopher as Artist: Ludwig Wittgenstein Seen Through Eduardo Paolozzi by Wolfgang Huemer

#### Wittgenstein's Fascination for Artists

In the cultural history of the last century, Ludwig Wittgenstein plays an exceptional role. His works not only had a substantial influence on philosophers, they also had a strong impact beyond the circles of academic philosophy; in particular, they found a significant resonance in the artworld. Other philosophers of the twentieth century often appear too abstract, overly technical, or engaged in highly specialized discussions, which can discourage readers who do not have a professional training in philosophy. Wittgenstein's work, on the other hand, has fascinated and inspired artists, poets, and composers. Terry Eagleton put it elegantly when he said that:

Frege is a philosopher's philosopher, Sartre the media's idea of an intellectual, and Bertrand Russell every shopkeeper's image of the sage [...]. But Wittgenstein is

the philosopher of poets and composers, playwrights and novelists, and snatches of his mighty *Tractatus* have even been set to music.

What is it that makes Wittgenstein so attractive to a broader audience? To some degree, his popularity can be explained by his unusual biography. He was descendant of one of the richest families of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but renounced his heritage; he wrote a philosophical treatise that was to become most influential, but abandoned his academic career to become an elementary school teacher. For a short while he worked as a gardener in a monastery, then as an architect to project a house for his sister. When he came back to work in philosophy, he substantially revised his old position and started off in a very different direction. He returned to Cambridge to teach philosophy, but toyed with the idea to emigrate to Russia and left for longer periods to stay in a lonesome cabin in Norway. In short, Wittgenstein did not pursue a linear academic career.

Many facts of his biography have become accessible to a broader audience shortly after Wittgenstein's death in 1951; first through obituaries—many of which did not omit to mention little anecdotes of Wittgenstein's life to illustrate his personality (cf. for example Russell 1951)—and later, in 1958, through Norman Malcolm's biography (Malcolm 1958), which contains a reprint of G. H. V. Wright's "Biographical Sketch" (von Wright 1955). It soon became common knowledge that Wittgenstein did not correspond to the widespread image of the armchair philosopher (or, even worse, of the philosopher who raises from his desk only punctually at 5 p.m. to have a short afternoon walk). His biography rather provides material for a film.

It would be reductive, however, to explain Wittgenstein's success beyond the sphere of academic philosophy only on the basis of his biography. The circumstances of his life might have attracted the attention, which then led many to engage in studying his philosophical work, as it was the case with Eduardo Paolozzi, for example. However, the situation is somewhat paradoxical: Even though it was the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein who fascinated a broader audience,

it is difficult, if not impossible, to mention a particular philosophical thesis or argument that could explain this fascination.<sup>2</sup> More than any specific philosophical issue I think it was the way in which he shared his reflections with the reader, i.e., the literary form he had chosen to express his philosophical perspective that attracted a broader audience and invited them to engage in studying his philosophical works. Wittgenstein explicitly states in the prefaces to both books he published or prepared for publication during his lifetime, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*, that he struggled for a long time to find the most adequate literary form to express his thoughts. Even an untrained eye can see at first glance that the literary form of the works—very much like their author—did not fit into the ordinary academic conventions of the time.

The first thing one can notice when opening the *Tractatus* is that it consists of short sentences that are enumerated in a hierarchical system, which not only serves to make the relations between the sentences explicit, but also communicates a sense of logical order and precision. The style is hermetic, the text consists of short, aphoristic statements that make apodictic assertions. Moreover, the author does not make a minimal attempt to explain or motivate his views, nor does he share his reasons for holding them with the reader, who looks in vain for an argument. In this way, the author does not leave any space for discussion or doubts. On the contrary, already in the preface he states "the truth of the thoughts that are here communicated seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems". This is the tone of a self-confident person who does not have an urge to explain himself to others which, in turn, can be seen as an expression of the solipsistic position proposed in the book.

The *Philosophical Investigations*, on the other hand, present themselves in a very different style. The author often dispenses his ideas to an anonymous interlocutor, who is never introduced or described and does not have a name. The author simply uses the second person singular ("you") to address the interlocutor. This "quasi-dialogical" structure involves the reader and invites her to weigh the

ideas expressed against her own views on the topic—or the position defended in the *Tractatus*. The form, thus, conveys Wittgenstein's goal to encourage the reader to reflect autonomously on the topics discussed and to "stimulate someone to thoughts of his own" (PI: preface). Moreover, Wittgenstein no longer speaks about the truth of the propositions expressed in the book. He rather presents "a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of [...] long and involved journeyings. The same or almost the same points were always being approached afresh from different directions, and new sketches we made" (PI: preface). This leaves ample space for revisions, doubts, and discussions. Moreover, Wittgenstein presents his theses in a very hesitant manner, such that they are often challenged by the anonymous interlocutor. The author who opened his *Tractatus* with the apodictic statement "The world is all that is the case" introduces the main thesis of his new theory of language with the following words: "For a large class of cases—though not for all—in which we use the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language".

The very fact that the literary form changes so drastically shows the discontinuity in Wittgenstein's thought that has been emphasized so much among early interpreters. On the other hand, the fact that the stylistic dimension continues to play a central role shows that, notwithstanding the discontinuities, there are important continuities in Wittgenstein's philosophical perspective. Most importantly, the focus on style distinguishes Wittgenstein's work from that of almost all academic philosophers of the twentieth century for whom the literary style of philosophical works plays at best a marginal role: typically, it is considered an ornament that could render the reading of a text more pleasant, but does not contribute to its meaning or significance. It should thus not come as a surprise that readers who do not focus exclusively on philosophy, but have broader cultural interests, are attracted by this aspect of Wittgenstein's work.

### Wittgenstein and Aesthetics

If what I have said so far is correct, it is not primarily the content, not a particular thesis or argument, but rather the form of Wittgenstein's philosophy that has caught the attention of artists,

writers, and composers.<sup>4</sup> In particular, it is hardly plausible that Wittgenstein's contribution

to aesthetics could have caught their attention. It is well known that Wittgenstein has not become famous for his work in aesthetics, nor has he ever made an attempt to formulate a systematic theory of art, the nature of artworks, or aesthetic experience. All we have is a short booklet that contains *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, but, as the editor Cyril Barrett explains in the foreword:

Nothing contained herein was written by Wittgenstein himself. The notes published here are not Wittgenstein's own lecture notes but notes taken down by students, which he never saw nor checked. It is even doubtful if he would have approved of their publication, at least in their present form.

There are, I think, good reasons to share Barrett's doubts: Wittgenstein was very hesitant to publish his work, he used to rewrite and refine his texts again and again, changing the exact wording or the order of his remarks numerous times. Moreover, Wittgenstein always raised suspicions against a theory of art, although the motives have changed over time: while he affirmed in his *Tractatus* that there can be no meaningful propositions in aesthetics, he often voices a suspicion against theories tout court in his mature philosophy.

However, there are two aspects in Wittgenstein's views on aesthetics that seem relevant. First, Wittgenstein does not conceive of aesthetics as a discipline detached from a general philosophical investigation. In the first lecture, he suggests (according to the notes taken by his students) that "[i]n order to get clear about aesthetic words you have to describe ways of living". Moreover, some commentators recently argued that for Wittgenstein the aesthetic dimension of life was fundamental. Charles Altieri, for example, suggested that Wittgenstein's remarks on aesthetics "clarify a full range of powers we use to explain why expressive activity of all sorts can play important roles in human behavior". In the light of these interpretations we can state that for Wittgenstein aesthetics was not an abstract theory, nor an academic discipline detached from ordinary life, but rather a central element of our form of life

that is of crucial importance when it comes to form or refine our repertoire to express who we are and to define who we want to become.

Second, Wittgenstein's perspective on aesthetics is not expressed by what he said in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* or in other places; it is rather shown in the corpus of his writings. Our judgments on art, music, and literature are a way to express our perspective behind the background of a shared environment, they allow us to communicate what is important to us and, thus, to make emerge a precise articulation of ourselves—and we find this aspect in many of Wittgenstein's later writings that contain numerous observations on art, music, and literature—or better: on artists, composers, and writers. Many of these sporadic remarks—which have been made accessible in *Culture and Value*, first published in 1977—have the character of short side remarks. Wittgenstein generally only mentions composers, writers, or artists, but does not discuss their works. In most cases, he expresses short, succinct judgments, but does not bother to explain or justify them.

At one point, Wittgenstein affirms that two words with which one is well familiar are distinguished “not merely by their sound or their appearance, but by an atmosphere as well”. He illustrates this point with “names of famous poets and composers” and suggests that “the names ‘Beethoven’ and ‘Mozart’ don’t merely sound different; no, they are also accompanied by a different character”. It seems to me that this point suggests a particular reading of Wittgenstein's remarks: he often uses the “character” of the names mentioned, the “atmosphere” they evoke, to draw a detailed map of a rich cultural landscape that allows him to locate himself as well as to display the perspective and the standpoint he adopts towards it. It seems to me, in other words, that the finely articulated web of cultural references in which Wittgenstein does not further elaborate his take on the poet or composer in question, also serves the purpose of letting an elaborate self-portrait emerge. Wittgenstein so provides a key for those readers who are able to recognize it.

Wittgenstein's scattered remarks on composers, writers, and artists, thus, can have a very particular effect on readers who are open to them: they invite

to understand the text not primarily as presentation of an abstract philosophical argument formulated by an anonymous author,

but rather as an encounter with a concrete and recognizable personality. A reading along these lines can easily arouse a feeling of acquaintance or familiarity with the (implied) author.<sup>9</sup> In Wittgenstein's mature philosophy, this feeling can be enforced by the quasi-dialogical style that allows the reader to witness an inner dialogue or to identify with the interlocutor. In both cases, the feeling of familiarity and acquaintance is intensified. In Wittgenstein's early philosophy, notwithstanding the differences in style, we can observe a similar effect: the apodictic character of the propositions and the absence of arguments show that Wittgenstein does not want to explain himself to the rest of humanity, but rather writes for those who already share his views. In the first line of the preface to the *Tractatus* he states: “Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it—or at least similar thoughts”. In this way, he creates a sense of “we and the others”, as it were: either one is already familiar with the thoughts expressed—and, thus, sympathetic to the perspective developed—or else one is excluded from the circle of those who can understand the work.

### Paolozzi and Wittgenstein: As Is When

So far, I have argued that Wittgenstein's fascination for a broader audience is related to stylistic elements of his works that make a concrete and recognizable personality emerge. I would now like to suggest that this aspect is particularly important in Eduardo Paolozzi's perspective on Wittgenstein. I will focus mainly on the series of screenprints *As Is When* from 1964 to 1965.

The series consists of 12 prints, all of which contain texts by or about Wittgenstein. In interviews Paolozzi explained that his attention was drawn to Wittgenstein first by Maurice Cranston's obituary in the *World Review*, by an article from Erich Heller in *Encounter*, and by Malcolm's *Memoir*. The passages on Wittgenstein often recall anecdotes of Wittgenstein's life that illustrate his philosophical mentality, but do not focus on those of

Wittgenstein's personality traits that captivated Paolozzi: his restlessness and his being "a strange man, a tormented lonely man, who was a foreigner", who "inherited a lot of money which he renounced, and embraced the doctrine of poverty". Paolozzi explains that his fascination with Wittgenstein was not focused on his biography, "the actual work is the key". Among quotes reproduced on the prints, we find passages where Wittgenstein uses strong or unusual pictures or metaphors. Others refer to or express Wittgenstein's early picture theory of language (IV and the quote from Newman on II). On VII and IX he presents Wittgenstein's (later) philosophical method—which, incidentally, also seems programmatic for works of Paolozzi like the Krazy Kat Arkive.

In short, Paolozzi's interest in Wittgenstein focused on his philosophical work, but was triggered by his unusual biography, in which he recognized several analogies to his own. Moreover, in interviews he repeatedly states that "I wanted to identify myself with" Wittgenstein and conceived of the prints as a "kind of combined autobiography". This illustrates that Wittgenstein's writings aroused in Paolozzi a feeling of closeness and familiarity that I have discussed in the preceding section. For him, Wittgenstein was not a distant, abstract philosopher, but a concrete and tangible person, who was, in a sense, present in his studio: "My own Wittgenstein works were a kind of collaboration with Wittgenstein"

### The Philosopher as Artist

Paolozzi, thus, perceived Wittgenstein as a collaborator in his artistic production, which invites to conceive of Wittgenstein's works as works of art of a particular kind—and, in fact, they contain elements that we usually do not find in philosophical works, but in works of art. Let me mention just three of these elements that can be found in the *Tractatus*. First, for Wittgenstein the harmony between form and content was important. We have seen above that he had struggled hard to find his own, personal style that was adequate to express

his philosophical perspective. In a letter to von Ficker, he says of the *Tractatus* that the work was

"strictly philosophical and literary". Second, Wittgenstein breaks the readers' expectations, which typically engage with philosophical texts in order to gain new insights or to get acquainted with new arguments. Moreover, working through a philosophical book requires concentration and patience, but promises a cognitive gain that outweighs these efforts. Wittgenstein, on the other hand, states that the goal of his book was not to offer knowledge or arguments—he states that the reader either has already known what is said in the book or else he will not understand it—but to provide pleasure: "[i]ts purpose would be achieved if it gave pleasure to one person who read and understood it" (. Third, Wittgenstein states at the end of his work that the propositions contained in it are meaningless. Very much like in other artworks, thus, the material of which the work is created—the propositions—point beyond themselves and can in this way constitute a new dimension of meaning, which is not said or stated explicitly, but shown in the work.

There is, thus, a sense in which we could call Wittgenstein an artist. It would be wrong, however, to think of him as a poet; his works are not literary works of art. This misunderstanding could be invited by Wittgenstein's famous passage that "really one should write philosophy only as one writes a poem". It would entail, however—as Wittgenstein points out—that he was a failed artist, i.e., "someone who cannot quite do what he would like to be able to do" (Wittgenstein 1998: 28). I rather think that we should consider Wittgenstein's to be works of art *sui generis*; philosophical works of art, as it were. They are designed to provide pleasure to those who "read and understood" them, which indicates that Wittgenstein has a very specific form of aesthetic pleasure in mind: the pleasure one feels when one realizes that the philosophical problems that have disturbed us are only the result of a misunderstanding of our language. The goal Wittgenstein pursued with his philosophical works of art was, thus, to make "propaganda for one style of thinking as opposed to another". <>

[Untold Tarot: The Lost Art of Reading Ancient Tarots](#) by Caitlin Matthews [Red Feather, 9780764355615]

Discover forgotten divinatory skills, and learn to read the Tarot with confidence. Not just another Tarot book, Untold Tarot presents historic styles of reading little known in the modern era. It teaches traditional ways of reading used for pre-twentieth-century decks, drawing upon older cartomantic arts such as blending and pairing cards, reading lines, and following "line of sight" to piece together untold stories according to the direction in which the characters are facing. The time to rediscover these lost skills is ripe, and the practical and personal approach presented here empowers you to read in your own fluid style and develop a full palette of skills. The book also includes a selection of card spreads drawn from traditional French and Italian sources, plus methods of reading cards based on the author's own extensive research.

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About the Author

Acknowledgements

Excerpt: Ancient tarots fascinate me. My first ever tarot, back in 1969, was a Grimaud Tarot de Marseille, which I worked with while I was at drama school in London, before moving on to the Rider Waite-Smith Tarot, on which the pip or number cards each had a pictorial image. Since my favorite toy as a child had been a pack of playing cards, I had a great fondness for the patterns of the pips and found the move from pips to pictures oddly irritating; the framing of the pips by specific



and suggestive images seemed to circumscribe my reading, restricting possible meanings to a very narrow set of possibilities.

By the turn of the millennium, the meagre supply of tarots that had been available in the mid 20th century had become a veritable flood. While some were well drawn and deeply considered, others were not: many were often slick, photographic or ill-conceived, as more and more designers jumped on the bandwagon of the Mind, Body, Spirit roller coaster of the 1980s and 90s. As Photoshop techniques developed, so the art of tarot began to change for me. Instead of working as windows into other worlds, illustrated cards began to resemble a passive TV screen. Finally, after a period of deep disenchantment, I stopped using modern tarots for many years, only returning to them periodically. Instead, I explored cartomantic oracles, immersing myself in older decks and historic tarots, and returning to the Tarot de Marseille. I have not been alone in this return to older tarots: many taromancers have gone the same way, and there is a steady rise in the reproduction of early decks and a few books on how to read the Marseille and other historic decks.

I yearned to know how to use these ancient decks practically. Very little textual evidence supports the divinatory reading of tarot cards. Indeed, some tarot historians remain adamant that many ancient decks were used solely for gambling and other competitive games, not for divination at all.<sup>1</sup> However, divinatory methods are persistent; if playing cards were being used for divination as early as the Middle Ages, when the clergy are recorded as inveighing against such a use, then I'm sure that tarot cards were not exempt.

Over the years, I've worked with the cards themselves to hear what they had to say. It is hard to read historic tarots with clarity or understanding today, largely because we do not share a consciousness with people in earlier centuries whose experience of symbol and image was different from our own. However, we don't have to go back in time or read in an archaic way. The clues to reading tarot actually lie within the tarot itself, much as the means of acting, gesturing and speaking Shakespeare's plays lies in his written dialogue: as soon as we immerse ourselves in tarot

practice, the hidden clues leap out and manifest themselves once again. While we may not have handbooks from the time of tarot's inception, we still have our common sense.

Over the course of time, tarot has been colonized by many other disciplines — a movement that 18th-century French developments in esoteric thought have fostered. Writers such as Court de Gébelin reimagined a deeply mythical origin and esoteric use of tarot, based largely on France's fascination with the discovery of ancient Egypt, thus fostering a mistaken belief that the tarot originated there. It is now common to encounter taromancers who steer their decks by the dictates of astrology, the wheel of the zodiac, or the Sephiroth of kabbala, as if the tarot were unreadable without this.

Of course, the classical planets and elements have been central to the development of Western Hermeticism, which has claimed tarot for its own, but I have chosen in this book to present methods of reading that ignore these esoteric disciplines and honor the tarot for itself. More recently, at the other end of history, a New Age revulsion against the tarot's powerful images has resulted in a plethora of bland tarotesque packs whose divinatory teeth have been drawn by the simple expedient of removing all potentially disturbing traditional card symbols so that no one can be affronted or disturbed by them. The archetypal images of the tarot provide a world of possibilities, and any tinkering with the cards results in a toothless tarot that has nothing to say about the challenging events of life — a disabling development, considering that most people usually only approach a diviner when experiencing life's upheavals.

Older tarots tend to speak lucidly and frankly about life as it is — they pull no punches but offer windows into the hidden motivations and distressing challenges of life, giving us pathways of possibility.

My aim in this book is to offer several ways of reading historic tarots so that, with practice and the guidance of the cards, you will find your own method of reading both the powerful trumps and the seemingly less important pips in a fluid manner, finding concise meanings. There is a little tarot

history along the way, but this is more a book for the taromancer who wants to work practically with these older tarots.

The temptation might be to handle such ancient tarots with ultra-conservatism and historic kid gloves, but I encourage you to use your decks with confidence and with playful concentration. Use them frequently, asking questions that are both needful and well framed, so that the tarot can give you helpful and honest answers. This is where the dialogue between you and your early tarot can begin, and where the untold story will tell you its tale.

### Telling the Untold Story

This book explores the practical ways in which pre 20th-century tarots with pip or number cards can be read, drawing upon the older cartomantic arts of blending cards, directional reading and other skills, rather than reading each card from a predetermined list of meanings.

Older tarots like the Tarot de Marseille are currently enjoying a great renaissance but, for many, pip tarots are like an untold story that everyone has forgotten, because they require the card-reading skills of a different era. In *Untold Tarot*, you will learn to read their untold story for yourself.

For over six hundred years, tarots have been part of the daily life of people in Europe. Wherever Europeans have traveled, the cards have gone with them all over the world, from the Americas to the Orient. Tarots have been widely used for gaming as well as for divination, but in this book we will focus upon how we divine with them. Tarots were once hand-painted for rich patrons such as the 15th-century Visconti family of Milan, Italy. Popular and affordable printing processes finally made tarots accessible to the less wealthy, and they spread over Europe, continuing to be engraved and block-printed. Today, tarots are a mass-market commodity, available in great profusion, each themed around a different topic to appeal to a wide variety of tastes.

After 1910, with the coming of the A.E. Waite and Pamela Coleman Smith deck, the Rider Waite-Smith Tarot — now the most popular tarot in the world — tarots began to have illustrated pip or

number cards, enabling readers to access the meanings in a more emotional and visual way: this has, in turn, created new, psychological ways of reading tarot. Since the early 20th century, most commercial tarots have followed suit, providing illustrated number cards and changing the way in which tarot is read: it has become more eclectic and removed from its roots.

Before the 20th century, tarots had twenty-two illustrated trumps, sixteen illustrated court cards, and forty pip or number cards which had no picture, merely emblems on them. In effect, five hundred years of tarot reading has begun to be lost; this book seeks to remedy that loss and to refocus on the art of reading ancient tarots.

In the first chapter we will explore what a tarot is and view a little of its history. In Chapter 2 we look at the trumps, their background and usage, while in Chapter 3 we outline the pips and explore two major methods of reading pip cards: mixing the suits with the numbers, whereby a profusion of meanings can be gained, and also a cartomantic method for those who prefer to have a more fixed framework for their reading. Chapter 4 looks at the court cards, their derivation and use. Chapter 5 delineates the major skills we need for reading older tarots. Chapter 6 outlines directional reading. Chapter 7 presents some historic methods and helps us to put all the skills together in more ambitious spreads.

In this book you will find ways of reading that enable the cards to be endlessly talkative, telling the story of your question like a landscape.

### Choosing A Tarot

To help you study and work with this book, I suggest you obtain a clearly printed Tarot de Marseille at the outset — one that isn't cluttered with extra meanings or legends, or other people's interpretations in the margins. If you are used to highly colored illustrated tarots, please adjust your focus: remember, it is not the most ornamented pack that will sustain your learning, but rather the most simple and flexible deck. While you may not understand how to read the pips yet, you will break through and learn how to do so. Although the faces in older packs may be simply rendered, and the color range on the cards appears more

restricted than you are used to, there will be at least one tarot that appeals to you. <>

[Outrages: Sex, Censorship and the Criminalization of Love](#) by Naomi Wolf [Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 9780544274020]

The best-selling author of [Vagina](#), [Give Me Liberty](#), and [The End of America](#) illuminates a dramatic buried story of gay history—how a single English law in 1857 led to a maelstrom, with reverberations lasting down to our day

Until 1857, the State did not link the idea of “homosexuality” to deviancy. In the same year, the concept of the “obscene” was coined. New York Times best-selling author Naomi Wolf’s [Outrages](#) is the story, brilliantly told, of why this two-pronged State repression took hold—first in England and spreading quickly to America—and why it was attached so dramatically, for the first time, to homosexual men.

Before 1857 it wasn’t “homosexuality” that was a crime, but simply the act of sodomy. But in a single stroke, not only was love between men illegal, but anything referring to this love became obscene, unprintable, unspeakable. Wolf paints the dramatic ways this played out among a bohemian group of sexual dissidents, including Walt Whitman in America and the closeted homosexual English critic John Addington Symonds—in love with Whitman’s homoerotic voice in [Leaves of Grass](#)—as, decades before the infamous 1895 trial of Oscar Wilde, dire prison terms became the State’s penalty for homosexuality.

Most powerfully, Wolf recounts how a dying Symonds helped write the book on “sexual inversion” that created our modern understanding of homosexuality. And she convinces that his secret memoir, mined here fully for the first time, stands as the first gay rights manifesto in the west.

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Excerpt: You must apply for a reader's card to gain access to the rare manuscripts section of the Pierpont Morgan Library in Manhattan, which is called the Sherman Fairchild Reading Room. At the top level of the imposing stone Beaux Arts building on Madison Avenue, the former private home of banker J. Pierpont Morgan, the rare books reading room is hushed.

You place your possessions in a wood-paneled locker and lock it. You make sure you have secured in the locker any object that might possibly create a mark. You wash your hands at a little sink with a steel basin, so you don't inadvertently smear the grime of modern Manhattan onto the precious, perhaps ancient, pages you will soon touch.

The rare manuscripts room has diffuse lamps, and opaque skylights overhead. Its lighting is indirect so that manuscripts will not fade. The dim lighting and the extreme care that the librarians take with every page laid in front of readers create an atmosphere of secular sanctity. That mood is intensified by the fact that readers around you are seated in front of wooden pedestals, which support open books and manuscripts; the deep indentation at the center of each pedestal, in which books are nestled and opened, protects the spines from cracking.

When the librarian brings you a book or manuscript that you have requested, she opens it carefully. She teaches you to lay across the pages a chain of heavy beads, like a necklace, encased in an ivory or a deep red fabric sleeve. This chain keeps the book partly open, while still protecting pages from creasing.

Ms. Maria Molestina, one of the librarians at the Reading Room, and her colleagues, are all highly trained in "codicology," the study and care of books as physical objects. For books that are too fragile to turn by hand, Ms. Molestina, or another librarian, will bring you a slip of heavy paper with a sharply angled edge, which you may slide between brittle pages to open them with surgical precision.

I was at the Morgan Library looking for a young man, now long dead — a nineteen-year-old student at Balliol College, Oxford. In 1859, John Addington Symonds was deeply in love with a

fellow adolescent whom, I knew, he had identified carefully only as "W." I was looking for the only handwritten manuscript of the unpublished love letter Symonds had written, that at once celebrated this teenage love and mourned its apparent renunciation.

The love letter took the form of a long poetic manuscript, written entirely in quatrains. Phyllis Grosskurth, who in 1965 had written a biography of Symonds titled *The Woeful Victorian*, had in passing described this love poem, as had others who knew about Symonds's now largely forgotten work. The poem's name is "In Memoriam Arcadie."

What had young Symonds meant by the title? In Greek mythology, "Arkady" is the rugged mountainous home of the god Pan, where human beings lived in harmony with the natural order. Pan was also the deity of unbridled sexual impulse; a mischief-maker and a musician.

"In Memoriam" is Latin for "in the memory of," a phrase used in elegies — that is, in verses written to say goodbye forever to lost loved ones. This nineteen-year-old, in other words, was signaling in his title that he was writing an elegy for a lost love, and a lost paradise.

But like much of Symonds's most important writing, the love letter/ poem had not been published during his lifetime. In fact, this work had never been published at all. And Symonds had made as sure as he could that a researcher would have to track this manuscript down in person and then supplicate a trusted custodian of the text, in order to have a look at it. He had continually buried his true meanings, even while leaving clues for their discovery.

Symonds's undergraduate college was Balliol College, at the University of Oxford; his graduate college, at the same university, Magdalen. A hundred and fifty-five years later, I was a graduate student too, at New College, just a few blocks away from both. My thesis adviser was Dr. Stefano-Maria Evangelista, who had written an influential book about Victorian homosexuality and the idea of the Greeks, called *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece: Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile*.

One day, in the comfortable top-floor study at Trinity College where we met weekly so he could review my work, Dr. Evangelista handed me two immense volumes bound in a deep-olive-green fabric. There was a third volume waiting on his bookshelf, to be taken up when I was finished with the first two. The books contained the letters of someone of whom I had never heard — John Addington Symonds. “You should read these,” my professor had said.

This began a journey of five years of study, during which I grew increasingly fascinated with this elusive, tormented, world-changing character.

The more I got to know John Addington Symonds through his letters, and the more I read about the men and women around him, the more present he seemed: in spite of the lapse of time between our lives, in Oxford especially, he often seemed to be just down the street; at times, when I was reading his letters in the Bodleian or the New College Library, his prescient voice seemed just a carrel away.

Every day, as I walked over the cobblestones leading out of New College, passed under the arched Bridge of Sighs, and turned onto Broad Street, I saw Balliol’s neo-Gothic doorway on my right. I could glance in at the smooth lawns of the courtyard and at the gabled rooms where this love affair, between lovers who were just grown out of boyhood, had been carried out — and then, it seemed, been cut painfully short.

In life, Symonds composed volumes and volumes — biographies, travel essays, books of verse, art criticism, translations, and textbooks. His letters alone, as I mentioned, constitute three massive tomes. He was, if anything, persistent in expressing himself. Nonetheless, he also insisted on silences. Symonds became the centerpiece of my 2015 doctoral thesis — but even after that was completed and handed in, I kept learning more about him from the astonishing clues that he had left behind for archivists and scholars. Those discoveries led me to write this book.

Though little known today outside the academic disciplines of Victorian studies and queer studies, Symonds should have a far more prominent place in history. He can truly be identified as one of the

fathers of the modern gay rights movement. He can even be called an originator of what we now understand as the modern identity of male homosexuality in the West. His insistence regarding how to think about love — and his demand that male-male love and attraction be recognized as innate, natural, and healthy, rather than as acquired “neuroses,” degeneracies, or diseases — helped craft our modern understanding of what it means to be a man who loves and desires other men.

Symonds would, until the very end of his life, use code to express his messages about love between men: he employed metaphors, misdirections, visual emblems, embargoed manuscripts, and lockboxes both rhetorical and real. He would spend his life creating and then hiding those true meanings, leaving signals for us, the men and women of the future, to decipher.

He tried to address the issue of men loving men in a wide range of genres: translating biographies and sonnets of homosexual artists such as Michelangelo Buonarroti and Benvenuto Cellini; composing a textbook of the lives of classical Greek poets; offering thinly veiled satire to a college journal; producing unpublished manifestoes that scarcely saw the light of day; and publishing collections of love poems, using feminine pronouns to mask the true gender of the Beloved. He tried to address the central issue of his life and work by publicly collecting art by a disgraced artist, and by publishing reviews to defend homosexual writers who were under attack.

He died relatively young. But by working assiduously for slightly more than three decades, he scattered deliberately into the future a set of seeds for a more progressive world than the one in which he lived — seeds of the world we now see around us, if we live in the West.

Symonds tried to express his belief that sexual love between men was innate and natural before there were concepts, let alone language, to support this idea. He was one of the people who invented the language. He spoke in every way he could as doing so became more and more illegal.

This book will follow John Addington Symonds’s life as an essayist, poet, advocate, husband, father,

and lover. Symonds's personal story offers a lens through which we may see a greater cultural and political struggle.

But the personal biography is also a story of state intervention in our personal lives and in our words — and a cautionary tale about what happens to us when that is permitted to be.

IN HIS QUEST for freedom and equality for men who loved men, Symonds had help from an unlikely source. [Leaves of Grass](#)—a volume of poems published in 1855 by the American poet Walt Whitman — would be the catalyst of a lifetime for Symonds. This collection, in an utterly original voice, robustly celebrates the self and its euphoric relationship to the natural world and to other men and women. It sent transformational ripples through British and American subcultures. It would affect groups of London bohemians, Boston Transcendentalists, artists, writers, feminists, Socialists, Utopians, reformers, and revolutionaries, who would in turn create new ways of seeing human sexuality, social equality, and love itself, and who would use that vision in turn to build new institutions.

There would eventually be seven to ten authorized editions of the book, depending, as scholars point out, on what you count as an edition. There would be the real [Leaves of Grass](#); the forged [Leaves of Grass](#); the pirated [Leaves of Grass](#); the bowdlerized, legal [Leaves of Grass](#); and the smuggled, uncensored, illegal [Leaves of Grass](#). There would be the [Leaves of Grass](#) that was read in private groups of workingmen in northern Britain, who felt it spoke especially to them, and the [Leaves of Grass](#) that early feminists read in London, New York City, and Philadelphia, who believed that it spoke uniquely to them as well.

After reading [Leaves of Grass](#) as a young man, Symonds would spend the rest of his life trying to respond to the book's provocative themes.

Physically fragile, status-conscious, fearful of social rejection, Symonds recognized a temperamental opposite in Whitman. The older poet was fearless, physically robust, all-embracing, stubborn in his convictions, unashamedly prophetic, and perfectly ready to upset everybody. Symonds never met Whitman in person, but the two maintained an

epistolary friendship across the Atlantic, at a time when letters were transported on six-week journeys by ships under sail. The Englishman's sometimes overbearing literary courtship of Whitman would span more than two decades.

Comforted and provoked by this friendship, Symonds gradually became less and less guarded. At the very end of his life, he finally stopped trying to express his feelings in veiled ways, and burst out at last into straightforward advocacy. His foundational essay, *A Problem in Modern Ethics*, circulated secretly before his death, declared outright that love between men was natural, and that it was good. At the end of his life, he collaborated on the sexological treatise *Sexual Inversion*, which would introduce the concept of homosexuality as an identity on a natural spectrum of sexual identities, as we understand it today. That argument bears with it an implicit claim for equal treatment of men who love men. *A Problem in Modern Ethics* could well have been the first gay rights manifesto in English.

Given the significance in LGBTQ+ history of John Addington Symonds's story, I asked many members of that community to read this book in manuscript. Based on their responses, I wish to share some notes.

Language about sexuality and gender is always evolving. I did my best, when describing the past, to use language that was accurate for the time, while still being alert to present-day usage.

My research found a deep connection between the origins of the feminist movement in the West, the modern (re-)invention of Western homophobia, and the start of the Western gay rights movement; this emboldened me to a degree to undertake this task.

Nonetheless I had some trepidation, not being identified as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, in undertaking to tell this story. I was advised by my LGBTQ+ readers of the importance of the author's transparency.

So I am sharing that while I am not a member of this community, this research material came my way; I was moved to do my utmost to shine a light on it, and sought to bear in mind the responsibilities involved with telling this extraordinary story.

By the time of Symonds's death, in 1893, a new generation of men such as Oscar Wilde were less indirectly signalling in their work what we would call gay themes, and were no longer so willing to inhabit what we today call "the closet." Many commentators describe the movement for gay rights as originating with Wilde and the trials of 1895 that brought down the playwright, sentencing him to two years' hard labor in prison.

But a generation before Wilde, a small group of "sexual dissidents," influenced by Symonds and his loving friend and sometime adversary Walt Whitman, struggled at great personal risk and in the face of extraordinary oppression, to advocate for these freedoms. <>

[Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Discrimination](#) by Holning Lau [Comparative Discrimination Law, Brill, 9789004345485] open access title

In [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Discrimination](#) Holning Lau offers an incisive review of the conceptual questions that arise as legal systems around the world grapple with whether and how to protect people against sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination. This volume is an essential guide for researchers seeking to acquaint themselves quickly with a comparative view of cutting-edge issues concerning sexual orientation and gender identity rights.

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Excerpt: Laws concerning sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) have undergone a sea change. Still, legal protections against SOGI discrimination vary widely around the world. As jurisdictions wrestle with whether and how to protect people against SOGI discrimination, several conceptual questions emerge. This Brill volume reviews and discusses legal developments and scholarly commentary concerning these questions. Specifically, this volume examines the following five questions: (1) Is SOGI discrimination encompassed by existing laws prohibiting discrimination based on sex? (2) Should sexual orientation and gender identity be considered protected categories in and of themselves? (3) Is there a standard sequence of steps for developing legal protections against SOGI discrimination? (4) What are the drawbacks of developing SOGI discrimination protections? (5) To what extent should religious objections justify exemptions from SOGI discrimination bans?

Laws concerning sexual orientations and gender identity (SOGI) have undergone a sea change. Many jurisdictions around the world have repealed their laws that criminalized same-sex intimacy and expression of diverse gender identities. In addition, a growing number of jurisdictions are further reforming their laws to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGST) persons against discrimination. Legal regimes at various levels—international, regional, national, and subnational—have deemed SOGI discrimination to be impermissible in contexts ranging from employment and housing to marriage and parenting.

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Developments at the United Nations reflect the globalization of SOGI rights. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights has made combatting SOGI discrimination a priority, as demonstrated by its “Free and Equal” campaign aimed at cultivating SOGI rights. Likewise, the United Nations Human Rights Council passed a historic resolution in 2016, appointing the United Nations’ first-ever Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Despite these developments, legal protections around the world remain fragmented. In many countries, LGST persons continue to suffer persecution concludes by reflecting on how this volume illuminates the value of studying SOGI discrimination law from comparative perspectives.

and have no legal recourse. Countries that do protect against SOGI discrimination do so to varying degrees and have based their protections on divergent legal theories. Indeed, numerous conceptual debates have emerged over the course of law reform. This volume provides an overview of how various legal institutions and commentators around the world have contributed to these debates. With its distillation of these debates, this volume serves as a guide for researchers who seek to acquaint themselves with comparative approaches to SOGI discrimination law.

This volume proceeds in six steps. Part I lays the groundwork by clarifying terminology, scope, and methodology. Parts II and III then examine the debates about how sexual orientation and gender identity fit into discrimination law’s framework of protected categories. Some jurisdictions refer to these “protected categories” as “prohibited grounds of discrimination,” and this volume will use the two phrases interchangeably. Part II examines whether SOGI discrimination should be considered sex discrimination and thus be covered by existing laws that regard sex as a protected category. Part III then considers whether sexual orientation and gender identity should be protected categories in and of themselves.

Protections against SOGI discrimination have developed incrementally. Part IV examines the nature of this incrementalism. LGST persons

experience discrimination in a range of contexts including the criminal system, employment, housing, public accommodations, marriage, and parenting. Governments historically have not reformed their laws to address these various areas all at once. Instead, governments tend to expand incrementally the range of contexts in which they prohibit SOGI discrimination. Part IV addresses whether there is a typical sequence to such incremental law reform. Part IV also examines another type of incrementalism: some jurisdictions are leaders in law reform and then other jurisdictions follow. This relationship among jurisdictions is discussed in Part IV.

The final two Parts of this volume explore the limits of SOGI discrimination laws. Part V examines critiques from progressive commentators who believe that SOGI nondiscrimination protections have significant drawbacks. Part VI then discusses ongoing debates about whether and how SOGI discrimination bans should include exemptions for religious objectors.

This volume examines five major questions concerning the development of SOGI discrimination law: (1) Is SOGI discrimination encompassed by existing laws that prohibit discrimination based on sex? (2) Should sexual orientation and gender identity be considered protected categories in and of themselves? (3) Is there a standard sequence for developing legal protections against SOGI discrimination? (4) What are the drawbacks of developing SOGI discrimination protections? (5) To what extent should religious objections justify exemptions from SOGI discrimination bans?

There are numerous benefits to approaching these questions from a comparative perspective. First, there is value in cross-fertilization of ideas. For example, although the UN Human Rights Committee stated early on that sexual orientation discrimination is a form of sex discrimination, domestic courts—especially in the United States—subsequently developed the logical underpinnings of that claim. Comparative analysis also illuminates competing approaches to SOGI issues. For instance, jurisdictions that are grappling with the question of same-sex marriage can see, through comparative analysis, that there is more than one way to legalize same-sex marriage. Different countries have taken different approaches with potentially



different downstream effects. Comparative study of SOGI discrimination is also useful because looking abroad can help to unsettle certain assumptions that may hinder domestic deliberations on SOGI discrimination rights. For example, studying South Asian jurisprudence that recognizes a third sex might help to unsettle assumptions within other jurisdictions that binary male/female categories are natural as opposed to social constructs.

Indeed, comparative study of SOGI discrimination is fruitful in a variety of ways. The short list of ways provided here is not intended to be exhaustive. Indeed this volume serves as a springboard for further research and discussion about comparative SOGI discrimination law. <>

[Hugo Grotius's Remonstrantie of 1615: Facsimile, Transliteration, Modern Translations and Analysis](#) by David Kromhout and Adri Offenberg [Brill, 9789004396074]

Grotius wrote the Remonstrantie around 1615 at the request of the States of Holland, to define the conditions under which Jews were to be admitted to the Dutch Republic. At that time, he was already an internationally recognized legal expert in civic and canonic law. The position taken by Grotius with respect to the admission of the Jews was strongly connected with the religious and political tensions existing in the Dutch Republic of the early 17th century. The Remonstrantie shows how Grotius's views evolved within the confines of the philosophical and religious concepts of his time. It is an example of tolerance within political limits, analyzed by the author David Kromhout and made accessible through a modern translation.

Grotius's Remonstrantie, being his recommendations to the States of Holland on the subject of the admission of the Jews in the Dutch Republic, offers insight in the political and religious constraints and in Grotius' carefully crafted line of thought and reasoning.

Subjects: Jewish History & Culture, History, History & Culture, Jewish Studies, Minority & Group Rights, Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Early Modern History, History, Book History, History

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Excerpt: In 2015 it was four hundred years ago that the eminent jurist Hugo Grotius, then pensionary of Rotterdam, wrote his Remonstrantie at the request of the States of Holland and West Friesland. To mark the occasion, chairman Jaap Sajet of the Morasha foundation took the initiative in 2014 for a scholarly study that placed the Remonstrantie in its historical and social context, including a new complete edition of the Remonstrantie with explanatory notes, a facsimile of the original, a retranslation into modern Dutch and an English translation. As fellow board members of Morasha at the time we could not imagine the vast scope of this project. Sajet's vision surpassed our imagination.

The Remonstrantie marks the beginning of the debate on the Jewish presence in the Dutch Republic, by one of the greatest contemporary jurists. Grotius discusses the issue of the rights of Jews in connection with the political and religious situation in the Dutch Republic. It is the principal purpose of the Morasha foundation to promote publications on aspects of Dutch-Jewish history which have so far been insufficiently explored. As such, this edition is highly appropriate to the objectives of Morasha.

In 1615 Hugo Grotius gave his view on how to deal with the influx of Sephardi Jews at the request of the States of Holland and West Friesland. In this Remonstrantie nopen de orde dije in de landen van Hollandt ende Westvrieslant dijent gestelt op de Joden (A Remonstrantie on the Regulations to be Instituted in Holland and West Friesland Regarding the Jews), Grotius first raised the question whether Jews ought to be admitted in the first place. After having answered in the

affirmative, he considered the terms and conditions to be applied to their admission. That the Remonstrantie was eventually shelved is no reflection on its contents. If anything, it had to do with the political situation in the Dutch Republic at the time.

Dr Jaap Meijer previously published an edition of the Remonstrantie in 1949, though without a retranslation or an English translation, so that it was not accessible internationally. It was time to engage with the Remonstrantie once more.

Publishing the work of a scholar as exceptional and eminent as Hugo Grotius requires much of everyone in the project. The researcher has to be well acquainted with the period and the issues Hugo Grotius was faced with in 1616. We are very fortunate that Dr David Kromhout expressed a great interest in the project and was available and willing to do the research. Not only did he write the article on the backgrounds to Grotius' advisory report, he also had to identify and translate the numerous Latin references and notes in the Remonstrantie. We appreciate the advice provided to Dr Kromhout by Prof. Marc de Wilde and Prof. Henk Nellen. Dr Adri Offenberg brought his great expertise as a book specialist at the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana to bear on the transcription of the seventeenth-century manuscript.

As a historical text can be challenging to read even when presented in a contemporary font, a retranslation into modern Dutch in the edition was included. This was a formidable task, and we are delighted with the result provided by Marijke Blankman MA. She has come up with a contemporary retranslation that nevertheless remained as close as possible to the source text. Dr Cis van Heertum translated this retranslation into English, using the Authorized Version of 1611 for the biblical quotes so that these, too, are consonant with the period of the Remonstrantie itself. Will Kelly carefully read the final version of David Kromhout's English text.

### Hugo Grotius's Remonstrantie

The book you have in your hands is one of Hugo Grotius's lesser-known works, translated into modern Dutch, entitled: Remonstrantie betreffende de regelgeving die in Holland en West-Friesland

moet worden opgesteld ten aanzien van de Joden (Remonstrantie regarding regulations that should be drawn up in Holland and West Friesland regarding the Jews). Grotius was commissioned to write the text by the States of Holland, in his capacity as pensionary of Rotterdam. This request was prompted by unrest surrounding the settlement of Jews in towns in Holland after it transpired that a resident of Hoorn had converted to Judaism. Because Amsterdam and Rotterdam were, at that time, the only Holland towns with a Jewish community, their pensionaries were asked by the States to draw up a concept of regulations governing the settlement and residence of Jews.

Today, the Remonstrantie is primarily of interest as a historical document, an illustration of the problems confronting the young Dutch Republic as a beacon of toleration and prosperity in a world where both were in short supply. As such, it sheds lights on the thinking and political relationships of early 17th-century Holland, at the beginning of the Golden Age. But it also holds up a mirror to our own time, in which to examine recurring issues like migration, identity and coexistence in diversity.

### Background

Around 1592/1593 groups of Sephardic Jews began settling in the towns of Holland. This was a new phenomenon for the time, though Jewish communities had existed in a number of towns in the Low Countries during the Middle Ages. As far back as the late 13th century, for example, there was a Jodenstraat (Street of the Jews) in Maastricht, and by the 14th century there is evidence of Jewish communities elsewhere. But after the devastation of the Black Death in the mid-14th century, Jews were persecuted in many places for being the supposed cause of the epidemic. By the 15th century the communities had seemingly vanished completely; there is, at any rate, no further mention of them in the historical record.

Following the Reconquista in Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella (the 'Catholic Monarchs') increasingly turned against the country's Jews, who had lived there for hundreds of years under the protection of Moorish rulers. In 1492 the Jews of Spain were presented with a stark choice: convert to Christianity or leave the country; in 1497 a similar ultimatum was issued in Portugal. Some of the Jews

who chose exile ended up in Antwerp or in towns in the Rhineland. There, the pattern was repeated: in 1549 Charles V, the grandson of the Catholic Monarchs, ordered Jews who had sought refuge in Antwerp to leave the city. This did not trigger Jewish migration to Holland, since Charles was the ruler of that province as well. Indeed many Jews simply remained in Antwerp; even then, the city fathers knew a thing or two about 'toleration'. But once Antwerp fell into Spanish hands and the Dutch Republic seemed to be gaining the upper hand in its war with Spain, Jews who had initially fled elsewhere (especially Hamburg and Cologne), began to seek safety in Holland, attracted by the spirit of toleration in the Dutch Republic and the opportunities created by its economic boom. For example, in the 1590s a group of Sephardic Jews settled in Amsterdam, while a group of German Jews made their home in the area around Groningen. In the entry for 1598 in his *Jaerboeken en Historiën* (Annals and Histories) Grotius mentions the arrival of Portuguese Jews, citing fear of the Inquisition and the hope of setting up a profitable business in Amsterdam as the twin motives for their decision. To translate this into contemporary language: they were a mixture of asylum seekers and economic migrants.

Although we now talk about Jewish immigrants, contemporary sources describe them as 'new Christians'; in any event they were not always open about their religion. According to Swetschinski it was not until 1602 that the first public expression of Judaism is found, in the form of a statement by a man accused of trafficking in stolen goods who gave his religion as Jewish. In the years that followed, other Sephardic Jews started coming 'out of the closet' and began looking into the possibility of opening their own synagogue. During that same period Lutherans and Mennonites were also pushing the bounds of toleration in the Republic, while a number of towns had substantial Roman Catholic minorities. It was chiefly the town authorities that were competent to decide on such matters. It therefore made sense for Jews to approach the towns with the most tolerant attitude. In his study of the Republic, Jonathan Israel notes how a group of Jewish families who had come to Amsterdam from Venice and Thessaloniki sought permission from the town council of Haarlem to establish a synagogue

there. When that request was denied because of opposition from local Calvinist consistories (church boards), they tried their luck in Rotterdam in 1610. There they were initially granted permission, but when that permission was revoked a few years later they returned to Amsterdam, where the Jewish community had managed to organise itself without explicit permission from the authorities.

The consistories' opposition to the establishment of synagogues in the towns and cities was not rooted in antipathy towards the Jewish religion. The Republic had no tradition of being either for or against Jews, and Calvinism was not by definition hostile to them. Their standpoint should be seen in the context of the 'confessionalisation' of the population, the struggle over the position of Calvinism within society and its political influence on government policy. The Dutch Revolt was accompanied by a revolutionary reform of the Roman Catholic Church and the introduction of a new (Reformed) ecclesiastical order. In that sense the new Church was now established as an institution, but Calvinists were still in the minority. Around the transition from the 16th to the 17th century, the Calvinists' aim was to expand their position in society, in the face of competition from Lutherans and Roman Catholics. Although the States of Holland had recognised freedom of religion (and the freedom to practise one's religion) at Dordrecht in 1572—to win over the public for the revolt against Spain and not to alienate anyone—the prevailing opinion among patricians and municipal authorities was that toleration of the public practice of other religions jeopardised social unity. Although the town councils were often accused of 'free thinking' by orthodox Calvinists, they too viewed toleration with great suspicion, not unlike those who look askance at multiculturalism today.

### Why Did Grotius Write the Remonstrantie?

The background to the Remonstrantie can be found in Blom's *History of the Jews in the Netherlands*. The sheriff of Hoorn had arrested a certain Hans Joostensz, who had converted to Judaism and together with his wife had begun making kosher cheese for Jews in Amsterdam. The conversion of Jews to Christianity was not a problem, but the

same could not be said for the reverse. In this particular case the States of Holland and West Friesland decided to banish the couple from the province, but by then, the case had already touched off a debate about policy on the settlement and treatment of Jews. Against this backdrop the pensionaries of Amsterdam and Rotterdam—Adriaan Pauw and Hugo Grotius—were commissioned to draw up a set of regulations to which Jews ‘should adhere in order to prevent any scandal, nuisance or sanctions’. According to Swetschinski these two cities were chosen because they were the only ones with a Jewish community, though Van Eysinga suggests that Rotterdam was regarded as more liberal minded and Amsterdam as more Calvinist, so that the States may have hoped that a combination of the two would yield a ‘golden mean’.

Hugo Grotius was appointed pensionary of Rotterdam in 1613. In practice this simply meant that he was the paid adviser to the municipal government, but holding a permanent appointment gave the pensionary a strong position vis-à-vis the town magistracy, which changed every year. With the help of his staff, which he was expected to pay out of his own pocket, the pensionary was the de facto head of the municipal civil service. At the time of his appointment Grotius was not yet 30 and already advocate general of the States of Holland. There had been talk of a possible appointment to the High Court of Holland and Zeeland, but in the end Grotius preferred a more political career.

At the time of his appointment the Dutch Republic was embroiled in a heated politico-religious debate surrounding the disagreement between Arminius and Gomarus about predestination. In 1611 the States had adopted a resolution ordering the Remonstrants (the followers of Arminius) and the Counter-Remonstrants (those of Gomarus) to accept each other's views, and as advocate general Grotius was involved in the implementation of that resolution. Grotius was also involved on a personal level. As a member of the Reformed congregation in Leiden he had supported calling Arminius as its minister; moreover he was a friend of Johannes Wtenbogaert, the future leader of the Arminians, and had lived in his house during his time in Leiden.

It is important to note that this theological dispute had a political dimension as well, concerning the relationship between church and state. Arminians, who were well represented in municipal government, championed a role for the state in matters like Church governance and the appointment of ministers, partly as a counterbalance to the intolerance of orthodox viewpoints. Gomarists, who were more strongly represented in consistories, sought greater influence over government policy and thus a more popular (i.e. democratic) influence on the oligarchic municipal authorities.

Obviously, the dispute between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants had nothing to do with the issues that gave rise to the request to draw up a set of regulations governing the Jews in Holland and West Friesland. But the request was premised on the notion that the States had the power to adopt such regulations. The Amsterdam municipal authority was evidently of a different opinion. In 1616 it adopted *ex proprio motu* an ordinance that prohibited Jews from slandering the Christian faith, converting Christians to Judaism and having relations with Christian women, even if they were prostitutes. It is not clear if the Amsterdam authorities then regarded the matter as closed. According to Van Eysinga, Adriaan Pauw also submitted a proposal for a set of regulations, which was discussed by the States in 1619, together with the request (Remonstrantie) of Rotterdam. In so far as the Remonstrantie assumed that the States were competent to regulate religious matters, it bears on the question at the heart of the debate and a related issue that arose two years later, namely whether a synod could be convened by the States General, or only by the individual provinces, which was the standpoint of the States of Holland.

### Peculiar or Shrewd?

The Remonstrantie consists of three parts: a general explanation, the articles themselves and explanatory notes to the individual articles. It is beyond the scope of this foreword to examine each of these parts in full, but the general explanation merits further attention. Seen through modern eyes, it will appear offensive, anti-Semitic and discriminatory. But it is informed by a rationale that led to regulations that were relatively liberal for

the time. It remains unclear if the general explanation accurately reflects Grotius's own views or whether it should instead be seen as a piece of advocacy, intended to persuade potential opponents with their own arguments. If the latter, it is an ingenious piece of rhetoric.

First, Grotius explains the need for these regulations by noting that Jews were starting to settle in the towns of Holland on a large scale, a state of affairs which was permitted by the municipal authorities with a view to the economic benefits these new residents would generate. Accordingly, he proceeds to examine the issue from the perspective of the common interest. To do so, it is first necessary to address two preliminary questions: should Jews be admitted to the country in the first place, and if so, should they be permitted to practise their religion? A third question is: what can be done to ensure that such practice does not undermine the Christian faith or disrupt public order?

Grotius begins by stating that there are two good arguments for not admitting Jews to the country. Admitting people of another religion weakens social unity. What is more, Jews hate Christians and could therefore pose a danger to public order and security. We hear echoes of these same arguments in the immigration debate of our own time: migrants are a danger to social cohesion and security. Grotius does not attempt to minimise the dangers to security; indeed he emphasises them by repeating alarmist stories about Jews that were then in circulation. Truly, he concedes, these are all good reasons not to let the Jews into the country, but on the other hand, he points out, Paul wrote that the entire Jewish people would eventually convert. And if that is the case, then surely they should be admitted—otherwise how can they embrace the true faith? Apart from this religious argument, there is also an obligation to extend hospitality on the basis of a shared humanity. On this point Grotius invokes a natural principle which he would develop into 'natural law' in later works, including *De iure Belli ac Pacis*. He also contends that even if Jews do hate Christians, they should not be treated in the same way, if only to ensure that Christians give no cause for such hatred (Grotius suggests that Jews actually have reason to hate).

Furthermore, on the risks to security and the possibility that the faith of 'weaker' Christians might be undermined, he maintains that laws and official oversight should be sufficient.

If the conclusion is that Jews can and should be allowed into the country, the question arises of whether they should be permitted to practise their faith. Grotius identifies two possible objections to this: first, the Biblical prohibition on idolatry, and second, the paradox that Jews will then be permitted something that is denied to Catholics. But, he argues, if Jews are not permitted to practise, they must be forced to convert to Christianity or, failing that, society will have to accept a group of people with no religion at all. The first option would be improper, and the second wrong, since pure godlessness is even worse than Judaism. Besides, he claims, Judaism is not idolatry; Jews worship the same God, albeit with an admixture of superstition. In response to the second objection Grotius points out that Catholics do the same: allow Jews to observe their religion but deny that privilege to members of other Christian denominations. Moreover, Grotius notes, given their obedience to the Pope, the enemy of the Dutch Republic, Catholics are actually much more dangerous than Jews.

In this way Grotius uses the force of logic to convince his readers that Jews should be allowed into the country and permitted to practise their religion. In addition to invoking hospitality and the Christian duty to love one's neighbour, his argument rests on two pillars: 1) a conviction that Jews would eventually convert of their own accord and that Holland was as good a place as any for them to do so, and 2) a belief that observing the wrong religion was better than having no religion at all, given that forced conversion was out of the question. The Biblical dimension of Grotius's logic is difficult for modern-day readers to follow. But it also demonstrates that without a shared frame of reference, debates on fundamental questions never move beyond the stating of opposing viewpoints without ever bridging the differences between them. In any case, it must be acknowledged that Grotius himself ultimately offers no answer to the two main objections he raises: that allowing people to practise their faith freely undermines social unity

and that by extending this right to Jews, they would be allowed something denied to Roman Catholics. And these were considerations that carried a great deal of weight with more liberal-minded patricians and municipal authorities. When the States eventually got round to debating the Remonstrantie, they could not resolve these contradictions either, and by resolution of 13 December 1619 they left the matter of the residency of Jews to the wisdom of the municipal authorities. By then, however, in a swift reversal of fortunes, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt had been beheaded, and Grotius was serving a life sentence in Loevestein Castle.

### The Article-by-Article Explanatory Notes

Assuming that Jews should be allowed into the country and permitted to practise their faith, there was still the matter of what rules should govern them. The Remonstrantie is based on the principle that Jews should be treated the same as Christians, so that they may experience Christian love. The only exception to this policy is in cases where it could harm 'the welfare of the Christian religion or of the state'. It is striking how Grotius situates the imperative of 'equal treatment' as an extension of the Christian commandment to love one's neighbour. Earlier in the text he distinguishes between the 'deeper love' between Christians and the 'neighbourly love' we owe our fellow man, after the example of the good Samaritan. The latter form of love is also the source of the hospitality which he previously cited as a reason for allowing Jews into the country and of the duty to accord them equal treatment. In this way we can trace the evolution of his thinking about natural law.

When Grotius writes about equal treatment, he is referring to Jews as a group and not as individuals. The political and social concept of a society of equal citizens with inalienable rights still lay in the distant future. Hobbes's *Leviathan*, the first work in which the state is derived from the individual, would not appear for nearly half a century after the Remonstrantie. At the start of the 17th century the conception of society was still very much rooted in the medieval notion of an assemblage of different groups and 'estates'. Relations between these groups were regulated by public law, while

the position of individuals was primarily determined by the group to which they belonged and their legal status within that group, in line with its own rules and customs.

These are the concepts that determine the form and content of the regulations proposed in part II of the Remonstrantie. They form the background for the compartmentalisation of society that is taken for granted: between Christian and Jew, between urban and rural. They are also the basis for two absolute prohibitions: Jews must not be allowed to live outside the towns and marriage between Jews and Christians is forbidden, on penalty of death. It should be noted that Jews are defined in terms of their religion. Only two provisions concern Jews on the basis of religion and origin: the obligation to register with the authorities within eight days of arriving in a town and the ban on holding public office. But because Jews are defined by their religion, the profession of faith is an essential part of public oversight and must be made in the presence of the municipal authorities. Opinions or statements incompatible with this profession of faith are subject to corporal or even capital punishment. This is also the reason that a Jew who has been excommunicated for 'bad conduct or wicked opinions' has the right to appeal the decision to the local authorities, since excommunication has direct consequences for his legal status.

Along with the profession of faith, Jews are required to swear an oath of loyalty to the Republic; being of a different faith made one's patriotism suspect. Therein lies a difference in the treatment of Jews and Christians. Another distinction can be observed in the relationship between the religions. Blasphemous remarks or profanation of the Christian faith in speech or in writing are prohibited; according to the explanatory note accompanying article 16, this proscription also extends to the possession, use or printing of the Talmud. Jews are permitted to interact freely with Christians, provided they do not attempt to convert them. Conversely, ministers are allowed to visit gatherings of Jews, after notifying the authorities, and offer them instruction; those present are not allowed to leave. A Christian who converts to Judaism will be banished, but a Jew who converts to Christianity should be allowed to

do so freely. A final key difference is the restriction on the number of Jewish families allowed to settle in a given town—200 (300 in Amsterdam), so as to prevent them from becoming too numerous.

Modern readers of the Remonstrantie are struck by the numerous provisions allowing Jews to do one thing or another. The implicit principle here is that everything which is not explicitly allowed is forbidden. This constitutes a fundamental difference from modern law, which is premised on the principle that everything which is not explicitly forbidden is allowed. The article-by-article explanatory notes are also striking. Roman law and the writers of classical antiquity serve as authoritative sources for Grotius, given that he had no direct example on which to model his work. The towns had no regulations on the matter, and when he turned his gaze elsewhere he could find only repressive examples. Catholic countries and Rome were often held up as examples of what not to do, although Grotius is selective on that front. The fact that Jews were allowed to reside in Catholic countries and Rome is cited as proof that, with a few legal provisions in place, the presence of Jews need not be a problem. But on the matter of whether Jews should be forced to pay a special tax in order to practise their religion freely, Grotius denounces a similar tax in Rome as tyranny and greed and compares it to the practices of the ancient emperors (article 6).

### What Happened Next

The Remonstrantie was never implemented, so we can only speculate as to whether it would have worked in practice. The States of Holland referred the question of regulation back to the municipal authorities with the sole restriction that Jews should not be forced to wear any distinguishing sign. In practice, though, few towns got around to taking regulatory measures. In 1632 Amsterdam tightened up its own rules by prohibiting Jews from engaging in occupations governed by guilds. But starting in 1672 the status of Jews in the towns was gradually liberalised, partially in recognition of the staunch support they had given to the Republic during that 'year of disasters', in contrast to the Roman Catholics, who, in various towns, had welcomed Louis XIV with open arms. Yet it was not until 1796

that Jews attained full equality in law with other citizens.

The Remonstrantie was not a central work in Grotius's career as a jurist. Even his biographer gives it no more than scant attention. It was a product of his day-to-day duties as pensionary. Nevertheless, the Remonstrantie is one of his few works which deals with the lives of ordinary citizens. Working from a number of basic assumptions he arrived at a set of regulations that were exceptional for their time, but as it turned out, the work was merely an academic exercise. The problems it addressed were not a major concern in contemporary political life. Jewish communities flourished in a number of towns and cities, especially Amsterdam, even in the absence of official regulations governing their lives. In the early 17th century, moreover, the debate about the place of Jewish communities was almost entirely eclipsed by the political debate surrounding the convening of a national synod, the dispute between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants and the debate about continuing the war against Spain.

### A Beacon at Sea

This brings me to my final question. Is the Remonstrantie more than a historical document, a phase in the development of Dutch society and a step in the evolution of Hugo Grotius's thinking?

The Remonstrantie is based on a different conception of society than ours: a Ständestaat, a society of groups, collectives or 'estates', in which the status, liberty and duties of individuals depended on their position within their own group and the position of that group in relation to others. This society was assailed on all sides by religious disputes, which served to undermine intra-group solidarity. Hence the concerns about religious diversity and irreligion which permeated society and indeed underpinned the Remonstrantie itself. It sounds odd to modern ears, and we are more likely to see it as an illustration of the dangers of the intermingling of church and state. But is building social cohesion on the basis of a shared Dutch identity so different from pursuing the same end with religion as the binding factor? Is the fear of foreigners who do not respect our values or of Muslims who threaten our Judaeo-Christian culture so very different from the fear of religious diversity

in the 17th century? And do we not continue to think in terms of groups when we talk about Moroccans, Turks, Muslims and ethnic minorities?

From within the social framework discussed above, the Remonstrantie attempted to find a rational solution to an age-old question: how can we, as members of different communities, live and work together in a single society? Over the centuries many solutions have been attempted: territorial separation, whether by street, neighbourhood, city or country (*cuius regio, eius religio*); cultural, religious or ethnic compartmentalisation, or apartheid. In Western Europe over the past half century we have tried to resolve the issue by eliminating it entirely, stressing instead individualism and equality. Against this backdrop, cohesive religious, cultural or ethnic communities are increasingly viewed with suspicion. With respect to the differences that remain, both toleration and tolerance are invoked as solutions. But as a rule, tolerance only extends to those differences that do not matter to us. Religious, cultural or ethical customs or views that strike us as objectionable or wrong must be altered swiftly by legislation to conform to majority opinion. But tolerance is only genuine if we are willing to put up with behaviours, opinions or customs that we regard as incorrect, wrong or objectionable. The Remonstrantie is Hugo Grotius's attempt to find an enduring answer to that conundrum. To do so, he ingeniously employed the convictions and arguments of his opponents.

Before consigning the Remonstrantie to history, therefore, we should ask ourselves whether the questions Grotius sought to answer are truly no longer relevant and whether the answers we have come up with are so much better. Because if not, it might be useful to draw attention to the Remonstrantie from time to time, as the present publication does. Not because it offers a more appealing solution, but because we need to realise that with all the debate about identity politics, all the indignation about what deviates from the norm or is culturally different, and all the arguments that religion has no place in public life, sooner or later we revert to the thinking that forms the foundation of the Remonstrantie and the questions that text attempts to address. In that sense the Remonstrantie is a warning to us to learn from the experience of

the past, or in the words of the Dutch proverb, it is a stranded ship that serves as a beacon to other vessels at sea. <>

[Gómez Pereira's Antoniana Margarita: A Work on Natural Philosophy, Medicine and Theology](#), 2 volumes edited by José Manuel García-Valverde and Peter Maxwell-Stuart [Heterodoxia Iberica, Brill, 9789004395039]

Nearly a century before Descartes, Gómez Pereira published the Antoniana Margarita with the purpose of demonstrating the thesis of animal automatism, among many other things. The author included in his book several proofs of animal insensitivity and an original model aimed at explaining animal behaviour in the grounds of a purely mechanical system. In this sense, Pereira's work represents a critical appraisal of the traditional scholastic theory of the animal mind, as well as one of the first efforts to develop this question in the field of empirical observation and physiological knowledge. It is precisely for this reason that Gómez Pereira must be recognized as one of the most valuable thinkers of the Spanish Renaissance. The editors, García Valverde and Maxwell-Stuart, offer the first critical edition of the Latin text, a careful translation and an extensive study that contextualizes its content in the philosophy of the sixteenth century.

Subjects: Ethics & Moral Philosophy, Philosophy, Literature, Arts & Science, Literature and Cultural Studies, Philosophy, Theology & Science, Jewish Studies

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Excerpt: The Castilian doctor Gómez Pereira, born in 1500, does not have much to thank the judgment of time for, because it has led him to a near total anonymity even though his work was at least mentioned by great figures of modern philosophy such as Bayle, Leibniz or Voltaire. Having been considered as a precursor of Cartesianism in the field of animal mechanism, he attracted the attention of those who wanted to attack Descartes by denying the originality of his philosophy in the closing stages of the seventeenth and during the eighteenth century. This same consideration motivated some revitalization of his reputation in his own country, where Gómez Pereira boosted some kind of artificial pride because Spain had among her philosophers a man who deserved at least a small part of the lights which always accompanied the name of Descartes. As a result of this attention paid to him in Spain, one of his works, the *Antoniana Margarita*, was reedited in the eighteenth century and later, in the late nineteenth century, his name was modestly remembered in the debate about whether or not one could postulate the existence of a real scientific tradition in this country. In this case some relevant historians such as Menéndez Pelayo, Nicolás Salmerón or José María Guardia used the work of Pereira as proof that such a tradition did indeed exist, or at least that it was a laudable exception in a desertlike landscape. But in spite of this occasional and circumstantial revival, the truth is that the name of Gómez Pereira is more or less absent from the textbooks of the history of thought, even those which focus upon the philosophy of his time. In fact, he is completely unknown to current historical research apart from a small number of works

developed in the Spanish academic field without any relevant international repercussions. (Even in works that deal specifically with the study of the history of Spanish philosophy, Gómez Pereira merits just a few pages which do not usually go beyond the locus communis of his influence on the animal automatism of Descartes).

And yet, the figure of Gómez Pereira and in particular his most emblematic work, the *Antoniana Margarita*, deserve much more attention than they have got so far. This present edition has been designed from the beginning with the intention of serving as the basis of a rigorous and systematic rediscovery of a doctor and Spanish philosopher who saw the deficiencies of the Aristotelian model of explanation of human being and was able to build an interesting anthropology on this critical view. But this is not the only value of Pereira's thought. To make it apparent to the modern reader, a new edition of the *Antoniana Margarita* with scientific philological criteria is needed. This is, in fact, the only basis upon which one can accomplish an accurate translation of the text and contextualise its complex content, bearing in mind that the *Antoniana* must be understood within the general background of the natural philosophy of the mid-sixteenth century. Even if this is evident to anyone who approaches the topics which are present in its pages, it has been usually neglected, since nearly all the efforts concentrated on Pereira's philosophy have been directed to judge its doctrine according to the repercussions that it may have had on subsequent thought.

Gómez Pereira was a multifaceted man, from what little we know about his biography. Much of the information comes from his own works, the *Antoniana Margarita* and the *Novae veraeque medicinae*. Along with the data contained in these texts, the investigation carried out by Narciso Alonso Cortés in the past century presents us with the image of a prestigious doctor who practised his profession mainly in his native town, Medina del Campo, which at that time enjoyed economical prosperity as a great centre of commerce in livestock, manufacturing and raw materials. His medical reputation may have gone beyond the limits of Medina del Campo since he was summoned by the court of Madrid to look after the

poor health of the Infante, the future Charles II, son of Philip II, at least as an adviser. The origin of his family, however, is uncertain. The history of the surname “Pereira” places his origin in Galicia or even Portugal. But, in any case, what is clear is that his family was in trade and had an economically favourable position. Because of this professional activity as well as other circumstances it has been suggested that the family of Gómez Pereira were converts. Through some legal documents found in Medina del Campo we know that Gómez Pereira himself took over the family business or at least a part of it, while exercising his own profession. Previously, the young Pereira had been sent to study Arts at the University of Salamanca probably when he was or 16 years old. Just at the moment he began to frequent the classrooms of these *Studia* a profound pedagogical renewal (which combined nominalistic logic and innovative teaching methods that promoted the active participation of students) was under way. Among the professors whose lectures he attended one must draw particular attention to Juan Martínez Guíjarro, later Cardinal Silicium, who came from the University of Paris and developed at the University of Salamanca new teaching methods in the field of logic and natural philosophy which he brought from France. Many years later, Gómez Pereira would dedicate the *Antoniana Margarita* to him as a sign of affection and admiration for the man who was in charge of the education of young Philip II and became Archbishop of Toledo.

The University of Salamanca furnished our man with the conceptual and theoretical education he later developed both as a doctor and as a man interested in natural philosophy in general. In company with other figures of his time in Europe, Gómez Pereira found large lacunae in scholarly explanations of nature and put the pursuit of truth before anything he owed to a particular School. The Aristotelian scheme seemed to him insufficient, so he did not hesitate to direct severe criticism at it for being contradictory or unclear in some essential aspects of the topics on which he wrote, especially those which had to do with both the explanation of life and the controversial issue of the nature and origin of the soul.

The *Antoniana Margarita* contains many topics which were common in the manuals of natural philosophy in the sixteenth century. When, at one point while Pereira is developing his argument, he boasts of having found a rational demonstration of the immortality of the soul, as incontrovertible as any mathematical deduction, his pen leaves clear proof that he shared with many of his contemporaries the same wish to cover himself in glory among mortals while announcing that this earthly existence is not the only one. Obviously, a kind of survival based on fame—this mark left on the memory of men—can be only a figurative or metaphorical version of the permanence of our identity beyond death. It reflects rather the result of our external activity within the limits of this life. But we are more than this activity; we are sentient and thinking beings whose existence postmortem brings us to the very deep considerations that inhabit the core of existential and philosophical reflection. The question is no longer about fame among mortals: now the aim is to look for reasons to subscribe or not to the belief that fame is finally the only thing that we can leave behind. From the point of view of Renaissance philosophy, this reflection, the reflection on the immortality of the soul, was what the cult of fame meant from a social and artistic point of view. Both, fame and the hope that we shall live after our own death, are complementary events which must be placed in the context of the Renaissance individualism. For this reason, we see so many men in this period sharing the same desire to preserve their names by giving a rational and convincing explanation of the immortality of the soul. Gómez Pereira was undoubtedly one of them.

Certainly, the centrality of the question of the immortality of the soul in the *Antoniana Margarita* has already been noted with great success by Teófilo González Vila, who has provided the most serious and comprehensive study of the work until now. However, he did not seem to realise that the work entered a debate on immortality that had been occurring especially, but not only in Italy, since the appearance of Pietro Pomponazzi's *De immortalitate animae* in 1516. Consequently, one of the tasks we shall undertake throughout this Introduction will be to demonstrate that Gómez Pereira was fully cognizant of the doctrinal

elements involved in this debate. In fact, he wanted to take part in it by introducing his very particular vision of the main issue: what is the relationship between the soul and the body? The *Antoniana Margarita* was written as an answer to this question. Gómez Pereira integrated many elements from different origins—Aristotelianism, Augustinian Platonism, Galenism, etc.—in order to emphasize the complete independence of the rational soul. Thus, without naming him, Gómez Pereira picks up the glove that, some decades earlier, Pomponazzi had thrown down to anyone who tried to prove the immortality of the soul exclusively in terms of natural philosophy. The Mantuan philosopher pointed out that, in order to achieve such a proof, it was not enough to say that the rational soul has no corporeal seat; it was necessary to demonstrate that it does not need the body at all in order to perform its activity: in scholastic terminology, one has to show that the soul is independent of the body both *ut subiectum* and *ut obiectum*. When Gómez Pereira formulates his theory of the complete indivisibility of the soul and the substantial identification of the soul and its faculties, and when he claims in a really original way that knowledge is but self-perception, he wants to show the complete ontological distinction that Pomponazzi requested to give the necessary rational support to the hope of immortality. Moreover, Pereira's denial of sensory perception in animals must be understood in the context of the controversy over the immortality of the rational soul, since one of the elements involved in it, in no marginal way, was the real distinction that could be established between humans and beasts: if finally it is accepted that the rational soul does not go beyond the limits of the definition of natural form and therefore owes its being to the same natural process of generation which leads to the living being, where and how is it possible to determine the difference between us and the rest of the animals?

### Structure and Contents of the *Antoniana Margarita*

Reading Pereira's book is certainly far from what we could consider a pleasant activity. One needs a generous effort of concentration to assimilate the sense of a complicated Latin that can sometimes exasperate whoever wants to get to the bottom of

its arguments, or who has the task of translating the text into a modern language for the benefit of a modern reader. Pereira is far, then, from giving satisfaction to those humanists who were his contemporaries, and whose stylistic taste he clearly rejected, as we can read in the Prologue of his last work, the *Novae veraeque medicinae*, published in 1558 probably posthumously. Moreover, it is understandable that whoever is preparing to read the *Antoniana Margarita* can be surprised by its organization and the general layout of its contents. It is composed in three parts without any internal division of chapters: the first part, which gives the title to the entire book, is the largest; the second is a commentary on *De anima* III, and the third is a treatise *De immortalitate animorum*. The discourse is arranged in a sequence of paragraphs whose content can be announced by marginal notes, present more in the first part than in the other two. The prose is usually very dense and full of digressions, many of which are so extensive that they seriously break the thread of the main reasoning. The impression of disorder and lack of a previous expository plan is certainly overwhelming, so that only the really interesting opening of the book, where Pereira introduces in *media re* the theme of animals' lack of sensory perception, can attract the reader.

Such a *modus operandi* which the Castilian doctor follows to display his thinking can be interpreted in several ways. It can be seen, maybe, as an effort to hide his arguments from the eyes of all those who want to get only a brief idea of it through the title of the different chapters. However, this supposed desire to conceal the doctrines which are developed in the *Antoniana* as a precautionary measure against the Inquisition should be ruled out or, at least, qualified in view of the extensive *Index seu tabula eorum quae in hoc opere continentur* that introduces the work, and offers a generous set of references which cover nearly all the author's ideas.

From another perspective, one can observe in Gómez Pereira a certain desire to focus the reader's attention on the free development of arguments that come out of his pen to the lively rhythm of his own thoughts. We are, then, in the presence of an author much more interested in

giving expression to the concatenation of ideas as they are present in his mind, than in expressing them in the traditional style with the usual divisions. Thus, the style of Pereira's philosophical discourse squares perfectly with the contents of his book and, ultimately, with the originality of the ideas he already announces when he clarifies the reason for the unusual title he has given to the book:

For several days I have been in two minds, and not a little hesitant, about how to provide a title for these reflections of mine, because I thought everyone would think my way of writing was unusual. If I were to call it a 'Paradox', even if it were not, I should think I had given my commentaries an arrogant title. If [I called it] anything else, I should think it was less fitting and less in accord with the work. So, in order to escape these uncertainties, I decided to make up a title for it from the names of my father and mother, and since, while they were alive, my father's name was Antonius and my mother's Margarita, I carried out my decision to call my commentaries Antoniana Margarita.

However, we should not extend Pereira's originality displayed in the expository structure of his book beyond the usual way texts of natural philosophy were edited at this time. In fact, one may say that such an intricate way of expressing philosophical doctrines was by no means peculiar to Pereira's prose. On the contrary, it was much more common than it seems. It is easy to find it in many other contemporary philosophers; we can see it, for example, in Girolamo Cardano, whose books were well known to Gómez Pereira, as demonstrated below, as well as in the dense texts of Cardano's opponent, Giulio Cesare Scaligero; even more dense was Agostino Nifo in many of his extensive writings; and the same can be said of Telesio, repetitious ad nauseam as he was, and of Campanella or Vanini, to give other examples. Probably the ultimate reason for this spread of pages and books must be found in the fact that the scholastic model of the quaestio was unable to channel all the accumulation of contents which came from both the renewed exegetical activity and the proliferation of doctrinal disputes.

In any case, the typical scheme of arguments and counter-arguments of the quaestio still prevails and

largely determines the development of the discourse in the Antoniana Margarita, where Gómez Pereira has also integrated a commentary on De anima III and an opusculum De immortalitate animorum. Nor was this last unusual. We can find this kind of colophon to a commentary on Aristotle's De anima when the author wanted to take part in the debate that Pomponazzi had previously initiated: one may cite here the Disputatio de intellectus humani immortalitate of Marcoantonio Genua or the De anima rationali peripatetica disceptatio of Francesco da Vimercate as good examples of this practice. Also, among the Spanish authors, Pedro Martínez de Brea published in 1575 a commentary on Aristotle's De anima which was prefaced with a Tractatus celeberrima controversia de animorum nostrorum immortalitate.

Of the three parts into which the work is divided, the first is the largest and most dense. The issues, however, are organized following a common pattern based upon a peculiar epistemology that emerges gradually and in whose shadow a wide range of topics grow, such as animals' lack of sensory perception, the denial of real difference between the concepts of essence and existence, the refutation of the Aristotelian theory of natural generation, or the non-existence of prime matter. In all these issues, as well as in many others, we can see Pereira's interest in giving an explanation of the way true knowledge can be attained, so that in these pages we find not only a theoretical epistemology, but also an epistemology which might be called practical, in the sense that Pereira is not only content to describe how we know, but also he wants to determine which objects can be accessible to human understanding given the fixed epistemological conditions. Hence, in Gómez Pereira's thought a logical and methodological aspect has been noted that puts his work in the line of the great epistemological developments of the seventeenth century.

It is now appropriate to summarize the contents of this first part of the book in order to follow at least schematically the discourse of the author. As already noted, the work opens with an extensive discussion devoted to demonstrating that animals

do not have the faculty of sensory perception. Gómez Pereira's argument is certainly easy to sum up: if animals had the ability to perceive sensorily objects around them, and were able to behave in one way or another because of this perception, then we should have to grant them not only sensory perception, but also the faculty of reasoning. So it would be necessary to conclude that they have an indivisible and immortal soul, as humans do.

We shall analyse later everything that is involved in this argument; now let us stay just with Pereira's principal point: animals' lack of sensory perception. At the beginning of the book Pereira himself recognizes that such a thesis may seem surprising, and this is because: "To such an extent has it been accepted by both the learned and the unlearned that brute beasts and human beings alike have been endowed with the faculty of sensory perception that there is no one who has any more doubt about this than about the general principle, The whole is greater than the part." The author was right to believe that to his contemporary reader, who had at his disposal the intellectual tools which were necessary to undertake the reading of a work of natural philosophy, a thesis that denies the existence of sensory perception in beasts might seem not only a striking novelty, but also something which contradicted common experience and the principles of Aristotelian philosophy. However, this thesis was not built on a kind of contextual vacuum. It constituted one of the most important branches of the debate on the immortality of the soul which was taking place just when Pereira was writing his book. This is because, leaving aside the Platonic conception that affirmed the immortality of the souls of both humans and animals, the question was brought to the realm of natural reason, then essentially Aristotelian. It was directly connected with a serious hermeneutical problem about which hundreds and hundreds of pages were being written by many authors contemporaneous with Gómez Pereira: is there in the psychology of Aristotle, as it was expressed especially in the *De anima*, any argument to support the immortality of the human soul? This question represents the key issue in a debate that was a burning issue just when Gómez Pereira was being educated at the University of Salamanca, and, even when the *Antoniana Margarita* was published, some decades

afterwards, was far from being smothered. Indeed, those who responded negatively to the question formulated earlier, apart from the different nuances that this response could have, indicated that the *De anima* did not give any grounds for some difference of genus between humans and animals, so that the human soul is necessarily included in the limits of the definition of a natural soul; this soul is located in the field of sublunary living beings, comes into existence with the compound that it shapes and ceases to exist with it. In contrast, those who answered affirmatively indicated that between humankind and beasts there is much more than a simple difference of species, and this differentiation is well represented in Aristotle precisely when he faced the study of the intellectual faculty.

In any case, both had to make great efforts to give an explanation, within the natural order, of the apparent similarities between humans and animals and of the no less obvious differences. In the context of these explanations there were countless points of view roughly subsumed under the general currents of Medieval and Renaissance Aristotelianism. In this way, some of the Aristotelians placed the truly distinctive element in the intellectual faculty, others on the contrary claimed that human sensory faculty is itself equipped with a distinctive character that allows it to receive the intellectual capacity from an external source, as a form superveniens upon the specific human form or as a higher potentiality which makes human form reach a higher condition. By contrast, those who saw no differences of genus between humans and animals had to explain why humankind manifests the use of reason in its theoretical dimension as well as in its practical and technical dimensions, whereas in animals one can detect only vague and questionable traces of rational behaviour. If we want to consider these traces as legitimate rational phenomena, should we then assume that between humans and beast there is only a unique rational faculty that, in any case, is able to reach different degrees of perfection?

Furthermore, in the afore mentioned debate the philosophers did not simply consider whether the final stage of the process of improvement which is life makes us, humans and animals, dissimilar only in

specie but not in genere. The question of the origin of this process was also taken into account. Aristotle, in the third chapter of Book II of *De generatione animalium*, asked how the different faculties of the soul appear during the process of generation, and whether these faculties come into existence simultaneously with the individual which is shaped, or are preexisting. The answer Aristotle gave to these questions was, let us say, devastatingly logical: the powers that depend on the body for their own activity come into being during the same process that gives rise to a new being. What happens, however, in the case of the intellectual faculty, whose activity gives us our own distinctive condition? Aristotle explicitly says that thought does not depend on the body, for “physical activity has nothing whatever to do with the activity of reason”; so it must belong to a different kind of soul, and if it does not need the body to exercise its own activity, neither does it depend on it in order to come into existence. We must therefore find another explanation, beyond the strictly biological one, in order to understand its true origin. So, once it is said that the other powers of the soul are rooted in the same biological process that gives rise to the living body, Aristotle affirms “it remains, then, that the intellect alone enters in, as an additional factor, from outside, and that it alone is divine.” If a sea of letters has been generated by the commentators of Aristotle’s words in that famous fifth chapter of *De Anima* III, the same might be said about the meaning of this *noûs thýrathen*. For the implications of the view that the activity that characterizes the human being has, according to Aristotle, a supernatural origin are enormous: all those who wanted to illustrate Aristotle’s thought, to comment on it and make it accessible to others, have always had the task of elucidating the mystery which is behind this bare assertion of the Master. One could write, of course, a whole history of philosophy from Aristotle himself to the early seventeenth century, at least, with those words as a point of reference.

Gómez Pereira is undoubtedly heir to all this controversy when he asserts that animals have no sensory perception. In his opinion, those who recognize that any animal perceives what seems to it desirable or harmful, and then acts accordingly initiating a movement in pursuit of it or escaping

from it, are not only obliged to grant them a sensory faculty with a discriminating power, but actually pure rationality, if those people follow the definition of reason given by St. Augustine. This, in effect, considered that the reason is simply the intellectual ability to distinguish and connect. Moreover, given that Aristotle also distinguished an intellectual faculty devoted to apprehending simple objects and another one which is able to deduce the complex from the simple (so that from the connection of terms one can build a proposition which is true or false), there is no doubt—Pereira says—that if we concede the first power to animals, we must also concede the second, for “so those who maintain that brute beasts recognise the presence or absence of an enemy or a friend are forced to acknowledge that they are forming mental propositions. If this is not so, let them explain how one recognises the existence of an enemy, and they will find no answer other than the formation of the foresaid mental propositions.”

Certainly, we can always turn to instinct in order to explain animal behaviour, but then we should first ask what exactly instinct is, because either this type of behaviour does not require prior knowledge, and then we should have to accept animals’ lack of sensory perception; or, if it is required, then we grant them the ability to have sensory perception and, finally, a cognitive process like ours, because otherwise—Pereira points out—how can we know how this process is?

But new consequences must be drawn from the possibility that the animals are able to know the world through sensory perception: nature would have been very cruel to them to make them suffer all they suffer, for example, at the hands of men. Furthermore, given the fact that it is well known that certain species of animals are able to pre-empt the arrival of cold winter and shelter or run away from it, we must grant them some faculty of prediction: so if they can predict the winter, they will also be able to have knowledge of death and, just like human beings, they will worry about the future of their souls. We might also grant them the knowledge of universal concepts: as Aristotle says, once the premises are known, it is necessary to deduce from them a conclusion, and if beasts know that this fire burns, and that this other also burns,

and they run away from whatever fire they are able to perceive, they must have completed the proposition “all fire burns.” So they also have an indivisible soul: this is because only with an indivisible soul can one achieve, for example, the knowledge of a congener or a baby as a whole; a divisible soul (*quanta*) will never reach this global knowledge, since the animal would know through a part of it a part of its object, and through another, another part, and so it would be unable to reach a perfect identification of whatever could be in front of it.

Faced with the prospect of such consequences, which *de facto* put beasts in the same category as human beings, Gómez Pereira tries out an alternative explanation of animal behaviour. This behaviour and the diversity of movements observed in animals maybe due to what Gómez Pereira called some *occultae qualitates* by which visual images (species) coming from outside, or certain affections that occur in those phantasmata which stay in the front of the brain (occiput) set the animal in motion directly activating its nervous system and muscles. In the case of human beings, who, like animals, are also exposed to these species and have inside their brains the same phantasmata, there is a real mental activity which, influenced by sensory perception, is able to generate our own movements through the knowledge of the object.

But what exactly is sensory perception? For this to occur two elements must be present. On one hand, there are species that come from objects, and we are able to have access to these through sense-organs. However, these species are not yet properly sensations; to achieve them it is also necessary what Gómez Pereira calls *animadversio*. He explains this very clearly:

Thirdly, consider carefully that it is not at all enough for a sensory organ to be shaped by what it is sensing for the process by which it is being constituted to be called ‘sensation’. Further thought is required, because sensation differs from the formation made by a seal, or a foot, or any other thing which imprints its own shape upon something else, in as much as the moment the shape has been impressed, the thing which has taken the shape is called after what has made the shape. This

does not happen at all to our sensory organs. Once they have been fashioned, in accordance with what is due to happen, by a visual image or something corresponding to a visual image, human beings should still not be called ‘sentient’ unless they turn the acuteness of their mind upon the object they want to recognise.

So from sensation configured in this way, the mind which pays attention to it builds, at a higher cognitive level, the *notio* of the object. Now, all this is a process in which only conceptually multiple instances can be identified; as Pereira emphasizes, the true subject of this process is a single unity, the entire soul, which first pays attention to the object and later constructs the notion of it. For the attention of the soul is nothing other than the soul itself, which voluntarily focuses on one object and not on a different one. In other words, its own attention is not really accidental, but what Pereira calls a mode of being, so that ultimately the act of knowing is not realiter anything other than the soul itself. And the same can be said about the internal experience that occurs through those phantasmata located in the brain: these, which are in no way part of the intellective soul (in fact, animals also possess them), are explained as certain spirits inserted in the brain, or as some accidentals that come to be in these spirits.

Another question Pereira tackles is whether or not the animals’ lack of the sensory perception he has described is consistent with Aristotle’s philosophy. His answer comes through a set of quotations in which he highlights Aristotle’s lack of definition in this respect: there are moments when he seems to attribute to animals sensory perception and even understanding, and others in which he seems to think otherwise. In any case, Pereira criticizes Aristotle for the fact that in his description of the cognitive process he turned to a group of differentiated faculties which are absolutely unnecessary. A good example of this is found in the affirmation that Aristotle makes in *De Anima* III of the existence of a common sense. For him the common sense is the faculty responsible for processing the so-called common sensibles, that is, those sensibles perceived accidentally by each sense, as for example motion, rest, etc. Here Pereira argues that, if it is stated that the common sense is an organic faculty, so that it intuitively perceives

what has been previously perceived by the different senses, it would make the latter unnecessary and we should be obliged to conclude that nature, against its own principles, has created many organs to do the same as it could with fewer. Moreover, it is much easier to understand that it is the soul itself, as an indivisible unity, which is responsible for perceiving, judging and differentiating the sensibles: after all, the soul is present in all parts of the body and is equally affected by all the sense organs.

In conclusion, all these questions entail considering that, ultimately, there is no real difference between the sensory and intellectual faculties. Neither must they be understood as two different accidents of one unique soul, for such a plurality of accidents would make impossible to explain how, if sense has its own objects and intellect others, all those different objects are able to converge on a single object: it would then be necessary to appeal for a third power which would analyse both objects and, finally, link them. In addition—Pereira points out—the unity of the soul would be broken, because it would be divisible according to the various objects it can perceive, and in this case one could not explain how it is possible that, since those objects are different and perceived only by different cognitive faculties, knowledge is always a simultaneous and indivisible achievement. Obviously, this is only because the subject that reaches this knowledge is necessarily one and indivisible.

Similarly, on the basis of the unity and indivisibility of the soul, Pereira rejects the existence of intelligible species. These species may not be extracted from phantasmata because these have a corporeal constitution, while intelligible species are by definition immaterial, and our intellect is unable to generate a spiritual substance from other material: “The intellect will not bestow an intelligible substance on a mental image, because God alone can create such a thing, and even if the intellect itself were a participant in this faculty, it could in no way create any spiritual substance in the mental image, because its substance is physical.” For Pereira, then, the intellectual object is not an accidental different from the soul itself, so it is not necessary to postulate the existence of these

intelligible species which involve some kind of transition between the subject and the object.

In conclusion, all cognitive activity, whether sensory or intelligible, depends on the soul and identifies with it. Immediately, a new question emerges and urges Gómez Pereira to give a convincing response: what is then the difference between sensory perception and understanding? As far as he is concerned, one must not speak of diverse instances of knowledge but rather of a unique process that will progressively reach various stages of refinement. Basing himself on the Preface of Aristotle’s *Physics*, Pereira examines these various stages through which the universal passes: it is not only the term which designates, but also the mental concept designated. This concept can be confused or distinct: the confused concept is one which covers a complete genus without any distinction of the species contained therein, while the distinct concept is one which defines the designated object with all the categories that are integrated into it. Therefore, there are two forms of knowledge: one of them is less subtle because it rests upon the mere assertion of the existence of an object, and the other is subtler since it clearly distinguishes all the elements that are present in it. Because of the nature of our own cognitive abilities, we find it is always easier to have access to the first type of universal cognition and only through effort and habit shall we be able to achieve a greater determination in our own understanding.

How can the soul accomplish this task? Pereira illustrates his response with an example of the abstract process that leads the mind to knowledge of the substance:

Therefore, if I want to understand the substance of a square white wall, I turn my mind away from thinking about whiteness, and quantity, and shape, and location, and when [it was built], and all the other individual circumstances connected with the wall, every one of which I had recognised beforehand, either by means of my external senses, or conceived earlier abstractly in my imagination, and I draw forth cognition of something I have never perceived sensorily, namely, the subject of these things.



Throughout this process, during which the mind goes from notion to notion, moving forward from what is immediately perceptible to that which we can grasp only mentally, it is not necessary to turn to some kind of generation of intelligible species: as seen in the quoted text, the soul progresses from the notion of accidents (perceptible) to the notion of substance (imperceptible). This process, which is done spontaneously by our soul, is explained as a quality that belongs to it by nature and allows us to extract species from genera, just as we are capable of extracting the notion of substance from the notion of accident. But the soul does all this by itself and in itself, because, as Pereira repeatedly emphasizes, the intellect, the act of thinking, and the object thought are the same, that is, the unique and indivisible soul.

On this basis, the Nominalist position that can be found in Gómez Pereira is built. The question whether universals truly exist is elucidated by explaining the universal concept as a connotative term which exists only in the sentences formed by our mind. The soul is able to understand that the entities which make up a genus and a species have similar characteristics that link them, and thus it is able to regard them all as a unity and this unity as a universal concept. From this explanation, Pereira criticizes certain metaphysical concepts that, in his opinion, lack real substance. Such is the case, for example, of the usual difference between essence and existence. As opposed to the position of St. Thomas, he affirms that these two concepts are not different realiter but only conceptually, and this because “*aut essentia erit ens, et sic ens et essentia non distinguuntur, quod probare nisi sumus. Aut non erit ens, et sic non ens intrasset entis compositionem, quod implicat.*”

Neither Gómez Pereira accepts the concept of prime matter. The procedure which Aristotle applied to form this concept was none other—Pereira says—than analogy, since prime matter is not accessible to the senses. Thus, prime matter is something that remains as an immutable subject in between the transition from one form to another one; that is: if a new form must be induced during the generation process, then the dispositions required for the formation of the new entity must remain; those dispositions, inaccessible to sensory

perception, are prime matter, which lacks any positive nature. Hence Aristotle pointed out in *Metaphysics VII* that it is not a quid or a quantum, or any other genre of predicates. Against this theory, the author of the *Antoniana Margarita* argues that in the process of natural generation it is observed that not only the material part of the compound disappears, but also the formal one, so if the sentence *ex nihilo nihil fieri* is adopted by the Aristotelians for affirming the necessary permanence of matter, the same should be said with respect to the form, since neither the form nor matter can turn into nothing or be generated from nothing, which means that also the form would exist in a temporal continuum. In Pereira's opinion, this problem is easily solved if we consider that the elements are the basic materials of nature. They can perfectly play the role of matter, and there is no problem in the fact that the elements are also subject to mutation and even annihilation, because, ultimately, they are under the influence of qualities which are contrary to their consistency: so when these qualities have a strong presence in them, this necessarily involves their destruction, just as when the primal qualities appear again, it involves the generation of the same elements. Therefore, it is not necessary to postulate a deeper substrate. And if someone objected that in nature it is observable that a new being is generated only when another rots down, this must be referred not to the permanence of an immutable substrate, but simply to the design of nature, which by doing so prevents an overabundance of individuals and pre-serves the balance between species.

This theme of generation gives rise to a comprehensive excursus in which Gómez Pereira rejects Aristotle's theory of natural generation as it is set out in *De generatione animalium III*, where the process of a new being's generation is explained by means of the presence of a generative spirit included in the semen of the male. To Pereira, this doctrine is unclear and has some contradictory aspects. It is unclear because the text of Aristotle is in this point very confusing and contradictory: he seems to hold that a thing which has a lower nature, that is, the semen (born from the putrefaction of food, as Aristotle himself had pointed out), is able to generate something of a higher nature such as the vegetative soul, or even the sensitive and the

intellective soul. To solve this contradiction, Pereira claims that the true and ultimate causa generationis must be a celestial power which is spread throughout all the sublunary world.

It is this power which acts when it has at its disposal the material instruments appropriate to do so. This theory perfectly explains the fact that there are animals which are born from rotting matter, and not from the male semen. In all the cases, we must understand the same cause, that is, heaven or, as St. Augustine said, God Himself.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, semen has not a true power of generation, but rather plays an instrumental role in the advent of a new life: it prepares all the materials needed for that.

Moreover, not all the forms imbued in the natural process have the same characteristics. The rational soul has a peculiar nature that allows it to exist independently from the body. The other forms require the entire body as a necessary and indispensable tool for exercising their operations, while for the rational soul the body is only a medium. Here Pereira outlines the relationship between the soul and the body (later he will develop his full theory about this topic). For now, he argues that the body is simply the window through which the soul is affected either by visual images (species) or by the called phantasmata. Such an effect is the real cause of knowledge, so knowledge cannot be differentiated from the soul as if it were an accident of it: knowledge, the process by which knowledge is obtained and the soul itself, are always the same thing.

From this latter issue the author formulates a more detailed explanation of the nature of the intellect based on a commentary on chapters 4 and 5 of Aristotle's *De anima* III. With this question, the *Antoniana* passes from its first part to the second, whose title is precisely *Paraphrasis in tertium librum De anima*. To begin with, at the very end of the first part, Pereira dismisses as absurd the position of the Averroists and argues that both the passive and active intellect are simply the soul itself understood in two different ways: as a passive intellect, in the sense that the soul fails to understand anything if it has not been previously affected by the senses; and as an active intellect, because it possesses the power to evade the senses

while paying attention to something else: this active and voluntary attention that the soul is able to direct at certain objects from those received through the senses is called by Aristotle the active intellect.

The second part of the *Antoniana Margarita* is then organized in the manner of a commentary on the third book of Aristotle's *De anima*. Of the three parts of the book this is the least extensive and barely contains novelties in comparison with the great discursive lines of the preceding part. Pereira repeats here that the intellect and the object thought are not different things in the soul: they are defined as *animae modus*; so one can speak of a passive side of the soul, which can be affected by external objects through sensory perception; and of an active side, which can actively direct its attention to those things in which it is interested. Moreover, in this *modus* of an active intellect the soul is separable from the body and therefore immortal. The explanation of this latter comes through a simile: a man remains the same whether he is sitting or standing; and if this man is first sitting and then stands, he does not lose his identity; he loses the position that he previously had; likewise, the soul after death loses the possibility of being affected by the senses: therefore, after death, it cannot be called passive intellect, although this does not mean it cannot continue to exist; the soul preserves its being, but in this case under the mode of the active intellect. Pereira thinks that this is the interpretation that best fits to Aristotle: "From this opinion, one not only draws [the conclusion] that Aristotle thought the soul continues after a person's death, but also that it will have an active understanding after [death] as well, since he attests, in the words I quoted, that the 'active intellect' will continue, and if this did not have this active understanding, it could not be given the name it has."

Moreover, Pereira goes into detail about some issues that, somehow, he had already discussed earlier. He turns to the issue of animal lack of sensory perception, in this case to indicate that the so called *appetitus prosecutivus* and the *appetitus fugitivus* which are observable in animals do not have to mean that they feel and know the objects that motivate such behaviour: in fact, these same appetites can also be observed in plants and even

in inanimate beings, and nobody is in favour of supposing that they have knowledge of things which surround them.

The third and final part of the Antoniana contains a mini treatise *De immortalitate animae* which represents not an appendage of the work, but its true culmination, since Pereira now collects and unifies everything previously stated about the immortality of the soul.

The beginning of this part is in itself enormously enlightening. He claims to have achieved an accurate demonstration of the immortality of the soul with reasons as persuasive as those used by mathematicians in their arguments:

Furthermore, I should have thought the fact that our soul is everlasting can be demonstrated by arguments as strong in the field of natural philosophy as those which are persuasive in mathematics in the case of geometry. I found out that these [arguments] had not been discovered right up to the present day, just as squaring a circle [was not discovered] until Aristotle's time, and I have read, (unless I am mistaken), all the extant commentaries on the subject, or the most part of them, and have found that all [their arguments] can very easily be demolished.

We must note two things as a result of this statement of intent. The first is that the author expressly decides to carry the question of immortality into the realm of natural reason, and to leave faith outside this demonstration. Before this, it is difficult not to suspect that Gómez Pereira was aware of the controversy generated by Pietro Pomponazzi when his work *De immortalitate animae* was published in 1516. We must remember that in this book it is stated that the field of natural reason is not only alien to the discourse of the immortality of the soul, but really hostile, and that therefore this issue should be left exclusively in the field of faith and theology, which have their own methods of demonstration.

The other thing previously referred to is the fact that Gómez Pereira claims to have discovered a piece of evidence that had not yet been found by anyone else. Leaving aside the question of his true originality, it is obvious he was aware that the issue was controversial: many others had already tried

to find such a demonstration and, in his opinion, all of them had failed in their attempt. Among the previous attempts to demonstrate the immortality of the soul to which Pereira refers here, we can find the reasons given by Plato, St. Augustine and Averroes; however, the arguments which were formulated by his contemporaries are completely absent. This might suggest that Pereira was not informed of the debate over immortality which was occurring especially at the universities of northern Italy during those years. Now, it was far from being unusual that those who participated in the discussions voluntarily passed over in silence the most recent names in order to refer only to those great figures of ancient and medieval philosophy that gave prestige to their own achievements. In this procedure Gómez Pereira was probably less original than we might think, and certainly the fact that he did not cite other philosophers who were closer to him in time does not mean in any way that he did not know them, or did not use them silently, as was the case with the Lombard humanist Girolamo Cardano, of whom we shall talk later.

The persuasive argument of which Gómez Pereira is so proud is based on what has been developed in the *Antoniana Margarita* so far. Hence, he considered it appropriate to go over the most important elements of his own doctrine as a kind of preparatory summary. Thus, he claims again the non-existence of intelligible species, explains again the universal concepts as ideas generated by the soul, emphasizes the idea that the soul spontaneously consents to the truth of something known so that this agreement is a *modus habendi* which belongs to the soul by nature, and reprises the idea that if beasts had sensory perception their souls would be indivisible and immortal. At this moment new elements are included to develop this last claim, as for example the corporeal nature of the animal soul. Here Pereira builds several proofs; among them, the experience that the parts of certain animals, when cut in pieces, continue to live independently: this is possible—Pereira argues—only if the soul of these bodies is divisible, and only what is corporeal can be divisible.

However, what is the deduction which leads from the indivisibility of the soul to the statement of its immortality? Gómez Pereira's answer to this

question is based on something that Aristotle says in *De generatione animalium* II:

Clearly, those principles whose activity is physical cannot be present without a physical body—there can, for example, be no walking without feet; and this also rules out the possibility of their entering from outside, since it is impossible either that they enter by themselves, because they are inseparable (from a physical body), or that they enter by transmission in some body, because the semen is a residue of the nourishment that is undergoing change. It remains, then, that Reason alone enters in, as an additional factor, from outside, and that it alone is divine, because physical activity has nothing whatever to do with the activity of Reason.

From here one may deduce without difficulty that whatever does not need the body in order to act is able to abandon it and live by itself: the indivisibility of the soul, which is the very condition of the possibility of knowledge, as shown above, involves the senses' being not the instruments of its operations, but mere intermediaries by means of which the soul, as a whole, is affected; then, knowledge is but pure awareness acquired by the soul itself from being affected thus; that acquired consciousness is always an immanent operation of the soul; it is reached by it without the active or passive participation of any instrument external to the soul itself. For this reason, one can say it is separable, since its essential operations have no corporeal sustenance. Sensation as well as intellection are therefore activities inherent in the soul: it becomes aware of itself through these operations whose temporal origin is in the effect caused by sensitive species or the phantasmata.

To illustrate this Gómez Pereira resorts to a beautiful simile. The soul is like a sleeping man who stays in a prison that, instead of walls, has a net behind which there are windows; this man can get out of his slumber only if the net touches some part of him or when the image of an object comes to him through those windows: "Then, you see, having been awakened and aroused, (i) he intuitively feels the blows of the net, or (ii) he sees colours or lights through one of the panes of glass, or [senses] tastes through another, or smells or sounds through the other two, or (iii) he recognises one of the said

objects in an abstract fashion, after a small part [of him] has been struck by the little images." Pereira makes use of this concept of the body *ut animae carcer* to insist that it is not an instrument, but simply the way through which the soul is affected. Its role in the process of knowledge is in fact merely passive; only the soul puts the necessary activity in this process, and this process is not transitive but completely immanent.

The substance and essence of the soul are always its own activity. Now, if this is so, the question is why the soul is not continually thinking. Gómez Pereira's answer is that attention is what determines both the perception of objects which can be perceived sensorily and the self-perception of the soul; the latter as well as the former depends on the will of the soul: therefore it is not continuous. If it were so, we could not perceive anything else. Moreover, the necessary condition for self-perception is the arousal that the soul experiences from external objects: only after this excitement does the soul become aware of itself, that is, of its own existence; hence, the final conclusion of Pereira is: "and a further [conclusion] will follow from it, too. If this [notion] is going to precede [cognition], it will be able to serve no useful purpose other than recognition that there is a particular antecedent from which the soul may later elicit a consequence: namely, that it is self-aware. [The reasoning] will go as follows. 'I know that I know something: whatever knows, exists: therefore, I exist'."

Therefore, once the soul has known its own affectedness, it is able to reflect on itself and discover itself as existing. Certainly, although we are dealing with a single process, these two moments must be distinguished, because in the first act the mode of being of the affected soul is known, whereas only in the second the knowledge of the soul as an entity independent of all bodily affection, with autonomous existence, is reached. Now, the immediacy with which the soul reaches the consciousness of this existence shows that this is not a deductive development, but a pure intuitive act that has a previous formal factor: the awareness of the affection is, in effect, "*quodam antecedens cognitum*" necessary to verify that the soul "*seipsam noscit*".

Even if the expression *nosco me aliquid noscere, et quicquid noscit est, ergo ego sum* is not the final sentence of the Antoniana Margarita, since Gómez Pereira will formulate new arguments *pro immortalitate*, the truth is that, only with it, the culmination of all the discourse that the author has directed to prove the immortality of the soul is achieved. This discourse represents the central nerve of the work to which the other contents, and especially the doctrine of animal insensitivity, are to be considered as derivations. Many scholars have argued that animal automatism represents the genuine motif of the Antoniana, probably because of its originality, but one cannot confuse originality with logical priority.

González Vila was the one who first held that the doctrine of animal automatism was in reality the corollary of an anthropology that was developed, not in a linear way, along the numerous pages of the work. It was, therefore, his merit to underline that, underneath the amalgam of contents and the diffuse and often disordered prose of the author of the Antoniana, a well-structured reasoning (he speaks of a true system) was present. This system rested on a complex epistemology and had three main elements: a) The nature of the act of knowledge requires an indivisible principle, so that only the soul, the unique indivisible principle in humans, knows; the body does not participate in sensory knowledge, not even as a tool; therefore, the soul, in its main functions (which are cognitive) enjoys complete independence and full operational self-sufficiency regardless of the body. b) This operational independence logically founds the ontological independence that allows the survival of the separated soul. Although Pereira does not deny the “corporeal” conditioning factors to which knowledge is subject, as evidenced by experience, he recognizes that the soul is weighed down by the body in its cognitive operations, so the body restricts the original and absolute cognitive spontaneity of the soul. c) Once the operating-ontological independence of the soul is asserted, and consequently the possibility of its separate subsistence, the perpetuity of this subsistence does not involve any difficulty, since in the soul, which is indivisible, there is no intrinsic principle of corruption. For González Vila, then, the final treatise *De immortalitate animorum* is not an

appendix of the work, but what gives it its real meaning.

In our opinion, although we consider that Vila's thesis is essentially correct, we are not so optimistic as to consider that the entire writing of Pereira relies on well-established planning. Unfortunately, we do not know if the work as it has come to us was written for a definite period of time or if it had a long gestation process behind it. From Gómez Pereira we only have the Antoniana, published in 1554, and the *Novae veraeque medicinae* of 1558, which shows that the publication of his writings was concentrated in a few years, probably at the end of his life. It does not take much work, therefore, to assume that these two books had many years of reflection, readings and experimentation probably determined by his profession as a doctor. In this sense, we must not rule out the possibility that in the Antoniana there maybe different layers that correspond to a considerably large period of time, perhaps ten years or more. There is, however, a clue, to which we shall refer later, that points out that the work, or at least a substantial part of it, must have been written seven or eight years before its publication. We refer to Gómez Pereira's use of the *De animorum immortalitate* by the Lombard philosopher Girolamo Cardano. The Antoniana contains several arguments against the immortality of the soul that are taken almost word for word from this work, which undoubtedly implies that Pereira had to read it carefully. This work was published in Lion in 1545, so that only after this date (more likely, some time later) it could be accessible to a Spanish physician who probably paid attention to the writings of other physicians, such as Cardano, which had enjoyed a certain prestige in Italy and abroad, and especially to one that announced in its title a subject that was so attractive to him. In any case, the texts extracted from the work of Cardano are concentrated in the treatise on the immortality of the soul with which the Antoniana closes, so it is possible that the previous parts could have been written before 1545, or at least that its content could already have been well fixed in Pereira's mind for some time.

The long digressions with which the work is replete, especially in its first part, and the succession of

questions addressed without a clear discursive thread, the many repetitions etc., can be interpreted in more than one way. Some people have simply censored Pereira's disorder and others have spoken of an author who writes to the rhythm he thinks in order to engage the reader in the true gestation of his doctrine. We have suggested the possibility that the writing of the work does not correspond with a definite period of time: its author could combine periods of effervescent production with others in which the writing was almost abandoned. One could also raise the question whether Pereira gave it a final review before sending it to print or, on the contrary, did so as soon as he finished writing his last pages. We have previously quoted the passage from the Prologue in which Gómez Pereira explains the reason for the title of the work. Here the author recognises that his manner of writing may be strange to the reader, and that even a title that reflects the true nature of the book, *Paradoxa*, could be interpreted as a sign of arrogance; for this reason, he decided to choose the title of *Antoniana Margarita* in honour of his parents. Pereira himself was then aware and proud of having created a work distinct from the ordinary canons. (We have seen, however, that his style was not exceptional among the authors of his time). This difference covered both the subject matter and the way it was presented. Therefore, we believe that the thematic development of the *Antoniana* should not be disconnected from the structure with which the author could preconceive his writing. Thus, to speak of a latent system in the *Antoniana*, as González Vila did, does not seem faithfully to reflect the mentality of its author, precisely because this would imply that between the conception of the writing and its execution there was a well-defined plan. But this plan does not seem to fit well with what is said in the Prologue: Pereira points out that, in essence, his writing is a set of paradoxes, that is, of experiences and opinions contrary to what seemed habitual, and for that reason his reading could be perceived as strange or even scandalous.

It is perhaps more opportune to consider that, in the development of the work and in the structuring of its contents, the purpose of Gómez Pereira was to combine the exposition of the aforementioned paradoxes as an inalienable premise for the exposition of what might be called his "positive

doctrine". So we may see from the very beginning. The discourse that tries to demonstrate animals' lack of sensory perception by the procedure of *reductio ad absurdum* of the opposite opinion leads to the exposition of the doctrine of the animal automatism. Later, the set of paradoxes devoted to deny the existence of the common sense, intelligible species, the objective reality of universals etc., needs to be understood as evidences which support the main theory of the indivisible unity of the soul and its radical distinction from the body. The same must be said of his conception of the natural generation in which it is denied that the soul is contained in the seed. Everything is aimed at underlining a soul-body dualism that is the true backbone of the book, and this is the only acceptable way for Pereira to demonstrate the immortality of the soul.

### The Fortunes of the *Antoniana Margarita*

The scant attention paid to *Antoniana Margarita* by Spanish researchers (outside Spain this attention has been non-existent among modern scholars) has been focused, with some noticeable exceptions, on the impact of the work especially in post-sixteenth century philosophy, from the moment its fortune was linked to the Cartesian philosophy as a possible precedent of the animal mechanism championed by the French philosopher. This perspective, certainly interesting in itself, should not override a more detailed study of the immediate context in which Gómez Pereira wrote his work. In this Introduction we have made some contributions to this study, that must be completed by many other studies which go beyond a simple presentation of the work.

However, we believe that it could be appropriate to devote at least schematically some lines to the impact of Gómez Pereira's work. In some studies on this subject this issue has been organized into three periods. In this case, we shall follow the criterion of Teófilo González Vila in his *Noticia bibliográfica sobre Gómez Pereira*, where he refers a first period from Pereira himself to Pierre Bayle, a second period from Bayle to Menéndez Pelayo, and a third from Menéndez Pelayo onwards.

Gómez Pereira himself introduced in an early reprint of his work the first or at least one of the first reactions to his book. In this case, we could talk

of a reaction caused voluntarily by him, because Pereira himself asked his old teacher Miguel de Palacios, Professor of Theology at the University of Salamanca, for a critical survey of his *Antoniana*. The *Obiectiones* which Palacios wrote to please his pupil were included in the *Antoniana Margarita* and accompanied by an *Apologia* where Pereira summarized and affirmed all the theses previously established: he also took this opportunity to clarify some points of his own thought. Palacios's attitude was, as rightly pointed out by González Vila, that of a professor who condescendingly reads the work of a good student, not that of a genuine critic. In any case, we may say that these *Obiectiones* fail to identify the central message of the *Antoniana*, either because the author did not read the work with the necessary concentration—this sin has been repeated over and over again unfortunately for the correct understanding of Pereira's text—or because he did read it but did not understand his student's thought in all its depth. Palacios's work analyses some questions which, even if they do not lack some interest, do not address the core of the work, that is, that Pereira's intention to dissociate completely the soul and the body in order to formulate on this basis a demonstrative proof of the immortality of the former. In fact, although in the order of the text the thesis of animals' lack of sensory perception is the first issue addressed, this was only one of the consequences drawn from the claimed independence and unity of the human soul. However, Palacios stays only in these derived issues and is unable to build a systematic criticism of Pereira's arguments.

Another reaction to the *Antoniana*, in this case notably adverse, was the *Ende cálogo contra-Antoniana Margarita*, written in Castilian by Francisco Sosa, a colleague of Pereira who lived in the same city and probably met him. This work is far from being useful to know how the *Antoniana* was received in educated circles, because it is a satiric fable in which the animals bring a suit before Jupiter, as a judge, against Pereira because he has deprived them of genuine

sensory perception and self-movement. González Vila is right to emphasize that the work, beyond its questionable literary quality and lack of philosophical depth, serves only to let us know that

the *Antoniana* had some popular repercussion; so if Pereira's intention was to write his work in Latin to remove it from the view of unlearned people, he was immediately thwarted, since that *Endecálogo* appeared just a year after the publication of his work.

These two books show that the immediate reception of Pereira's work was significantly adverse and probably disappointing for the author, who could feel misunderstood and unjustly attacked. In any case, the echo of his work vanished soon, as evidenced by the fact that during the next century the references to the *Antoniana* and to Gómez Pereira himself are very few. His book slept a long dream that produced merely some critical and superficial allusions to the doctrine of animal mechanism.

The second period dates from the moment when Gómez Pereira and the *Antoniana Margarita* become the object of the attention of some who see in them a precedent of the philosophy of Descartes. The great occasion for this ephemeral change in a clear process of decadence and obscurity arose from the French philosopher Pierre Bayle, although one must not forget that, before him, Vossius had already spoken of Pereira as a precursor of animal mechanism.

But in spite of this antecedent, it is true that, when Bayle included Pereira in his *Dictionnaire*, he gave rise to a debate about the true originality of Descartes in the aforementioned thesis before its unquestionable precedent contained in the *Antoniana Margarita*. Certainly, Bayle did not discuss Pereira's merit as the true author of a primitive version of animal mechanism, but he thought that the real originality must still be attributed to Descartes, because his mechanism derives from the firm principles of its philosophy, while Pereira had only an ingenious isolated occurrence without the support of a true system of principles such as that of Descartes.

From this moment on, the figure of Gómez Pereira carries relevance as never before. Even if Bayle tries to show the unmethodical and unsubstantial way in which the doctor of Medina del Campo expressed his doctrine of animals' lack of sensory perception, the fact is that it did not take the

opponents of Descartes long to spread the suspicion that he had plagiarised some of the contents of the *Antoniana Margarita*. This accusation was known to the extent that Adrien Baillet, the great biographer of the French philosopher, was obliged to claim that the doctrine of animal mechanism had already been conceived by the young Descartes before he had the opportunity to know of the existence of Pereira's book. However, it has been maintained that neither the chronological observations of Baillet nor the denial expressed by Descartes himself of having read Pereira's work completely rules out the possibility that he could have read Pereira's book in the Netherlands where it was probably more accessible than in France.<sup>158</sup> Those chronological reasons of Baillet were not accepted by many others, such as Huet, who openly stated that Pereira had clearly anticipated Descartes in the theory of animal automatism.

Other references to the work of Gómez Pereira can be found during the transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, for example, in the Portuguese Jewish physician Isaac Cardoso, who edited his *Philosophia libera* in 1673: here Pereira is placed on the same level as Vallés and Gassendi as a modern atomist who rejected the Aristotelian concept of prime matter. Even in Leibniz himself we can find traces of Pereira: in two letters dated on 1711 and 1713 he says he was looking for a copy of the *Antoniana*, and having found it he declares that the thought of Descartes is not too different from that of Pereira, although he believes that the French philosopher had not read his work.

The question of Descartes' true originality and his possible debt to Gómez Pereira will be found again among the Enlightenment writers, as we can see in the Dictionaries of Calmeto, Moreri, Brucker, etc. In the *Encyclopedia* of Diderot and D'Alembert too, particularly in the article devoted to the soul of beasts, we may read that Descartes was the first who dared to treat animals as mere machines, even if Gómez Pereira had said something similar before him, but he arrived at this concept—they say—by pure chance. The Enlightenment authors echoed the opinion of Bayle in pointing out that Pereira did not draw his doctrine from any principle, and therefore his name has scant

relevance, because he suffered the saddest thing that can happen to an innovator, "il ne fit point de Secte."

One unexpected effect of the presence of Gómez Pereira in the French erudite elite, even if in a pale way, was the recovery of his work during the eighteenth century. But, unfortunately for our author again, this recovery did not involve any serious and detailed study of his thought, as evidenced by González Vila. So the unique perspective adopted to comment on and analyse the contents of the *Antoniana Margarita* is strongly determined by the notion of their possible influence on Descartes; moreover, the Spanish writers generally follow the sentence of Bayle denying such an influence. Perhaps one of the most notable exceptions is the Jesuit Juan de Ulloa, who after refuting mechanism and atomism, says that, in spite of everything, he is proud of the fact that some of his countrymen, such as Pereira and Vallés, have guided such powerful minds as that of Descartes.

This growing interest in animal mechanism and specifically in the *Antoniana Margarita* was the main cause of the second and final edition of the book in 1749, whose preface and permission generously praised Gómez Pereira, and lamented the fact that such an innovator and such an important author had fallen into total oblivion among the philosophers of his own land. Unfortunately, this new edition did not remedy the prevailing ignorance about him, as one can realize by reading the different works of natural philosophy and the dictionaries produced in Spain at that time, where there are few references to our doctor and they seem to come from indirect sources, not from a direct reading of the text.

This same poverty of references and knowledge of Gómez Pereira's philosophy was also present during the nineteenth century, at least until the moment when, in the context of a debate on Spanish science which was stimulated by Menéndez Pelayo and J.M. Guardia, among others, the figure of Gómez Pereira was recovered as an illustrious example of a true scientific tradition, or on the contrary as an oasis in the most desolate desert.

In the case of Menéndez Pelayo, whose interest in the *Antoniana* comes from his youth, Gómez Pereira



is considered as an outstanding physician, a great scholar and a true pioneer of Cartesianism not only from the point of view of animal mechanism, but also as the first author of the famous cogito ergo sum. Later the Cantabrian scholar dedicated a detailed monographic study to the Antoniana, which he first published independently in 1878 and later as an appendix to his famous work *La ciencia española*. Against the interpretative tradition that was rooted in Pierre Bayle's opinion with respect to the thought of Pereira, Menéndez Pelayo argues that in the Antoniana there is a true philosophical system based on well-established principles. The novelties of this system are for him very important: to remove, for example, intelligible species establishing a complete identity between intellect, intellection and its object was simply to advance the ways by which the Scottish empiricism would transit a century later. The image of Pereira drawn by Menéndez Pelayo was that of a great thinker (really comparable to Vives), a sincere Catholic who was able to reconcile independence with orthodoxy, and someone who represented the living proof of the freedom of Spanish scientists under the Inquisition.

Another relevant vision of the Castilian doctor, contemporary with that of Menéndez Pelayo, can be found in the doctor, science writer and Humanist José M. Guardia, who was educated in France (in fact, the majority of his works were published in the famous *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*). Guardia devoted an extensive study to the figure of Gómez Pereira, for whom he felt a special affinity as a doctor and as a free thinker in a remarkably hostile environment. He tries to present him as a victim of the Inquisition in Spain: Pereira's unquestionable materialism was soon persecuted with great animosity by those who in this country were fiercely watched by orthodoxy, hence his work was severely criticized and almost disappeared. But, in spite of all this, an heroic Pereira was able to exercise a scientific methodology which helped him to overcome all the prejudices accumulated over the long history of the scholastic school. From this perspective, Guardia held that the third part of the Antoniana devoted, as we have seen, to the immortality of the soul, was only a subterfuge to avoid some questions in which he was not interested at all but with respect to

which it was more secure to "keep up appearances". In fact, for him the central thesis of the book is the animal mechanism, where it is necessary to place Pereira's great originality. With regard to the "Cartesian question" Guardia emphasized that neither Descartes nor the Cartesians wanted to recognize how much their philosophy owed to this Spanish doctor, but in any case he rejected the hypothesis that accuses the followers of Descartes of destroying many copies of the works of Pereira. This debate on the interpretation and the meaning of Pereira's thinking somehow determines his recovery among the small number of Spanish scholars who have focused their attention on the figure of Gómez Pereira during the twentieth century. <>

[Petersburg](#) by Andrei Bely, translated by Robert A. Maguire and J.E. Malmstad [Indiana University Press, 9780253034113]

Andrei Bely's novel *Petersburg* is considered one of the four greatest prose masterpieces of the 20th century. In this new edition of the best-selling translation, the reader will have access to the translators' detailed commentary, which provides the necessary historical and literary context for understanding the novel, as well as a foreword by Olga Matich, acclaimed scholar of Russian literature.

Set in 1905 in St. Petersburg, a city in the throes of sociopolitical conflict, the novel follows university student Nikolai Apollonovich Ableukhov, who has gotten entangled with a revolutionary terrorist organization with plans to assassinate a government official—Nikolai's own father, Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov. With a sprawling cast of characters, set against a nightmarish city, it is all at once a historical, political, philosophical, and darkly comedic novel. <>

[Petersburg: A Novel in Eight Chapters with a Prologue and an Epilogue](#) by Andrei Bely, translated by David McDuff [Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics, Penguin Books, 9780141191744]

"The most important [...] Russian novel of the 20th century." -The New York Times Book Review

Considered Andrei Bely's masterpiece, *Petersburg*, is a pioneering modernist novel, ranked in

importance alongside *Ulysses*, *The Metamorphosis*, and *In Search of Lost Time*, that captures Russia's capital during the short, turbulent period of the first socialist revolution in 1905. Exploring themes of history, identity, and family, it sees the young Russian Nikolai Ableukhov chased through the misty Petersburg streets, tasked with planting a bomb intended to kill a government official—his own father. Bely draws on news, fashion, psychology, and ordinary people to create a distinctive and timeless literary triumph.

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Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Russian literature saw the emergence of a movement that transformed it from a group of relatively separate genres (novel, novella, short story, play, lyrical and narrative poem) into something approaching a synthesis of genres. Symbolism, as the movement came to be known, was originally modelled on its French counterpart. The poet, writer and critic Valery Bryusov (1873-1924) sought, in his own poems and in translations, to introduce to Russia the poetry of the factory and the great city such as it was expressed in the work of the Belgian poet Emile Verhaeren, as well as the aesthetic and existential dilemmas of Verlaine, Rimbaud and Mallarmé. Bryusov's attempt to pull Russian literature out of the ideological morass that threatened it during the 1880s was only partly successful. The new movement soon became dominated by religious, philosophical and sociological ideas. Yet the writing of its leading figures — Bryusov, Blok and Bely — is characterized by an inventiveness, freshness and clarity that had not been experienced in Russian literature since the time of Pushkin.

One of the major innovations of French Symbolism was the rise of the prose poem. As a genre, this to all intents and purposes originated with Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris* (1869), a collection of lyrical prose pieces on the theme of the city in which the techniques of 'psychological' fiction are blended with poetic statements to produce a sense of intoxication (*ivresse*) and liberation from Time. In the hands of Arthur Rimbaud, whose prose sequences *Les Illuminations* and *Une Saison en enfer* appeared in 1891, the year of his death, the prose poem became a mighty instrument of psychic

exploration and discovery, moving beyond literary genres into the realm of absolute writing. In Russia, the prose poem did not acquire the same importance. Apart from the (rather unadventurous) experiments of Ivan Turgenev, and some brilliant pieces by Innokenty Annensky (1856-1909), the genre remained largely untouched by

Russian poets. The reasons for this are obscure. One factor may have been that in the Russian literary tradition the genres of poem and novel had always been rather more interchangeable than they had been in the West. One thinks of Pushkin's 'verse novel' *Eugene Onegin* and Gogol's 'poem' *Dead Souls*. At all events, Russian Symbolism saw the development of extended poetic prose rather than short, lyrical prose poetry.

The greatest writer of Russian Symbolist prose, Andrei Bely (the name is a literary pseudonym, meaning 'Andrew the White' — Bely's real name was Boris Nikolayevich Bugayev) was born in Moscow in 1880, the son of the mathematician N.V. Bugayev. At his father's insistence, he entered the faculty of mathematics and physics at Moscow University, and graduated in 1903. Immediately thereafter, he decided that his interests lay outside mathematics and physics, and he enrolled in the philological faculty of the same university, but failed to complete the course — his activity as a writer and poet had already begun to take up much of his time. By the age of seventeen he was already the author of poems in the style of Heine, Verlaine and Maeterlinck, and the early years of the twentieth century saw the publication of three extended prose 'symphonies' and a collection of poetry entitled *Zoloto v lazuri* ('Gold in Azure'). These were followed by a fourth 'symphony' and two more collections of poetry: *Pepe!* ('Ash') and *Urna* ('The Urn').

Much of the philosophical and extra-literary background to these works is provided by the thought of the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov, in whose historical and eschatological views Bely found an explanation and elucidation of Russia's growing crisis. The 'Second Symphony' in particular shows the influence of Solovyov, in which the fragmentation and ossification of the modern world are overcome by a mystical, transforming idea of harmony and authentic personality. There are no

characters as such, but rather symbolic presences; the idea, in itself 'inexpressible', acquires expression by the interaction of symbols and verbal phrases in a gradual process of allusion and suggestion. The other strand in these early works is the theme of the city, which, in the spirit of Verhaeren, but also in the purely Russian tradition of Pushkin, Gogol and Dostoyevsky, is seen as a dark and imprisoning place, a geometry of cubes and intersecting lines, where the human spirit is oppressed and deprived of freedom. In this prison the poet feels himself alone, able to identify only with the 'prophet of the fields', the wandering Russian peasant who has ended up in the city by chance and may be able to lead its lost inhabitants back to the world of natural virtue. As several critics have pointed out, Bely was not an original social or political thinker — his real gift lay in the improvisatory, 'performance' aspect of his art. In his social and historical ideas, he tended to follow whatever was current at the time — thus his work possesses a high degree of representativeness, both of Russian Symbolism and of the era that brought it into being.

It is perhaps difficult now fully to conceive the sense of crisis, both outer and inner, that affected Russia during the early years of the twentieth century. An analogy with the position in European Russia in the

years immediately after the fall of Communism at the end of the 1980s may be superficially helpful, but does not reflect the depth of the social and psychological changes and processes that marked the revolution of 1905 and the period that followed it. The national disgrace and humiliation caused by Russia's defeat in the war with Japan, the rise of political terrorism, the sporadic breakdown of law and order, the relaxation of sexual morality, the ascendancy of Western-style capitalism and industrial expansion, and the

growing unrest in the countryside among the peasantry, were all instrumental in sparking off extreme political and social reactions on both right and left. On 17 July 1906, Bely wrote from the country to the symbolist painter V. Vladimirov: 'Events here are fast beginning to boil. The whole of Russia is on fire. This fire is flooding everything. Both the anxieties of the soul and personal sadnesses are fusing with the national grief into a single red horror.'

Bely's reaction to the 'horror' — which for him also entailed being finally and definitively rejected

by Blok's wife, Lyubov' Dmitrievna, with whom he had for some time been violently infatuated, was to go abroad. From Munich he wrote to his friend E.K. Medtner of his love for Russia and the Russian people, but declared that the best way he could help them was by literary means. To his mother, he wrote: 'On my return to Russia I shall take all measures in order to make myself secure against the flood of superfluous impressions. Now before

### Critical Appraisal

...challenge Ezra Pound, W.H. Auden, Wallece Stevens, Paul Valery, John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, and painters such as Picasso, musician-composers, like Stravinsky, different but equally opaque writers as kafka, Rilke, Pirandello, Joyce, Broch, Bloch, Musil Bely, and Blok

The author, in defining the genre of "lyrical fiction," separates a type of fiction that can be legitimately viewed as "poetry" from other narrative types. The lyrical novelist uses fictional devices to find an aesthetic expression for experience, achieving an effect most frequently seen in dreams, picaresques, and allegories. Analyzing representative novels by Hermann Hesse, Andre Gide, and Virginia Woolf, Ralph Freedman focuses on the problem of self-consciousness. His findings are directly applicable to much twentieth-century fiction.

[The Lyrical Novel](#) by Ralph Freedman [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 9780691012674]

my gaze there is ripening a plan of major future literary works that will create a completely new form of literature. I feel within myself an enormous reserve of literary energy: if only the conditions of life would permit me to devote myself to work. In Moscow I wasted far too much energy and words on worthless people, became a kind of pack horse and as a result came the overstrain and nervous disorder in which I have found myself these last few months. I thank fate and you that I have come to Munich.'

By 1906, Bely had already written three of his 'symphonies', and it seems doubtful that the expression 'completely new form of literature' refers to them. More likely is the possibility that Bely had, even as early as this, begun to work on the material that was eventually to become the novels *The Silver Dove* and *Petersburg*. In a letter of 18 June 1907, already back in Russia, he told Bryusov: 'When July comes ... I shall begin work on a novella (povest'). A letter to Blok of autumn 1907 contains the information that Bely is preparing to move to Petersburg, 'where I will write my "Needle"; and another letter to Blok of 20 March 1908 says: '... have settled down at home ... Am writing the novella.' The journal *Pereval*, Nov, 1907, contains a note stating that 'Andrei Bely's novel *The Admiralty Needle*' will appear from the publishing house Grif in the winter of that year, and that its central character is the poet Pushkin. The *Admiralty Needle* was one of the early projected titles for the novel *Petersburg*. At the same time, Bely seems to have been working on the *Silver Dove* material: on 3 November 1907 a notice appeared in the literary pages of the newspaper *Chas*, stating that 'A. Bely is moving to Petersburg, where he intends to work on his new novella *The Silver Dove*.'

The two new prose works had as their respective themes the fate of the countryside and the fate of the city — *The Silver Dove* concerns the upheavals in Russia as a whole, while *Petersburg* is about Russia's capital. Bely had discussed the problem of the Russian countryside, and of Russia as a whole, as a land on the brink of some great watershed, in the article *Lug Zelyony* ('The Green Meadow'), which dates from 1905. The theme of Russia and its crisis is also at the forefront of the concerns that

haunt his poetry collection *Pepel*. In *The Silver Dove*, Bely portrays a religious sect in the village of Tselebeyevo, to which a city-dweller comes, the student Pyotr Daryalsky (based on the real-life figure of the symbolist poet Sergei Solovyov, the philosopher's nephew). He has come to the village in order to see his fiancée, whose name is Katya. She is the granddaughter and heiress of a local female landowner of German extraction, whose surname is *TodgrabeGraaben*. In the novel, the sect of 'doves' symbolizes a dark, oriental force, while the story of the *Todgrabe-Graaben* family is an embodiment of all things Western. The hero, Daryalsky (his name is derived from the Persian word for door), vacillates between these two antagonistic poles, as he seeks his way in the world.

*The Silver Dove* was completed in 1909, and was immediately published in the journal *Vesy*. This was the journal, edited by Bryusov, that had, between 1906 and 1908, published a series of articles by Bely in which he excoriated the Petersburg intelligentsia of his day, accusing it of frivolity and a lack of respect for its 'forefathers'. Nearly all the leading writers were attacked, including Merezhkovsky, Blok, Vyacheslav Ivanov and Gorodetsky. The articles contain, along with their polemics, a sustained and extended characterization of Petersburg as a city of gloom, bureaucracy, *poshlost'* and grey conformity. Two of them in particular — 'The Stamped Galosh' and 'Ivan Aleksandrovich Khlestakov' — portray the city as having no real, flesh-and-blood inhabitants at all, but only ghosts that flit through its streets, and shadowy presences whose task is to trick, provoke and deceive; above the city the Devil, in his Gogolian—Merezhkovskian form, sits enthroned. Bely seems to have believed, for example, that in his infatuation with Lyubov' Dmitrievna he was made the target of a sinister provocation that substituted lust for love. The articles are a curious blend of literary criticism, socio-political analysis, impressionistic description and highly subjective, personal brooding. 'Ivan Aleksandrovich Khlestakov' begins like this:

Petersburg, grey, foggy, as though frowning with deep, deep thought. Or the other way round: Petersburg, curtained with someone's thought, vague as the dream of a feverish patient. And

these people, running with little sticks along the Nevsky, neither know nor suspect whose thought has shrouded their feeble bodies and pale, green faces in fog: they clutch at their bowler hats, form grimaces instead of smiles, mainly concerned not to let the papers scatter out of their briefcases.

This writing is clearly related in style and manner to the novel *Petersburg*. Another feature of the article is its invocation of Peter the Great and the Bronze Horseman sculpture as a symbol of Russia and its tragedy, something that also unites it with the novel. It seems, however, that before Bely could write his *Petersburg* novel, he had to work out the other great strand of ideas, symbols, characters and associations that was associated with the Russian countryside. From there, he was able to approach the theme of the city not in opposition to the countryside, but as an extension and part of it — a part of the Russian nation.

In 1910, the year in which *The Silver Dove* appeared in book form, a number of events took place in Russia which were to have a decisive influence on the way in which *Petersburg* developed. Perhaps the chief among them was the exposure of the secret police double agent Azef. Azef occupied a position of high authority in the Fighting Organization of the Social Revolutionary Party, and was the author and instigator, though not the executor, of a number of spectacular provocations, including the assassination of the Interior Minister V.K. Plehve, in 1904. At his trial, Azef was acquitted, and a remarkable speech of exoneration and justification was made by the President of the Council of Ministers, P.A. Stolypin. Photographs and portraits of Azef appeared daily in the newspapers, and his name became a watchword. For Bely, with his sensitivity to provocations of any kind, Azef became a kind of demonic emanation of his own traumas and of the traumas of Russia.

The other major event of 1910 was the unveiling of an equestrian monument to Alexander III on Petersburg's Znamensky Square. Heavy and massive, it was in complete contrast to the elegant, light and majestic Bronze Horseman on Senate Square. In the public mind, the contrast symbolized the old and the new Russia — the old one at the dawn of a new, 'European' age of enlightenment,

the new one menaced on all sides, defensive and armoured. There seems little doubt that Bely was influenced by the public debate about the new monument, and that elements of it were carried over into the novel *Petersburg*.

Although *The Silver Dove* had been published in 1909, Bely did not consider it complete, and intended to work on it further. After his visit to Italy and North Africa, undertaken between 1910 and 1911 on the advance he had received from the publishing house Musaget, he returned to Russia and then experienced difficulty in concentrating on the new work. In the autumn of 1911 he was still referring to the novel as 'the second part of the "Dove"', an expression which perhaps indicates his sense of block and inertia. These were aggravated by financial problems. Bely had spent a great deal of money on his travels, and was now faced with the prospect of having to earn what he required for subsistence from casual journalistic work, literary reviewing and the like. *Vest'*, the journal for which he had formerly worked, had now ceased to exist. *The Silver Dove* had attracted some interest, particularly in those circles that were close to the journal *Russkaya mysl*, which was edited by P.B. Struve, with Bryusov as his principal associate.

Bryusov approached Bely's request to be taken on as a contributor cautiously but benevolently. Bryusov proposed that Bely should write a portion of a new novel, entitled *Evil Shadows*, to be published in the journal. But the journal's editorial policy was dictated by Struve, who was trying to change the Symbolists from a set of bohemian outcasts into a part of the literary establishment. Struve therefore tried to make difficulties, going back on certain of Bryusov's promises, in particular a 1000 rouble advance on which Bely and his wife A.A. Turgeneva planned to travel to Brussels. At an interview, Bely asked Struve if *Russkaya mysl* would publish the continuation of *The Silver Dove*. 'I asked if I could have an advance,' Bely wrote to Medtner. 'Struve said not on any account. He promised: "Bring me the manuscript and you will receive the money in full at once." The latest date for delivery is 15 December. In two and a half months I must write fifteen printers' sheets, otherwise I shall have nothing to eat.' At the same time, it became clear that however well-disposed

towards Bely Bryusov was on a personal level, he did not really consider that Bely would be a suitable contributor for the stylistically conservative *Russkaya mysl*. He had already warned Struve about Bely's recently-submitted article about Dostoyevsky, for example, telling him it was out of harmony with the journal's aims and purpose.

In his memoirs, Bely recalls his view of the 'continuation' project in the following, perhaps somewhat subjective, terms...

These extracts from his memoirs are clearly related both to the plot and to the philosophical content of Petersburg. At the time of the letter, Bely had in fact already completed five of the novel's long chapters, and one can see direct connections, for example, to Chapter Two (the section entitled 'The Senator's Second Space'), and Chapter Five ('Pépp Péppovich Pépp' and 'The Last Judgement'), among others. In Steiner's theosophical-derived philosophy, Bely may even have found a resolution of the dilemma between East and West that is such an important feature of the novel: in the character of Nikolai Ab-leukhov, who is descended from Oriental forefathers, Bely not only presents a continuation and extension of the character of Daryalsky — but he also presents himself in the process of discovering his authentic 'I', aided by the inner and outer transformation of Russia which he believed was on the way. That process of discovery was a long and complex one, and it coincides in some measure with the history of the novel's development.

In 1913, Petersburg was finally accepted for publication by the St Petersburg firm of Sirin, which counted Blok among its editorial collaborators and also published a literary miscellany of the same name. Blok was initially somewhat ambivalent about the novel, for he saw that in the theme of the conflict of East and West, and their negative influence on Russia, Bely had in many ways borrowed insights and images from his, Blok's, poems — in particular, the cycle 'On Kulikovo Plain' left its mark. None the less, the novel appeared in the miscellany, and was printed in book form in 1916. The Sirin edition is the most complete version of the novel to have been published. It was to have been the second part of a trilogy, of which *The Silver Dove* was to form the first part, and a

planned novel, never written, entitled 'The Invisible City' (*Nevidnyi Grad*) the third.

After the revolution, Bely moved temporarily to Berlin. There, in 1922, he undertook a revision of many of his works, including his early verse collections, and Petersburg, and had them published. The influence of Rudolf Steiner's philosophy seems to have been the decisive factor in his decision to rewrite his poems. In the case of Petersburg, the matter is less clear. Some critics, chief among them Ivanov-Razumnik, who possessed Bely's original manuscripts, were convinced that Bely wished to alter the novel's political tendency, to make it more favourable to the cause of the revolution. Yet political motives do not in fact seem to have been uppermost in the author's mind. From the time of publication of the Sirin edition, Bely appears to have been convinced that the novel was too long, and his revision of 1922 is primarily an exercise in textual abridgement, somewhat hastily performed. While it is occasionally possible to note an omission here and there that points to a 'flattening' of the polemical tone, by and large the omissions appear somewhat arbitrary, and portions of text are frequently excised without regard for the fact that this often renders the chapter headings incomprehensible or irrelevant, since the phrases to which they refer are missing. The omissions are so numerous and so diffused throughout the text that it would be extremely difficult to provide a line-by-line analysis of the discrepancies between the earlier and the later editions. There can be no doubt that the 1922 edition has a much more compressed, 'modernistic' feel to it — it is a product of a more recent time and socio-political climate but this is achieved at the price of textual consistency and coherence. Though slower-paced and more wordy, the 1916 edition surely represents a truer fulfilment of Bely's original aim in writing the book — to construct an elaborate 'cerebral game' which, in its rhythmical meanderings and convolutions, would reflect the confused atmosphere of the age, with its sense of the drawing together of the threads of Russia's destiny, and their possible explosion and disintegration.

The present translation is based on the text of the 1916 edition, as republished in the Moscow

Academy of Sciences edition of 1981, compiled by L.K. Dolgoplov. The translator has taken account of the many critical and textological comments contained in Dolgo-plov's large concluding essay, and the notes that accompany the translation are to some extent based on Dolgoplov's. Where Bely's extremely personal and sometimes eccentric syntax and punctuation are concerned, the translator has mostly opted to preserve them as far as is possible in the English language. <>

#### [A Reader's Guide to Andrei Bely's Petersburg](#)

edited by Leonid Livak [The University of Wisconsin Press, 9780299319304]

Andrei Bely's 1913 masterwork Petersburg is widely regarded as the most important Russian novel of the twentieth century. Vladimir Nabokov ranked it with James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, and Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. Few artistic works created before the First World War encapsulate and articulate the sensibility, ideas, phobias, and aspirations of Russian and transnational modernism as comprehensively.

Bely expected his audience to participate in unraveling the work's many meanings, narrative strains, and patterns of details. In their essays, the contributors clarify these complexities, summarize the intellectual and artistic contexts that informed Petersburg's creation and reception, and review the interpretive possibilities contained in the novel. This volume will aid a broad audience of Anglophone readers in understanding and appreciating Petersburg.

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#### Excerpt: About This Book

"Something happened to art around the turn of the twentieth century," writes Gabriel Josipovici with reference to the fact that "Proust, Joyce, Picasso, Klee, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky, for all their manifest individuality, do have something in common." Literary and cultural historians call that "something" modernism—a convenient, albeit anachronistic, shorthand for a transnational community of cultural producers and consumers who, beginning in the 1880s, grew increasingly skeptical about the philosophical pillars of the nineteenth century: the positivist cult of natural sciences as the source of ultimate truths about the universe around us; the reductively materialist understanding of human nature; and the unbridled optimism about progress that clashed with the modernists' own acute sense of spiritual and civilizational decline. Russian modernist culture matched its French-, German-, and English-speaking counterparts in the variety and intensity of artistic and philosophical production, which conveyed a new "way of experiencing the world." An early recruit to modernism, the poet, critic, and novelist Andrei Bely saw it not as "an artistic school" but as

a group project aimed at "reevaluating all philosophical, ethical, and religious values of European culture."

Like their foreign counterparts, whose utopianism they shared and often surpassed, Russian modernists saw the ultimate purpose of creative activity in the radical transformation of human beings and life itself. This programmatic desire to revolutionize the human condition, known in Russian modernist culture as the "revolution of the spirit," was driven by the sensibility of crisis - the sense of staring into a spiritual, cultural, and social chasm between past and present-- and by the resultant longing for a grand new beginning that modernists consciously modeled on the Christian apocalyptic expectations of the end of the world and the ensuing establishment of Christ's millennial kingdom on earth. Few artistic works created before World War I encapsulate and articulate the sensibility, ideas, phobias, and aspirations of Russian and transnational modernism as comprehensively and extensively as Andrei Bely's magnum opus [Petersburg](#) (1913), whose place and importance in the literary and cultural history of twentieth-century Europe have been often compared to those of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922).

In spite of the continuous critical rapprochement between the two modernist masterpieces — and certainly not for lack of translations, since Bely's novel exists today in four English renditions (see John Elsworth's essay in this volume) —*Petersburg* has not received its due attention from the Anglophone public and is rarely taught within the framework of literature and humanities courses at English-speaking colleges and universities. One can only conclude that, like other hermetic modernist classics, *Petersburg* presents serious challenges to nonspecialist readers as well as to instructors in Russian and comparative literature, not to mention general humanities. The essays collected in the present volume strive to make *Petersburg* more accessible: they have been written with a broad audience in mind in order to help the Anglophone reader gain a better understanding of Bely's novel and to facilitate its study in the college classroom. To this end, the volume's contributors have been asked to do what they, as academics and researchers, rarely get to do; namely, to refrain

from new and original interpretations of a literary classic and to summarize instead what we already know about *Petersburg*, explicating it in the intellectual and artistic context, Russian and European, that informed the novel's creation and historical reception.

Boris Nikolaevich Bugaev (1880 -1934.), who used the penname Andrei Bely, was an intellectual omnivore drawn to the most diverse practices in European art and thought, which he idiosyncratically appropriated and creatively reworked. In a testimony to Bely's eclectic interests, *Petersburg* is a virtual encyclopedia of European philosophical and aesthetic currents between the turn of the century and World War I. This makes *Petersburg*--originally written for an interpretive community that shared the author's cultural knowledge and could actively explore the novel's maze of meanings—all the more difficult to understand today. Hence the structure of our book. Far from claiming to explicate *Petersburg* comprehensively, each essay explores a particular aspect of Bely's novel. If there is indeed an overarching conclusion to be drawn, it is that no single interpretation can withstand the test of *Petersburg*'s philosophical heterogeneity, aesthetic experimentalism, and --last but not least—its narrative disruptions and logical contradictions. In large part, this plurality of clashing meanings is an outcome of authorial design. But a number of problems in *Petersburg*'s intellectual economy and narrative structure arise from Bely's rapid philosophical evolution and chaotic personal circumstances at the time he was writing the novel. Another contributor to the chaos is *Petersburg*'s complex publication history. The multiplicity of analytical approaches proposed in our essay collection aims to do justice to the broad range of interpretive possibilities contained in Bely's novel, down to its seemingly trivial details.

Take, for example, Nikolai Apollonovich Ableukhov's fancy ball attire—a red domino and a black mask. This costume simultaneously anchors *Petersburg* in the social realia of contemporary Russia; mediates a mythopoetic parable of Bely's personal drama; and stakes out his novel's place in Russian modernist culture, which instrumentalized to its own ends a traditional Italian stage genre,



commedia dell'arte, wherein Nikolai's costume originates. Depending on their familiarity with Russian modernism and its actors, Bely's first readers could variously interpret Nikolai's public antics as the Red Domino. For many, the costume invoked the spike in street hooliganism in 1905-6, with hoodlums in masquerade attire harassing women during the political disturbances that form Petersburg's historical background. The domino's red color also emblemized revolutionary violence, not least because Nikolai's role in an assassination plot recalled the use of carnival disguises by terrorists, as Lynn Patyk's essay shows. For readers privy to the theatricalization of life in modernist circles, Nikolai's commedia dell'arte disguise conveyed a special philosophy of art, discussed here by Colleen McQuillen. Finally, Bely's acquaintances saw in the masquerade dress a key to an autobiographical parable hidden in Nikolai's failed romance with Sofia Likhutina, his friend's wife. The costume linked Petersburg's love triangle to Bely's tortuous affair with the wife of his friend Aleksandr Blok. Both poets lived this drama, in 1905-7, and wrote about it in terms of the commedia dell'arte plot pitting the red Harlequin (Bely) against the white Pierrot (Blok) in a contest for Columbine's heart. Replacing Harlequin's traditional, checkered and particolored suit with a patternless and monochromatic red domino, Bely wore that masquerade attire in public and subsequently bestowed it on his hero in Petersburg.

The variety of potential meanings inherent in every aspect of Bely's novel— from prominent leitmotifs to discreet details (even colors, such as yellow, overflow with multiple connotations, as Maria Carlson, Henrietta Mondry, and Judith Wermuth-Atkinson's essays show)---- calls for a broad range of interpretational approaches. Going through the essays in this volume, then, the reader will see soon enough that Petersburg yields a number of equally convincing, albeit often contradictory readings generated by different analytical lenses. But, as announced in its title, Bely's novel does have a stable and readily identifiable thematic core, whose meaning is unambiguous by virtue of its rootedness in the tradition of St. Petersburg's literary representation, commonly known as the "Petersburg text of Russian literature." This tradition is steeped in the mythology of the imperial capital,

which the Russian cultural imagination has endowed with supernatural independent agency. In that cultural mythology, the city of Peter the Great--brought into being in 1703 as Russia's strategic "window to Europe" by the tsar's single-minded will--is forever cursed by its unnatural and cruel birth. The ostentatiously Western metropolis deliberately broke with the Russian cultural traditions embodied by Moscow when it rose up on the bones of its slave builders, who died in the thousands to erect the self-proclaimed Russian emperor's new capital in the inhospitable climate and harsh working conditions of a swampy northern wilderness.

The myth codified in the "Petersburg text" was predicated on the tension between two antithetical notions of the city. On one hand, St. Petersburg was the glorious seat of imperial power where one could seek fame and fortune. An elegant "Northern Venice," it bore witness to one man's creative will, thus inspiring future creators among Peter's westernized Russian progeny. On the flip side of the city's mythology, however, St. Petersburg appeared as a haunted and morbidly unhealthy place that quashed the aspirations of ordinary folk, drove its inhabitants insane, or killed them outright by means of climate-induced, chronic physical illness and periodic natural calamities. The city was, furthermore, infused with a spiritual malaise resulting from the violent repression of traditional Russian culture during Peter's reforms. In this much darker version of St. Petersburg, the standard yellow color of governmental buildings dominating the imperial capital symbolized disease, visible in the skin tone of city residents. It also stood for madness (with state-run mental institutions popularly called "yellow houses") and prostitution, whose practitioners carried a state license informally known as the "yellow ticket." The European façade of this inhumane St. Petersburg was but a demonic illusion conjured up by Peter the Antichrist, a mirage with apocalyptic portents about the city's imminent disappearance, along with the Western civilization it embodied, into the swamps from which it had arisen.

By the time Bely turned to the myth of St. Petersburg, he had many authoritative literary models at his disposal—from such foundational

works of the "Petersburg text" as Aleksandr Pushkin's narrative poem *The Bronze Horseman* (1833) and story "The Queen of Spades" (1833), along with Nikolai Gogol's Petersburg tales ("Nevsky Prospect" [1835], "Nose" [1836], "Notes of a Madman" [1835], and "Overcoat" [1842]), to the subsequent elaboration of the city's myth throughout Fedor Dostoevsky's oeuvre, most notably in *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and *The Idiot* (1868). At the turn of the twentieth century, the "Petersburg text" received a new lease on life in budding Russian modernist culture, whose apocalyptic sensibility found much fertile ground in the myth of St. Petersburg. But no other Russian modernist did as much as Bely to bring the "Petersburg text" into the new century. By working St. Petersburg's mythologized history and topography into the narrative structure of his novel, Bely made the city a literary character in its own right. While doing so, he systematically exploited the tradition of St. Petersburg's literary representation, positing himself as a direct continuator of Pushkin and Gogol and using the "Petersburg text" as a medium for an aesthetic and philosophical debate with Dostoevsky. This program was one he had theoretically outlined as early as 1905 but ultimately realized only in Petersburg.

A confluence of personal and historical circumstances encouraged Bely to embrace the myth and text of St. Petersburg with a vengeance. The writer first set foot in the city on 9 January 1905, arriving there from his native Moscow on the very day the government drowned in blood a political rally in the capital's streets, unleashing the first Russian revolution. This month-long visit — during which Bely socialized with Aleksandr and Liubov' Blok, inaugurating an ill-fated romance with his friend's wife that brought Bely to the brink of suicide on another visit to the city, in September 1906—did much to amalgamate in the writer's mind the personal and social dramas forming Petersburg's narrative backbone. Of course, St. Petersburg's mythology and treatment in art—recall that the heroes of Pushkin's *Bronze Horseman* and "The Queen of Spades" go mad, not least because of their living environment—fit well into Bely's association of the city with traumatic experience. The association helps explain the

removal of "Saint" from the city's name in the novel's title and also the ominous patronymic "Petrovna" (the daughter of Peter) borne by Nikolai Apollonovich's love interest and Apollon Apollonovich's wife, both of whom are the sources of the male protagonists' emotional torment.

Anchoring the novel in the "Petersburg text of Russian literature," Bely turned his narrative into a panoply of citations and intertextual allusions -- at times serious, at other times parodic and polemical-- that gave Petersburg's protagonists another, implicit dimension. For Bely, intertextuality was indeed a primary tool of characterization: the reader cannot fully appreciate the story of Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov and his estranged wife, Anna Petrovna, without tracing the couple to their Tolstoyan models —Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Karenin and his wife, Anna; nor can one fully grasp the personae of Nikolai Apollonovich Ableukhov and Aleksandr Ivanovich Dudkin without recognizing their Pushkinian, Gogolian, and Dostoevskian predecessors. While our volume cannot boast an exhaustive account of Petersburg's dense intertextuality, many contributors discuss, as a matter of course, various aspects of the novel's grid of literary allusions.

The book's first part explores Petersburg's multifarious rapports with Russian and European intellectual life in Bely's day. This context is indispensable for a fuller appreciation of the intricate network of contemporary philosophical, theological, scientific, and political ideas that underpin the events Petersburg describes. This intellectual fabric informs the actions of the novel's characters and mediates the interpretation of these events and characters by Bely's narrator. Lynn Patyk explores the historical circumstances informing Petersburg's terrorist intrigue, with an eye on the range of meanings—beyond politics—that intrigue had in Bely's modernist circle and in contemporary Russian society at large. Maria Carlson draws attention to Bely's fascination with Theosophy and, especially, with its offshoot—Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophical doctrine, which freshly captivated the writer midway through his work on Petersburg. It has been suggested that Petersburg cannot be understood outside the German guru's occult science. Such claims, however,

should be viewed with some skepticism. Half of Petersburg had been written before Bely became Steiner's acolyte. And even after the writer immersed himself in Anthroposophy, while finishing Petersburg, poor German skills slowed down his apprenticeship with Rudolf Steiner, as Bely himself admitted in letters to friends. More important, as Maria Carlson and Hilary Fink show, Bely was too original, eclectic, and idiosyncratic a thinker to structure his novel in strict accordance with one specific intellectual system.

Steiner was among several German sages to leave a mark on Petersburg. Bely's interest in Friedrich Nietzsche's iconoclastic thought predated his work on the novel. The formative role in modernist philosophies of art and life of Nietzsche's intellectual heritage all but assured that Bely would engage with it (even parodically at times), as Edith Clowes illustrates. Nietzsche's importance in Bely's intellectual biography is echoed in Petersburg's minutest details, such as the Dionysian caryatid on the façade of the institution headed by Apollon Apollonovich Ableukhov—a visual representation of the conflict between Apollinian striving for order and elemental Dionysian chaos, theorized by Nietzsche as a fundamental premise of human existence. Neo-Kantianism is yet another German philosophical current informing the novel. As Timothy Langen explains, it shaped Bely's thought in the decade preceding his Petersburg project, and it is present there not only as one of the novel's competing philosophies but as the once-favorite doctrine of its young protagonist, Nikolai Ableukhov, who thus inherits more than one detail of Bely's sentimental and intellectual biography. The French thinker Henri Bergson equipped Bely with polemical tools for a critical reexamination of Nietzscheanism and Neo-Kantianism, whose philosophical virtues, Hilary Fink argues, the writer no longer took for granted during his work on Petersburg. Judith Wermuth-Atkinson shows that Bely's modernist search for alternatives to the materialist understanding of the world and the human being led the author of Petersburg to pay special attention to the new science of psychology, as elaborated by the Austrian Jewish neurologist Sigmund Freud.

A special place in Petersburg's imaginative universe is occupied by racial theories, whose narrative manifestations are explored by Henrietta Mondry. Bely, like most of his peers, was a racial thinker. He was also prone to racial conspiracy theories, which had been enthusiastically embraced in his Moscow home. As a result, the writer was haunted by apprehension about the decline of the Aryan race. Aryans, understood as all Christian Europeans, were supposedly under siege by the Semites (read Jews) and the Yellow race (Asians, in the parlance of the day), with the latter unwittingly serving as a weapon of the universal Jewish plot. Petersburg's first readers ascribed to Bely's right-wing politics the thinly veiled anti-Semitism suffusing several characters in the novel-- the double agent Lippanchenko; his informant, the sleazy journalist Neintelfain; Lippanchenko's mistress, Zoia Fleisch; and Jewish radicals at a political rally. But, as Mondry shows, Bely's racial thought went beyond politics. Fusing with modernist apocalyptic sensibility and drawing on the anti-Semitic thought of Richard Wagner, whom Bely admired as a composer and critical theorist, Petersburg's racial dynamic cast Jews as agents of Russia's socioeconomic disruption and as carriers of even graver existential threats - biological, spiritual, and cultural—to European civilization.

Fearing the opprobrium of political liberals, whom Bely imagined as puppets of Jewish interests, the writer expressed his racism circumspectly in Petersburg's 1913 edition. To be sure, the novel's anti-Semitic undercurrent was unmistakable, not least because Bely had sought inspiration in popular Jew-baiting pamphlets. Symptomatically, suggesting that his friend switch prospective publishers, Blok presented a nascent modernist venture, the publishing house Sirin, which Bely ultimately chose for Petersburg, as a "great Aryan project" free from Jewish influence. But as he prepared the novel's second, 1922 edition, Bely already had to account for Russia's changed political reality. The country's new Marxist rulers were likely to censure a novel that cast revolutionaries as proxies of a secret Jewish plot. In the novel's purged 1922 version, then, the original anti-Semitic message, while still present, became more cryptic, allowing one advocate of Bely's art to speak of the writer's intellectual evolution. This

was, in fact, mere adaptation to political circumstances, something Bely did continuously in Soviet Russia without relinquishing the basic tenets of his world view, including his apocalyptic racial apprehensions and conspiratorial mindset.

Closing the book's first part, David Bethea demonstrates the centrality of eschatology in Petersburg's narrative and stylistic economy. Eschatological thought—speculation about the end of history, framed as the demise and rebirth of the world and humankind—had special urgency in Russian modernist culture, which simultaneously anticipated, welcomed, and feared the apocalyptic scenarios it imagined. In this context, Bely's choice of St. Petersburg was anything but accidental: the thoroughly mythologized city, whose apocalyptic demise had been prophesied from its foundation, was a logical setting for the final battle of good and evil. This battle would put an end to the Antichrist's reign on earth and usher in the Second Coming of Christ, who in Bely's novel indeed roams the damned city, in the guise of a mysterious White Domino.

Our volume's second part examines Petersburg in the aesthetic context of Bely's day. Keenly following the latest developments in Russian and Western artistic theory and practice, equally well-versed in literature, painting, and music, Bely poured his erudition into Petersburg as a medium for reflecting on and realizing modernist artistic philosophy; above all, he focused on the ideal synthesis of art forms in a single oeuvre, as theorized by Richard Wagner, whose own Gesamtkunstwerk, or total work of art, took the form of his four-opera cycle *The Ring of the Nibelung*. It is highly significant that, while writing Petersburg in Brussels, in the spring of 1912, Bely indulged his passion for music, attending three Wagnerian operas (*Lohengrin*, *Tristan and Isolde*, and *The Valkyrie*) to "[give his] days the coloring of the Ring," as he told Aleksandr Blok. There would be many other such interruptions in his work on the novel for the sake of music, without which he "simply could not live."<sup>26</sup> Steven Cassedy explores the role of music in Bely's novel against the backdrop of modernist musical theories and their implementation in literature. European modernists treated music as the supreme art form, wishing to

integrate it, along with painting, into literary fiction. Inspired by this intellectual ferment, Bely not only devised his own theory of music in relation to other art forms but, as Cassedy shows, strove to realize his theory in Petersburg, whose intricate phonetic and rhythmic experiments with language explore the possibility of merging literature and music.

In contrast to their Western peers, Russian modernists took Wagner's idea of the total work of art to its logical extreme by turning their very lives, through aesthetically meaningful everyday behavior, into artistic texts that were lived before they could be written down. This practice, known in Russian modernist culture as "life-creation" (*zhiznetvorchestvo*), is exemplified in Bely's tortuous liaison with Liubov' Blok, which the writer mythopoetically transposes in Petersburg, as Colleen McQuillen shows. Her essay considers Bely's novel as an exemplar of modernism's embrace of performance practices and metaphors. Explicating the role of the imagery and the vocabulary of theater and masquerade in Bely's novelistic articulation of his world view and sensibility, McQuillen illumines the complex interaction of art and life in Russian modernist experience, as encoded in Petersburg's theatricalized romantic relationship between Nikolai Apollonovich Ableukhov and Sofia Petrovna Likhutina.

Heeding the programmatic modernist fusion of art forms, Olga Matich treats Petersburg as an expression of Bely's passion for painting. She explores the ways Bely uses verbal signs to create visual images, underlining the affinities of his style to painterly practices. Bely's choice of St. Petersburg as the novel's scene highlights such affinities, because the city was a popular subject among the modernist painters of the World of Art group, in whose eponymous journal, *Mir iskusstva*, Bely debuted as a critic. A series of meaningful coincidences links Petersburg's creative history to Aleksandr Benois's illustrations for Pushkin's *Bronze Horseman* and "The Queen of Spades," two cornerstones of the "Petersburg text." After its 1904 publication in *Mir iskusstva*, Benois's *Bronze Horseman* cycle was exhibited in St. Petersburg when Bely arrived there, in January 1905, for the aforementioned month-long stay, which resulted in

impressions that would later inform Petersburg's historical and love intrigues. Then, in late 1911, just as Bely sat down to write the opening chapters of Petersburg, the first edition of Pushkin's "Queen of Spades" with Benois's illustrations appeared and was soon followed by the similarly illustrated Bronze Horseman events Bely was not likely to miss.

In the fall of 1911, Bely also discussed painting with Henri Matisse, hosted by the Moscow art patron Sergei Shchukin, whose large collection of European modernist art was open to the public. Exchanges of this kind gave Bely a chance to stay informed even before his 1912 departure for Western Europe. Abroad, his work on Petersburg was punctuated by visits to art galleries, where the writer saw the latest in modernist painting and regaled himself with Old Masters, from Matthias Grünewald and Jan van Eyck to Lucas Cranach and Hieronymus Bosch, whose traces Olga Matich finds in Petersburg's visual texture and whom Bely particularly appreciated as precursors to "chimerical" modernist painters.

Bely's artistic ecumenism and erudition make a fuller appreciation of Petersburg contingent on our ability to read this novel outside Russian cultural history proper, especially since it both echoed concurrent developments in transnational modernist culture and foreshadowed many of its literary practices. Thus, on one hand, Petersburg exemplifies transnational modernism's "metropolitan perception," its intense and continuous preoccupation with urbanism. Bely's novel augured a series of modernist narratives, written in different languages but united, as Taras Koznarsky shows, by shared attention to the urban metropolis as both an active protagonist and a highly significant and indeed preferred setting in literary fiction and visual arts. On the other hand, Bely's novel marks the moment of transition between early and high modernism, in Russia and the West. The quarrel about the nature of reality was at the core of the conflict pitting Russia's positivist intelligentsia against modernists who located reality beyond rational cognition. Treating art as a privileged medium for transcendental intuition, modernists saw themselves as better realists than their materialist opponents. But, by the early 1910s, modernists increasingly looked for

reality in human consciousness, coming to view the world as a construct of the psyche. This idea replaced the metaphysical bent of early Russian modernism, coinciding with the rise of the "realism of consciousness" in the West, where similar notions were being explored in the writings of Marcel Proust and Virginia Woolf, among others. In the final essay of Part Two, Violeta Sotirova looks at Petersburg as a case study in the larger modernist turn to consciousness as the source of reality, placing Bely's novel alongside contemporary literary experiments by his Western European peers.

With Russian modernists turning to the psyche as the source of true reality, experiments with language and narrative became means of conveying the unique relation of individual consciousness to the world. Petersburg spearheaded this trend. Its blueprint, in fact, appeared in Bely's 1908 review of Stanisław Przybyszewski's *Homo Sapiens* (1901).<sup>33</sup> All that he had found admirable in the novel of the Polish modernist—its fragmented depiction of space, time, heroes, and events; its reliance on active readers to make sense of the narrative; its lack of psychological speculation as a motivating link between the inner life and actions of characters—Bely appropriated and developed in Petersburg, thus earning the title of "a cubist in literature." Petersburg's style matched its unconventional narrative. Written by a poet, this novel explored and manipulated every level of spoken and written language—from phonetics to morphology to syntax to page graphics—in order to speculate about language as a source of what people perceive as reality but what might as well be an illusion originating in the psyche. With Petersburg, Bely became "a writer for writers," charting the course of Russian modernist prose, whose practitioners rated his achievement as rivaling that of James Joyce.<sup>35</sup> That is why we open this volume with an essay by John Elsworth, the author of the most recent English translation of Petersburg—a task one eminent Russian-American Slavist has described as "almost insuperably hard." Elsworth's essay endeavors to impart to Bely's Anglophone reader a sense of the challenges inherent in translating a text that has continuously baffled even educated native speakers of Russian. His other aim is to give the reader an idea of the

inevitable losses and distortions accompanying any such translation project.

### Andrei Bely's Petersburg: A History

Unlike the difficulties arising from Petersburg's experimental style, esoteric philosophical references, dense intertextuality, and hermetic subtexts, the novel's equally challenging narrative structure is something one would be hard pressed to ascribe to authorial design alone. Bely's novel was in many ways shaped by the writer's personal circumstances and by the complex story of the book's multiple editions. Familiarity with Petersburg's creative history helps us understand, if not solve, some of its narrative puzzles.

Bely initially conceived Petersburg as the second part in a trilogy. The poet's first foray into the novelistic genre, *The Silver Dove*, was serialized in the course of 1909. When *The Silver Dove* came out in book form, in May 1910, the author's preface described it as the first part in a trilogy, *East or West*. The trilogy's second installment---unrelated to *The Silver Dove* in plot and dramatis personae, with the exception of an episodic character (Styopka) changed its title several times. At an early stage, in October 1911, Bely called it *A Lacquered Carriage*, referring to Senator Ableukhov's mode of transportation. Two months later, submitting the novel's first three chapters to the Moscow journal *Russkaia mysl'*, Bely called his work *Evil Shadows*, alluding to the phantasmagoric nature of the city where the novel's scene was laid.<sup>38</sup> After the journal deemed those chapters unacceptable, Bely persevered in the project, renaming it *Petersburg* by mid-1912.

Modernists flaunted their independence from the free cultural market, whose commercialism they castigated as a source of Europe's spiritual decline. But they also partook in that market. For all its elitist hermeticism and experimentalism, Petersburg owed its start to pragmatic monetary concerns: Bely began writing the novel in order to improve his dire financial situation. The author's economic predicament also dictated the initial breakneck pace of his work, explaining the high concentration of logical gaps in Petersburg's opening chapters.

Bely had few independent sources of income and drew much of his sustenance from critical,

journalistic, and literary activity. In November 1910, the writer went abroad in the company of his new romantic interest, Asya (Anna) Turgeneva. He intended to travel "for at least a year," in order to "finish the trilogy *East or West*" far from the bustle of Moscow. But the travelers quickly ran out of money and cut the trip short, in May 1911, after visiting Italy, North Africa, and Palestine. Although the journey broke Bely's piggy bank, yielding not a page of the promised sequel to *The Silver Dove*, it did reenergize his anti-Western animus, which he soon poured into Petersburg.

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Bely's time in Brussels was not colored solely by Wagnerian operas. The city's streets, where medieval and Renaissance architecture coexisted with modernist statements in the Art Nouveau style---echoing the writer's appreciation of the Old Masters, whom he revisited in German and Belgian museums, as prefigurations of "chimerical" modernist painters --- unexpectedly became a setting for new mystical experiences. Bely and Turgeneva felt the sheer intensity of these experiences (some might call them paranoid delusions) on a daily basis and sought answers from Rudolf Steiner, whose name had been on everyone's lips in Moscow the previous autumn. In early May, they made a three-day trip to Cologne, where "the Doctor" held court. Rather unsurprisingly, the impressionable and mystically inclined visitors fell under the spell of Steiner's charisma (Bely called it his "aura"), resolving to become apprentices in his occult science. This entailed not only a crash course in Anthroposophy (accompanied by German instruction since Bely's and Turgeneva's knowledge of the language was poor), but also constant travel as they followed Steiner, like groupies, on his lecture circuit--from Munich to Basel to Vitznau to Stuttgart to Berlin. Naturally, Petersburg's proposed work schedule "went to hell," as Bely told Blok in December 1912, taking stock of his sporadic work on chapters 1 through 6, and asking his friend for another loan, since he was already in breach of contract with the publisher. Thus, revising the novel's "chaotic" opening chapters in the fall of 1912, the writer was no less plagued by haste, thanks to pressing

new commitments arising from his Anthroposophical apprenticeship, than a year earlier.

In the spring of 1913, Bely's publisher, Nekrasov, set into galleys the novel's reworked first two chapters, which the writer had sent him sometime in 1912. But at that time Bely decided to switch publishers, going with the nascent modernist house Sirin, which bought from Nekrasov the rights to Petersburg, giving its author a more advantageous contract. Nekrasov's galleys occupy an intermediate position between the original "architectonic chaos" of Petersburg's opening, written in the fall of 1911, and the definitive version of the first three chapters, on which Bely worked in late 1912. The "Nekrasov redaction" has been a valuable source for literary scholars who can compare three versions of the novel's beginning, tracing the evolution of Bely's project and parsing its ultimately unresolvable contradictions.

After sending to Sirin the final version of the novel's first three chapters, in February 1913, Bely and Turgeneva left Germany for Russia, where he worked further reprints in the USSR. The novel would not be reissued there until 1978, when it appeared in the twice-expurgated 1928 edition. In 1981, Petersburg's original version—prepared by Leonid Dolgoplov to the highest standards of literary scholarship—came out for the first time since 1916.

Despite Soviet proscription, Petersburg played an epochal role in modern Russian literature. Its importance for the evolution of Russian prose writing in the twentieth century had no equals. The novel marked a watershed in literary expression: one simply could not write Russian prose "after Petersburg" the way it had been written before. Even rejecting Bely's stylistic and narrative experiments, one could never lose sight of Petersburg's towering example, which remained a major, if often unspoken, reference point for Russian writers in the USSR and in exile. Characteristically, fifty years after the novel's original publication, Vladimir Nabokov ranked Petersburg alongside James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, and Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* in his list of "my greatest masterpieces of twentieth century prose." Like the

other modernist masterpieces on Nabokov's list, Petersburg makes for an intensely enjoyable but challenging read, for Bely expected his audience to actively participate in unraveling the work's many meanings, narrative strains, and patterns of details. The present volume aims to facilitate that task by recreating for the general Anglophone public the sociopolitical, intellectual, and artistic context informing Bely's novel. <>

Essay: Of Dreams, Phantoms, and Places: Andrey Bely's Petersburg by Milica Banjanin, [The International Fiction Review, 10, No. 2 (1983)]

What is the idea of place, which is central to Andrey Bely's symbolist novel Petersburg? The title itself implies place, as well as emphasizes that Petersburg—the city—is the main hero of Bely's work. Perceptions of place combined with, and related to, those of dreams and phantoms can be understood within the larger framework of the novel by examining how they impose themselves upon the lyrical self of the author, and how he transforms them into a fabric of images. This understanding could be achieved by approaching the novel through a careful reading of one of its chapters. Chapter six of Petersburg seems to be an ideal starting point for an analysis of dreams, phantoms, and places. References to other chapters or sections of Petersburg will be made wherever it is relevant. However, it is in chapter six that the texture of the symbolic design and the vision of Bely's novel is realized.'

In a letter about his novel to the critic Ivanov-Razumnik (December, 1913), Bely suggests that he did not faithfully portray the details of an authentic reality, either historical or revolutionary, of the years 1905-06, but rather that he gave a symbolic picture of Russia's approaching cataclysm. Bely insists that his "entire novel depicts the subconscious life of maimed thought-forms through the symbols of place and time."<sup>2</sup> He emphasizes further that the action takes place not in the real city—Petersburg—but in a conditional city imagined and created, "In the soul of a certain person, not named in the novel, whose mind has been overstrained with cerebral work."

Bely's image of Petersburg is unusual in that, while preserving the outside characteristics of a concrete place in both topographical and historical terms, it is nevertheless not a real city but part of an idle "cerebral game," or of some transcendental category which has penetrated reality from beyond the realms of consciousness.

Although Bely uses in his portrayal of the city a number of specific details and identifying signs, both are utilized in such an arbitrary fashion that any semblance of authenticity is quickly dispelled. For example, the concrete places that are repeatedly mentioned are the Winter Canal, the Moika, Peter Square with its monument to Peter the Great, the Summer Garden, the Gargarin and the English Embankments, the Nikolaevsky and Troitsky Bridges, the Admiralty, the Neva River, the Islands, etc. However, what predominates in Bely's novel is an artificial topography that exists only in the author's consciousness. If we try to follow the movement of any character in the novel along the streets or bridges or sections of the city that are named, we suddenly realize that the characters are either moving in circles, or that they cannot possibly reach their proposed destination following the route that Bely suggests. The same applies to government buildings that Bely names, or the homes in which his characters supposedly live. Outside of the novel, Bely's city does not exist.

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In the prologue to the novel, Bely states that he needs Petersburg mainly because it is the capital of the Russian Empire. Unless Petersburg is a capital: "It only appears to exist". Bely not only alludes to the illusory quality of the city in which "nothing is what it seems," but also to the phantom-likeness of Petersburg, the city that might disappear. Bely needs Petersburg because of the city's ties to its founder Peter the Great. Moreover, the non-Russian, European quality of Petersburg helps Bely restate the question of the role of Russia as a symbol of both the East and the West. Bely's Petersburg, "appears on Maps: in the form of two small circles, one inside the other, with a black dot in the center; and from precisely this mathematical point, which has no dimension, it proclaims forcefully that it exists" (p.2). The city in Bely's novel is like a Janus, now showing its real and

concrete side, now its unreal and illusory face. Therefore we are not surprised that the city appears to exist as a "mathematical point," and as a point in space and time in which astral spheres touch the real ones.

As stated earlier, chapter six, which will be followed here in some detail, is a point of departure for our analysis of dreams, phantoms, and places in Bely's novel. Most of the section headings in chapter six are places; for example: "the Staircase," "the Street," "Nevsky Prospect," "the Caryatid," "A Dead Ray was Falling through the Window," "Petersburg," "the Garret." The epigraph with which the chapter starts is taken from the second part of Pushkin's poem "The Bronze Horseman": "Behind him everywhere the Bronze Horseman/Was galloping with heavy clatter."

We realize immediately that the statue of the Bronze Horseman and its implied multileveled symbolism is going to play a major role in the entire chapter. The text of chapter six begins with the description of the terrorist Dudkin's wretched lodgings on Vasilievsky Island, which resemble Raskolnikov's coffinlike room. Both Dudkin, and as we will see later, Nikolai Ableukhov are, like the narrator, mouthpieces for Bely, and therefore important for our understanding of the entire novel. Dudkin wants to escape from his room and from his troublesome dreams. He recalls a nightmare of the previous night in which "some kind of an outline was running after him. And was dooming him irrevocably". Dudkin's urge to go out to the street is motivated by his fear of dreams and phantoms. What were his dreams and phantoms?

Dudkin had been suffering from a persecution mania which continued in his dreams (three nightmares per night), in which he is pursued by Orientals and by a meaningless word "enfranshish" which appeared "the devil only knows from where". We have been told earlier in the novel that his room is infested with bedbugs, which Dudkin had been destroying with insect powder or persidskii poroshok, literally "Persian powder." An Israeli scholar, Omry Ronen, recalls that on the containers for such powder one could find the words printed in Roman letters "en franchise" (duty free). Perhaps Dudkin, who does not know French, transposes this word meaningless to him, into Cyrillic letters and



sees it both as "enfranshish," and its reverse the "Persian" named Shishnarfne. The hallucination of a Semite or a Mongol face with yellow lips appears to Dudkin during his nightmare. The face is that of the double agent Lippanchenko, as well as symbolically the fear of the Eastern domination that was pervasive in Russia at the beginning of the century. Fearing the enclosed space of his room and its yellow wallpaper, Dudkin runs out to drown his fright in alcohol.

In the section of chapter six entitled "A Dead Ray was Falling through the Window," Dudkin has a nightmare that he is conversing with Shishnarfne whom he had originally encountered in a dream in Helsingfors (now Helsinki) where his involvement with the party, his alcoholism, and his anarchistic theories of the destruction of culture began. Dudkin's dream involves both Shishnarfne and the phantom—the Bronze Horseman. It was in Helsingfors that Dudkin had also met Lippanchenko, a Ukrainian, who passed himself as a Greek Mavrokordato, but whose features were those of a "semite and Mongol." There Dudkin had fallen under Lippanchenko's control. Dudkin's dream of Shishnarfne—enfranshish then is both connected with Lippanchenko, and is an emanation of his own troubled soul.

In the following section entitled "Petersburg," Dudkin's dream takes on the form of a Persian Shishnarfne, who, as it becomes explicit later in the scene at Lippanchenko's cottage, is also closely connected with Lippanchenko. Shishnarfne and Dudkin talk about Petersburg, the city built on a swamp, the unreal city that "belongs to the land of the spirits". Shishnarfne gradually becomes a contour against the window and then "merely a layer of soot on the moon-illuminated pane", while his voice becomes stronger. The material substance of Shishnarfne, which becomes only a phonic substance, suddenly disappears. At that moment, still dreaming, Dudkin realizes that "Petersburg is the fourth dimension which is not indicated on maps, which is indicated merely by a dot. And this dot is the place where the plane of being is tangential to the surface of the sphere and the immense astral cosmos. A dot which in a twinkling of an eye can produce for us an inhabitant of the fourth dimension, from whom not even a wall can protect

us. A moment ago I was one of the dots by the window sill, but now I have appeared . . ." Dudkin's realization about the city being a dot is comparable to Bely's own reference to Petersburg as two small circles with a dot in the center, found in the prologue to the novel. For the purpose of our discussion it is necessary only to mention the fact that Bely was involved with both the theosophy of Blavatsky and Besant, and with the anthroposophy of Rudolph Steiner, which played a considerable role in one phase of his writing of Petersburg, and which contributed to the cosmic and mystical flavor of the novel.

What is more relevant is that for Bely, Petersburg appears as "an invisible world, the world of shadows" that could disappear at any point. Even earlier in the novel Bely had stated that "Petersburg streets possess one indubitable quality: they transform passers-by into shadows". The word "shadow"—or its synonym "silhouette"—is applied in the novel to characters who lead lives of false existence in the visible world. They are the "underground" agents Dudkin, Lippanchenko, and Morkovin. Dudkin himself is referred to as "a bluish shadow" when he emerges from the islands. The association between the hallucination Shishnarfne and Lippanchenko underlines the connection between the supernatural world and the world of shadows. The city itself appears in the domain of the supernatural. It is not a human world, but a world ruled by Shadows. Yet it is not only shadows that rule this invisible world: phantoms do so as well. The phantoms in Dudkin's life are both the city and the Bronze Horseman, whose function is to destroy the irrationality of the world of shadows embodied in Shishnarfne. The phantom of the Bronze Horseman plays a role symbolic of the forces of Russian history. Peter himself is perceived as the "father" of Russia, and as a symbol of authority against which there has been a continuous rebellion.

At the moment when Dudkin realizes that "enfranshish" was a word out of his own dream, an emanation of his own cerebral game, he hears the words: "It is I . . . I destroy irrevocably" (p.108). This particular phrase is associated in the novel with the Bronze Horseman. Dudkin, in his garret, while recalling the phrase "I destroy irrevocably," thrusts

his head through a broken window and looks at the city, specifically at Peter Square and at the statue of the Bronze Horseman that suddenly, as it seems to Dudkin, detaches itself from the rock and flies down. The Bronze Horseman proceeds to fly over the city, from one section to another. While the Horseman is flying over spaces Dudkin remains the prisoner of space: "Amidst his four walls he seemed to himself merely a captive prisoner, that is, if a captive prisoner does not have a sense of freedom greater than others, and if this narrow little interval between the walls was not equal to universal space". Dudkin realizes that he is acutely mad and that Shishnarfne was "The reverse of abracadabra or—enfranshish". He also suddenly knows that Lippanchenko has had power over his soul, the same was that the Horseman did, and that he, Dudkin, had betrayed Nikolai Ableukhov to Lippanchenko, and that Lippanchenko was a double agent. At this moment, when Dudkin became aware of what he must do regarding Lippanchenko, he suddenly has a noisy visitor: "Crash after crash resounded, the crash of metal, shattering stone". At the landing to his garret that opens up into universal space: "The Bronze Horseman stood" and "the destinies of Evgeny were repeated".

It is curious that Bely had suggested earlier in the novel that the enigmatic Horseman "extending a heavy patinated hand," which Dudkin had passed on his way back to his garret, is actually an emanation of Dudkin. "It seemed to him [Dudkin] that his back had opened up. Out of this back, as out of a door, something like the body of a giant reared and prepared to fling itself out of him" (p.64). Bely seems to imply that the Bronze Horseman is a figment of Dudkin's cerebral game, while at the same time affirming the Horseman's existence.

Bely interprets and alters the myth of Pushkin's Bronze Horseman here. While it "seemed" to Pushkin's Evgeny that the Bronze Horseman was galloping after him, Bely's Dudkin accepts the Bronze Horseman's appearance as a fact, however fantastic it may be. The movement of history has come full circle and "Aleksander Ivanovich [Dudkin]—Evgeny—now understood for the first time that he had been running in vain for a

century". The Horseman tells Dudkin that human history has reached a dead end, and asks Dudkin to endure yet a little while longer because terrorism and destruction are not a way out. Then, turning white hot, the Bronze Horseman pours his molten metal into Dudkin's veins. Pushkin's rebel Evgeny is identified with Bely's Dudkin, but Bely carries this identification even further. His Bronze Horseman addresses Dudkin as "My son." What Dudkin comprehends at the moment of the Horseman's appearance is that he must destroy Lippanchenko, and only then will he destroy his prison—the garret. But he also understands that the existing power structure will collapse, as will Petersburg itself, under the metal's blow. The link between the metallic horseman and a piece of metal (the scissors) with which Dudkin later murders Lippanchenko becomes apparent. It also assumes a historical dimension.<sup>10</sup> Dudkin, as a criminal emanation of the Horseman (we recall that the giant had come out of his back), uses as a murder weapon a pair of scissors, which symbolize his split personality, as well as Peter's splitting Russia into East and West.

In chapter seven, Dudkin kills Lippanchenko by splitting his back open. The body was found in the morning: "There was a pool of blood; there was a corpse; and a small figure, with a laughing white face. It had a small moustache, with bristling ends. How strange: the man had mounted the dead body. In his hand he was clutching a pair of scissors. He had extended an arm, and over his face—over his nose, over his lips—crawled the blot of a cockroach". This seems to represent a total identification of Dudkin with the Horseman, and it takes place at the same time that the explosion of the bomb at the Ableukhov household occurs. The bomb, as we recall, was the symbol of the apocalyptic destruction of the city. From this point on, the Horseman vanishes from the pages of the novel. This final appearance of the Bronze Horseman is a grotesque parody: the mad Dudkin sitting in the horseman's position on the murdered Lippanchenko. Dudkin's extended arm resembles Pushkin's Peter who "Stands with outstretched hand/ The Idol on [his] bronze steed". Bely's Peter ends as his own (Peter's) caricature. After the episode of Lippanchenko's murder and the explosion of the

bomb, Bely moves his characters away from Petersburg."

As has been apparent from the analysis of chapter six, the associations between Peter and the Bronze Horseman pervade the texture of the novel. Nikolai Ablukhov, to whom Dudkin had brought the bomb in a sardine can, himself has several encounters with the legendary Peter and the Bronze Horseman legend. While talking to Morkovin, an agent both of the secret police and the party, Nikolai sees Peter as "some kind of a giant, with a dark green felt hat, black hair and a tiny nose, and a tiny mustache". Nikolai sees Peter in the same tavern where he is drinking. The reference is to Peter I's legendary drinking with seamen. Another association with Peter occurs, again in chapter five, as Nikolai becomes intoxicated during his talk with Morkovin, and while looking at Peter and the sailor sitting at another table, Nikolai has a vision "From there, from afar, under full sail, winging his way toward Petersburg was the Flying Dutchman". Bely

often based in visual perception, would transform mankind. To express these beliefs, Bely's works involved three significant components: the individual, the material world, and the otherworldly etheric.

Bely, like Kandinsky, used musical terms to identify his works. He wrote four Symphonies, which are unique fictional prose forms. Their most striking facet was their fragmentariness – the paragraphs included were often linked only metaphorically or by means of leitmotifs. The reader has to work to become involved in deciphering the texts to a much greater extent than was traditional during the era in which they were written.

Thematically, all four works are primarily concerned with symbolic cognition, a dualistic world of matter and spirit, and the apocalypse – whether universal, personal, or both.

In Symbolism, which is deeply connected with anthroposophy, in that both involve the same goal – transcending the human reality to achieve a new, deeper spirituality – the Symbolism is both a concern of the work as well as the agent which controls the form and texture of the work.

Several of Bely's works contain strong anthroposophical elements. Kotik Letaev, for example, was written when Bely was completely immersed in anthroposophy. According to Northwestern Press, Kotik Letaev (1922) is one of the most important works of twentieth-century Russian prose and the great symbolist novel of childhood. It depicts the emergence of consciousness and its development into self-consciousness in a Russian boy growing up among the Moscow intelligentsia in the 1800s.

As compared to Petersburg and The Silver Dove, other works of Bely, Kotik Letaev does not contain the same political, literary, or even plot elements. There is an even greater reliance on musical devices. One of the key images of the book is that of fire, which is repetitively associated with life before birth.

According to Gerald Janeczek, who translated the book into English in 1999, (In Kotik Letaev) the child gradually experiences the three areas of human nature described by Steiner in Theosophy: the

body, the soul (ego) and the spirit. Kotik also retraces the historical evolution of the human race (World Soul) as presented in The Occult Mysteries of Antiquity, as well as ascending the stages of Higher Knowledge, and there are indications that he encounters the Guardian of the Threshold. The doctrine of colors also plays a role in the novel. In fact, Kotik Letaev is virtually saturated with anthroposophical imagery and ideas. <>

[The Red Jester: Andrei Bely's Petersburg as a Novel of the European Modern](#) by Judith Wermuth [Slavistik, LIT Verlag Münster, 9783643901545]

What was Andrei Bely's aim in his ambiguous novel Petersburg? For the first time, this study firmly places Bely's work at the heart of the European Modern (die Moderne). The book argues that the novel - with its concern for the spiritual and its desire to create new aesthetics - helped reshape fundamental views of reality, of the Self, and of consciousness. Theories of Freud and Jung, as well as the aesthetics of the Viennese Secession, are used to elucidate Bely's approach to the narrative. The book also presents Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy as the prism through which Bely reflects modernist ideas.

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Bely's anthroposophical aesthetics

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### Excerpt: Petrushka: Reality and Appearance in Petersburg and the Viennese Secession

At the turn of the twentieth century the question of communication between outer and inner reality fascinated scientists as well as artists and authors. The modern materialist worldview of Western culture was characterized by an implicit division between the objective or physical realm of existence, called also an outer system, and the subjective or psychic realm of existence, called an inner system. This predominant worldview was based on Newtonian classical physics. A change in this view was rooted in the revolutionary scientific developments at the turn of the century. For Modernists, Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (1905) undermined the very basis of materialism. It challenged the idea that properties of matter, such as space, time, or energy, have an objective existence independent of observation, and suggested that the observer may be involved with the determination of the observed properties of matter. Consequently, the Modernists believed that

Einstein placed the inner and the outer systems in a relationship of interdependence and introduced a new concept of the observer as a participant. This concept led to a unitary idea of reality (called by C. G. Jung *onus mundus*), in which matter and psyche or the material and the spiritual were not separated from each other.

In the early twentieth century, as at certain earlier times, one of the major aesthetic questions was again the relationship between reality and appearance (*Sein und Schein*). This general concern was looked at from different angles.

In the first place, philosophy, psychology and literature were concerned with dream and its role in human life. Freud's early article *The Dream* is a fulfilment of a Wish, published already in 1895-99, and his first book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) posed the questions of replacing action by a dream, and, generally, of the degree of reality present in dream. In fact, the new perception of reality was fundamental in the development of analytical psychology and for establishing a new view of the unconscious.

Another aspect of the problem of reality and appearance is the use of different artistic methods of obliterating the borders between reality and spectacle, between truth and lie, or between mask and man.

The work of Hermann Bahr, a significant literary figure in fin-de-siècle Vienna, most likely drew Bely's interest to Ernst Mach's theories in *Analysis of Sensations* and also to particular literary works related to Mach's view of reality, such as Arthur Schnitzler's play *Der Grüne Kakadu* (1899). The names of Mach, Bahr, and Schnitzler were all well known to the writers of the Silver Age from the pages of the literary journal *Vesy*. Mach's name is among those Bely himself mentions in his comments on Oswal'd Kul'pe's book *Ocherki sovremennoi germanskoi filosofii* (*Essays on Contemporary German Philosophy*). The name of Hermann Bahr appears multiple times on the pages of *Vesy*. The journalist Maximilian Schick emphasizes that this is a "a fine Viennese writer, ... a refined and free-spirited European," and elaborates on his aesthetic approach to theater. In the section "Chronicles" of the first issue of the journal there is a report about

the staging of Schnitzler's play *The Green Cockatoo* in Paris, in which the author points out that this play is "well known to the Russian audience."

In Petersburg, Bely focuses rather on the aesthetic transformation of Mach's theories by Hermann Bahr. To Bely, Bahr's aesthetics, which represented the aesthetics of the Viennese Secession, was apparently the conduit of the contemporary view of the Self shared by many Western authors of the beginning twentieth century. Bahr appointed himself an aesthetic missionary to turn-of-the-century Vienna, much as Bely did for Russia. Bely, who saw Petersburg as a novel of the European Modern, must have needed to discuss Bahr's views as well as other major theories of the time. In this chapter 1 will focus on Bely's views of the Ego and of reality based on the theory of Ernst Mach, and on the references to Hermann Bahr's aesthetics called new idealism.

In his book *Understanding Hermann Bahr*, Donald Daviau asserts that the publication as well as the study of Bahr's work have been severely hindered in the last fifty years by two circumstances: firstly, the problems with the rights to Bahr's works, including the *Nachlaß*, and secondly, a negative opinion, particularly among German authors, inherited from the polemics and satires of Karl Kraus, that was passed on unrevised from one generation to another.

According to Daviau, Bahr's contemporaries called him a mediator of Modernity and the Man of the day-after-tomorrow (*der Mensch von übermorgen*). Having begun his career in politics, Bahr soon preferred to write journalistic essays covering broad areas of art, literature, music, science and philosophy. He was editor of the Berlin *Freie Bühne*, co-establisher of the Vienna weekly *Die Zeit*, where he edited the feuilleton section, dramaturg of Burgtheater, and director in the Deutsches Theater in Berlin under Max Reinhardt. As Daviau asserts, Bahr worked across national lines, considered himself an *Austropäer* (a combination of Austrian and European), and devoted a large part of his life to a cultural program of unifying the European nations. His views, according to Daviau, are still relevant for the European Union." Bahr contributed also to the development of individual artists and

writers, as well as to the aesthetic developments in art and literature. He considered himself to be the founder of the group that became known later as Jung-Wien (Young Vienna). While Daviau rightfully defines this claim as "self-aggrandizement," Bahr was certainly the spokesman and the theoretician behind this group. He was also a passionate supporter of Arthur Schnitzler, believed that he had discovered Loris (Hugo von Hofmannsthal), provided, through his essays, a detailed insider view of the Viennese Secession, and shared with his admired friend Gustav Klimt the cause of "modernizing art in Vienna along the model of other leading European nations in order thereby to usher Austria culturally into the twentieth century."

### Decomposing the Ego. Ernst Mach and the aesthetics of Hermann Bahr.

Unlike the allusions Bely makes to Freud and Jung, which can be found in Petersburg as clusters concentrated around particular chapters, the references to Bahr's views are rather scattered throughout the narrative of Petersburg. Nevertheless, when put together, as in a puzzle, they reveal their common context. I will start with Bely's adoption of Bahr's perception of the concept of nerves.

In the chapter "Not Good," Aleksandr Ivanovich Dudkin makes a statement that "...it is all just — nerves" and characterizes himself and Nikolai Apollonovich as "nervous people." In "Comte-Comte-Comte" nervousness is presented as a distinction of the younger generation: "old people are not troubled by silence while nervous youth is." Here the opposition between silence and nerves may seem gratuitous to readers unfamiliar with Bahr's view that modern man needs to express himself, which means to express his nerves.

In 1891, Hermann Bahr published the second collection of essays from the series *Zur Kritik der Moderne* (Critique of the Modern) under the title *Die Überwindung des Naturalismus* (1891; Overcoming Naturalism). In an essay that has the same motto as its title, "Overcoming Naturalism," Bahr discusses the need to abandon Naturalism as an aesthetic school of the past which no longer plays any role in contemporary modern European culture. He insists that Naturalism should be replaced by new schools and defines their new

aesthetics. He regards Naturalism as a necessary phase, something like an academia for nerves (hohe Schule für Nerven), since Man could become a virtuoso of nerves only during the confrontation of the soul with reality that lasted about thirty years -- the time when Naturalism was the predominant aesthetic school in the German speaking part of Europe. Bahr believes that Naturalism was first replaced by psychology in the sense that art and literature gave up the representation of external images to discover what he called the secrets of the solitary soul. The purpose was to describe precisely that which distinguishes our own feelings and our own unique knowledge from reality. Bahr realizes that Naturalism is the way to psychology. Psychology, however, reversed the aesthetics: the artist was no longer supposed to be a tool of mirroring reality. Quite the opposite! According to Bahr, reality served now as material for the artist and was used to express his nature in clear and powerful symbols. Bahr sees both the old and the new art as forms of the self-expression of Man. He sees the difference in the fact that in the art of Classicism, Man means reason and feelings; for Romanticism, Man means passion and sensuality; while in the Modern, Man means Nerves. Naturalism, in Bahr's view, will be overcome by the mystic of the nerves. Bahr asserts that psychology, like Naturalism, was as forms of the self-expression of Man. He sees the difference in the fact that in the art of Classicism, Man means reason and feelings; for Romanticism, Man means passion and sensuality; while in the Modern, Man means Nerves. Naturalism, in Bahr's view, will be overcome by the mystic of the nerves. Bahr asserts that psychology, like Naturalism, was only a prelude to the awakening and the manifestation of the Ego (das Selbstische). The new, last phase of modernity is in the command of the nerves. This is Bahr's description of the new Man and the new idealism that replaces realism or naturalism:

The new idealism represents the new humans. They are Nerves; the rest died out, it is past (welk) and dry. They now experience everything with the Nerves, and their reactions are now based only on the Nerves. What happens is the result of the Nerves, and the consequences are also the result of the Nerves.

Importantly for the analysis of Petersburg, Bahr connects his characteristics of the new Man with the new aesthetic view of form in art and literature:

The word, however, is based on reason or on the senses. Thus, they [the new humans] can use only a symbolic language (Blumensprache): They speak always in likenesses and symbols. They can change their language/speech often for it is only an approximation and it is under no pressure; at the end of the day it remains always a mask (Verkleidung). The content of the new idealism is Nerves, Nerves, Nerves, and — costume.

In his confrontation with Likhutin in the chapter "He Did Not Quite Explain Himself" Nikolai Apollonovich clarifies that "the domino is explained by nervous exhaustion." Some descriptions of the state of mind of some of the characters such as the description of Likhutin as a "violent madman" can be seen against the background of Freud's and Jung's studies of hysteria. Bely's use of words derived from the Russian word for nerves, however, leads the analysis of the novel in a different direction. The connection Bely makes between Nikolai Apollonovich's nerves and the domino refers to Bahr's formula of the new idealism as "Nerves, Nerves, Nerves and — costume" and helps explain Bely's entire idea of the identification of his protagonist with a domino or a costume. This connection is more clearly presented in the chapter "What Costumier?" In this chapter, parallel with the first detailed description of Nikolai Apollonovich, his appearance, his rooms, and his daily routine, Bely also makes a strange connection between the character and his costume, a connection which remains present, like a leitmotif, throughout the narrative. First Bely describes Nikolai Apollonovich's emphatic satisfaction when he receives his costume: "At this point Nikolai Apollonovich's face suddenly took on a pleased expression: Ah, this will be someone from the costumier's: the costumier has brought me my costume..." However, twice Bely emphatically repeats the question: "What costumier?" "And again we repeat to ourselves [in our own right]: What costumier?" Here Bely gives a full description of the main attribute to Nikolai Apollonovich's character, the costume consisting of a "small mask with a black lace beard," and a "sumptuous bright

red domino cape with folds that rustled." Then a ritual, which Bely calls masquerade, follows:

Soon he stood before the mirror — all of satin, all of red, having raised the miniature mask over his face; the black lace of the beard, turning away, fell on to his shoulders, forming to right and left a whimsical, fantastical wing; and from the black lace of the wings, from the semi-twilight of the room in the mirror looked at him tormentingly, strangely — it, the same; the face — his, his own; you would have said that there in the mirror it was not Nikolai Apollonovich looking at himself, but an unknown, pale, languishing — demon of space."

This masquerade in front of the mirror presents Nikolai Apollonovich already in the beginning of the novel in the context of modern man as understood by Hermann Bahr and the Secessionists. To do so, Bely uses two of the emblems established in turn-of-the-century European aesthetics: the costume and the mirror. <>

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Bely's works tend to focus on the apocalypse, while bridging life and art, because he was a Symbolist (to use the term Bely used for his concern for the ties between man and the transcendent). He also loaded his works with rhythms, alliterations, and neologisms for this reason. Bely defined Symbolism not merely as a literary device, but rather as a "radical epistemological stance" — a new form of cognition. Bely believed that this new cognition, often based in visual perception, would transform mankind. To express these beliefs, Bely's works involved three significant components: the individual, the material world, and the otherworldly etheric.

Bely, like Kandinsky, used musical terms to identify his works. He wrote four Symphonies, which are unique fictional prose forms. Their most striking facet was their fragmentariness — the paragraphs included were often linked only metaphorically or by means of leitmotifs. The reader has to work to become involved in deciphering the texts to a much greater extent than was traditional during the era in which they were written.

Thematically, all four works are primarily concerned with symbolic cognition, a dualistic world

of matter and spirit, and the apocalypse — whether universal, personal, or both.

In Symbolism, which is deeply connected with anthroposophy, in that both involve the same goal — transcending the human reality to achieve a new, deeper spirituality — the Symbolism is both a concern of the work as well as the agent which controls the form and texture of the work.

Several of Bely's works contain strong anthroposophical elements. Kotik Letaev, for example, was written when Bely was completely immersed in anthroposophy. According to Northwestern Press, Kotik Letaev (1922) is one of the most important works of twentieth-century Russian prose and the great symbolist novel of childhood. It depicts the emergence of consciousness and its development into self-consciousness in a Russian boy growing up among the Moscow intelligentsia in the 1800s.

As compared to Petersburg and The Silver Dove, other works of Bely, Kotik Letaev does not contain the same political, literary, or even plot elements. There is an even greater reliance on musical devices. One of the key images of the book is that of fire, which is repetitively associated with life before birth.

According to Gerald Janeczek, who translated the book into English in 1999, (In Kotik Letaev) the child gradually experiences the three areas of human nature described by Steiner in Theosophy: the body, the soul (ego) and the spirit. Kotik also retraces the historical evolution of the human race (World Soul) as presented in The Occult Mysteries of Antiquity, as well as ascending the stages of Higher Knowledge, and there are indications that he encounters the Guardian of the Threshold. The doctrine of colors also plays a role in the novel. In fact, Kotik Letaev is virtually saturated with anthroposophical imagery and ideas.

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This attention leads to seemingly contradictory literary strategies of representation, a contradiction that can be seen in other urban modernist novels from the same period like Andrei Bely's [Petersburg](#), Robert Musil's [The Man without Qualities](#).



At this point, what one might call the positive critical dimension of Bely's symphonies, their tendency to sharpen the ... similar structural displacements in later modernist fiction by Joyce, Evgeny Zamyatin, Robert Musil, and many others.

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[The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture: From Tongan Villages to American Suburbs](#) by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal [Cornell University Press, 9780801432583]

A pioneering, richly interdisciplinary volume, this is the first work in any language on a subject that has long attracted interest in the West and is now of consuming interest in Russia itself. The cultural ferment unleashed by the collapse of the Soviet Union reawakened interest in the study of Russian religion and spirituality. This book provides a comprehensive account of the influence of occult beliefs and doctrines on intellectual and cultural life in twentieth-century Russia. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal's introduction delineates the characteristics of occult cosmology which distinguish it from mysticism and theology, and situates Russian occultism in historical and pan-European contexts. Contributors explore the varieties of occult thinking characteristic of prerevolutionary Russia, including Kabbala, theosophy, anthroposophy, and the fascination with Satanism. Other contributors document occultism in the cultural life of the early Soviet period, examine the surprising traces of the occult in the culture of the high Stalin era, and

describe the occult revival in contemporary Russia. The volume includes bibliographical essays on Russian occult materials available outside Russia.

[The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture: From Tongan Villages to American Suburbs](#) is a compilation of essays written by various scholars on the various underground and occult aspects of Russian culture and later of the culture of the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks who created the Soviet Union did much to portray Russian culture under the Tsars as backward and the Russian peasant as illiterate and prone to superstition; however, as one sees by reading this book many individuals within the Soviet Union themselves had elaborate occult and esoteric beliefs. While the Soviet Union tried to ban writers and intellectuals and suppress all religion or "irrational" developments of the human spirit, this effort largely failed due to the very creative nature of man (so misunderstood by Marxists). Russian culture has always been influenced by surviving pagan beliefs and through the Christian tradition preserved in the Russian Orthodox Church; however, influences from freemasonry, Swedenborgianism and spiritism, Theosophy, Anthroposophy, Eastern religions, and other occultists such as Gurdjieff and his interpreter Ouspensky have also played an important role in shaping the occult underground culture in Russia. In addition, various German philosophical idealists such as Kant, Schelling, and Hegel came to play an important part in the development of Russian thought along with iconoclasts such as Nietzsche and romantics and anarchists. This book includes a brief introduction to the occult culture in Russian and Soviet thought and various essays, followed by a conclusion dealing with modern developments in Russian culture. Essays included are an essay on folk magic and divination among the Russian peasantry with emphasis on the survival of paganism and the role of the Russian Orthodox Church; an essay on the role of the peasant and the occult in Russian literature with reference to the authors Ivan Turgenev, Andrei Bely, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn; an essay on the role of the Jewish Kabbalah in Russian occultism including reference to Christian Sophiologists including the theologians Vladimir Solovyov, Pavel Florensky, and Sergei Bulgakov; an essay on the role of Satanism with emphasis on the role of Satan in the Orthodox

Churches and Russian tradition as well as mention of the novels of Andrei Bely; an essay on "fashionable occultism" including reference to the Theosophical and Anthroposophical societies, spiritualism, and freemasonry; an essay on the thought of Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov; an essay on Russian cosmism which included ideas on space exploration and immortality with reference to Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, Biocosmist and panpsychist; an essay on technology and the role of the Soviet engineer; an essay on occult socialist realism (interestingly occult ideas based upon the Christian veneration of saints were behind the Soviet action taken in preserving Lenin's body); an essay on the filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein and the role of the occult and gnosticism in his thinking; an essay on Vsevolod Ivanov; an essay on Daniil Andreev famous mystic and writer who combined world religions in what he termed "The Rose of the World"; and a concluding essay on the role of occultism in politics which mentions various Russian Rightist groups including the Traditionalist thought of Aleksandr Dugin and the role of the infamous antisemitic tract, [\\_Protocols of the Elders of Zion\\_](#). In sum, this book constitutes an enormous compendium of material on various occultists, writers and groups, as well as a useful bibliography including details about various obscure journals and rare books, and will prove invaluable to the researcher in esoteric thought. Many in America are largely ignorant of the alternative belief systems which exist among the Russians and which existed under the Soviet tyranny, and hopefully this book will prove a useful tool to alleviating that ignorance. For all those interested in alternative modes of perceiving reality and in discarded belief systems, the ideas presented in this book will prove to be a fascinating look at the deep recesses of the Russian (and Soviet) psyche.

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[The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture](#) by  
 Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal [The National Council for  
 Soviet and East European Research, June 16, 1993]

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#### Annex I

Excerpt: "Occult" means that which is covered or hidden. The term applies to a wide variety of doctrines and practices, ranging from elaborate belief systems such as Theosophy and Anthroposophy to sorcery, witchcraft, and a wide-range of divinatory practices (astrology, palm-reading tarot cards, et. al), and from the seances of the Spiritualists to the orgiastic rituals of certain sectarian cults. Occultism comes to the fore in times of social stress, cultural confusion, and religious uncertainty.

The occult revival of late 19th and early 20th century Russia was a response to the fading credibility of the Russian Orthodox Church, the spiritual/psychological inadequacy of intelligentsia ideologies, the destabilizing effects of rapid industrialization, and continued political upheaval. Interest in the occult cut across political divisions and class lines, but had a special appeal to women. Sophisticated doctrines coexisted, often in the same persons, with ideas or practices taken from Kabbala, Buddhism, Yoga, Siberian shamanism, and practices of the mystical sectarians,

and folk beliefs, often taken from the pagan Slavs, in magic and "spoiling."

Occult doctrines influenced the art and thought of late Imperial Russia. Symbolist writers and painters of the era held that there was another higher world which only the artist, with his/her special powers, could perceive. Cubo-futurist and suprematist painters believed that geometric and abstract forms constituted the authentic reality hidden beneath or beyond the illusions of empirical reality. Occult emphasis on mind-body interaction, parapsychology, and hypnotism helped set the agenda for the new science of psychology. Occultism blended with apocalypticism, and with radical political doctrines which preached the dissolution of the (egoistic) self in a larger macrocosmic Self. On the right, all sorts of demonic conspiracies were attributed to Jews and freemasons. " Occultism reached the highest circles of the Imperial Court; Rasputin was but the tip of an ice-berg.

Occultism was an element in Soviet culture as well. The line between magic and science disappeared in the utopianism of the early Soviet period. Hopes formerly invested in religion and magic were transferred to technology and science. Stalinist political culture utilized ideas taken from the occult elements in its attempt to influence the masses. Stalin's name assumed incantational significance.

Contemporary Russian occultism is fueled by destalinization, the collapse of communism, and the resulting spiritual/cultural confusion and economic chaos. There are marked parallels to the New Age Movement in the West, but on the far right, a occult variant of Russian messianism, seems to be developing.

#### The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal

The occult means "that which is covered or hidden." The term applies to a wide variety of doctrines and practices, ranging from elaborate belief systems such as Theosophy and Anthroposophy to sorcery, witchcraft, and divinatory practices of all sorts, and from the seances of the Spiritualists to the orgiastic rituals of certain sectarian cults. Philosophically, occult systems are a way of ordering the world, a search for the unifying principles that underlie

apparently disparate phenomena. They reflect a desire to go beneath or rise above empirical or material reality and to deal with intangible essences such as mind, soul, or spirit. Some modern occult systems use the terminology of science and try to prove that their doctrines are scientific, but their quest for a higher knowledge is fundamentally extra-rational.

In addition, most occult doctrines assume rejection of material in favor of spiritual reality. Even if occultists share some methodological elements with science, their original premises and ultimate goals are diametrically opposite. There is also a practical side to the occult---attempts, by means of black and white magic, fortune telling, (astrology, palm-reading, tarot cards, et. al.), to control nature and/or to enlist invisible or supernatural forces, divine or diabolic, for personal goals, such as wealth, health, and love.

Occult is often used interchangeably with esoteric, "that which is designed for and understood by the specially initiated alone, as doctrines or rites limited to a small circle of adepts and initiates." Esotericism has been described as a type of thought, an attitude to the world, that is associated with a particular cluster of ideas. Also common to many esoteric doctrines is the assumption of sacred numbers and of the magical powers of The Word, and the use of Gematria, calculating the numerical value of words, frequently for divinatory purposes, e.g. to calculate the date of the Apocalypse. Esoteric also pertains to texts which contain a hidden or inner meaning, in addition to their "exoteric" or public meaning.

The "Occult" overlaps with mysticism, but is not synonymous with it. To draw a hard and fast dividing line between them, is both artificial and impossible. Yet certain distinctions can be observed. In Western Europe, mysticism tended to deepen or supplement official theology; it was expressed within the Church and in deference to religious authority. Occultism was an extra-Church, though not necessarily an anti-Church phenomenon. Most practicing occultists considered themselves Christians. Church authorities often condemned occultists as Satanists or heretics, as much for political reasons, the desire to be the sole interpreter of doctrine as for religious ones.

Mystical experience is open to all; it requires no special training. Occult doctrines emphasize esoteric knowledge or practices which must be learned. This secret lore, with its potential for power, is revealed only to adepts, in a special chain of transmission from master to disciple. Some occult doctrines and practices are confined to secret circles, cults, or sects. Medieval occultists typically secluded themselves and eschewed political or social stands. From the late medieval period on, occult doctrines became intertwined with utopian visions of all sorts, and with millennialism, messianism, and mystical revolutionism. Taking on this-worldly goals, some occultists hoped to use their special powers to create a new world.

### Occult as Symptom of Social and Cultural Stress

The occult is as old as history itself, indeed older, but interest in occult beliefs and practices has waxed and waned over the centuries, typically reaching a crescendo in periods of religious uncertainty and cultural confusion. At such times, for various reasons, old values and beliefs lose their credibility; a rapidly changing political, economic, or social reality gives rise to new questions that the established religion does not answer and/or to spiritual yearnings, which the institutionalized church does not satisfy. Until a new consensus takes root, the occult, with its vision of an immutable world, deepens or supplements the verities of established religion, and seems to offer stability and salvation. Examples in early Modern Europe include Renaissance Italy, torn between medieval Catholicism and revived paganism, and seventeenth century England, disoriented by the new science, the emerging industrial order, and beset with political and religious conflict. The discovery of a new world (America), Renaissance humanists' use of critical reason, confidence of human powers stimulated by the scientific revolution, and apocalyptic expectations caused by the date 1666 (666 is the number of The Beast) stimulated hopes of a new era and called into question conventional Christian notions of good and evil, virtue and sin. Philosophic and practical occultism, sophistication and superstition, rarefied theory and black magic, coexisted in different sectors of society and even in the same persons.

The occultism of such periods is typically syncretic, for despite their ancient lineage, occult beliefs and practices are neither monolithic nor unchanging. Rather, at any given time or place, the ancient lore is adapted to contemporary personal and social concerns and to the particular cultural and religious heritage. Old beliefs are rediscovered, recycled, overlaid with new elements, and applied to current issues. The Age of Reason was also the age of Emanuel Swedenborg, Cagliostro, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, Franz Anton Mesmer's hypnotic cures. Discomfort with the claims of reason and science led to the recirculation of old prophecies and the dissemination of new ones. Mystical freemasons preached reform by a dedicated self-perfected spiritual elite.

Nineteenth and twentieth century occultists sought to reconcile religion and science, humanize an increasingly impersonal world, and harmonize an increasingly fragmented society. That All are One is a tenet of many occult doctrines, which also, paradoxically, emphasize discovery of one's true self, understood as individuality, as distinct from egoistic individualism. We find a scientization of the occult, transfer to science and technology of hopes formerly invested in religion or magic.

By the 1890s, the impersonality of the burgeoning cities, the perceived threat of mass democracy to culture and higher values, increasing class conflict and ethnic strife, combined to foster rejection of liberalism, rationalism, materialism, and positivism by an ever growing number of artists and intellectuals. Occult ideas combined with radical political doctrines of both left and right, with apocalypticism both Christian and secular, and with the anti-rationalist philosophies of Nietzsche, and to a lesser extent, of Bergson, fostered contempt for the "bourgeois values" of peace and prosperity. These trends sprang forth with even greater vehemence after the Great War, and continued through the 1920s. Indeed, in the eyes of many people, including occultists, the Great War confirmed the bankruptcy of rational civilization. Occultists had a natural affinity for extreme political doctrines. That Naziism had occult roots is generally known, but occult doctrines and beliefs entered into Bolshevism and Stalinism as well, as we shall see. The Nazi mystique of blood and soil

was bound up with Blavatsky's idea that certain "root races," in which she included Jews and Gypsies, were obsolete. She did not say that they should be exterminated, but some German occultists did. Some French occultists had demonized Jews as well. Just as the French Revolution was labelled a masonic conspiracy, the Bolshevik Revolution was attributed to a "Judeo-Masonic conspiracy."

The Great Depression and Hitler's coming to power fostered a change in the social mood. In reaction to the blatant irrationalism of Fascism and Naziism, liberals and radicals emphasized reason and science as the only way to solve problems, and associated occultism with superstition and reaction. In the 1960s, however, interest in occultism revived, and has grown steadily ever since.

## The Occult in Late Imperial Russia.

### 1. Background

Occultism in Russia was part of a larger cultural tradition that was philosophically reinforced from within. Russian Orthodoxy did not discourage personal religious experience; it tolerated gnostic speculations by clerical and lay theologians that would have been condemned as heresy in the Roman Catholic Church. Gnostic elements became embedded in Eastern Orthodox theology in the 6th century and were reinforced in the 16th century by the thought of the German mystic, Jacob Boehme, then popular in the Orthodox seminaries. Boehme's thought (very likely in combination with mystical Freemasonry) influenced the reformer, Count Mikhail Speransky, the Slavophile Ivan Kirrevsky, whose father was a Mason, Vladimir Odoevsky (author of *Russian Nights*), and also Alexander Golitsyn and Rodion Koshelev, both close associates of Tsar Alexander I. Boehme also influenced Russia's greatest philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, sometimes called "the last Gnostic," and through Soloviev, the art and thought, including religious philosophy, of the early 20th century.

On the popular level, the dvoeverie (dual faith) combined pagan pantheism with Christianity. Pagan rituals designed to assure a good harvest, prevent harm, restore health, or harm an enemy, survived well into the 20th century. The basic distinction of the dvoeverie was not between good

and evil, but between clean and unclean. In Medieval and Early Modern Russia, people of all classes turned to witches and sorcerers to prevent "spoiling," ward off the "evil eye," and cast spells on enemies and rivals. Witches and sorcerers, incidentally, were often male. As late as the 16th century, the oath of loyalty to the Tsar included the renunciation of sorcery. The peasant's universe was populated by all sorts of nature spirits, e.g. rusalki (mermaids), wood sprites, creatures who inhabited house and barn, and had to be propitiated. Peasant nannies regaled their charges, the children of the more privileged, with folk beliefs and legends. The writings of Pushkin, Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dostoevsky, Sologub, and, surprisingly, Chekhov, contain many examples of occult or supernatural images and themes, especially of the "unclean force." Tolstoi's essay, "The Fruits of Enlightenment," ridiculed such beliefs; in his novels, he depicted seances and alluded to freemasonry and numerology. These beliefs were not part of a coherent system but their emphasis on invisible forces and other worlds created a mind-set receptive to the sophisticated occult doctrines described below.

As Western occult systems were introduced into Russia, their structures and forms were adapted to indigenous predispositions, needs, and movements, including political protest. Masonry was introduced into Russia in the 18th century. Such Russian masons as Nikolai Novikov (1744-1818) stressed a personal morality that went beyond external adherence to religious law. In Russia, where civil liberties were unknown, the secrecy of the masonic lodges facilitated discussion of controversial issues. That very secrecy led Catherine the Great to regard the lodges as covers for political sedition. Frightened by the French Revolution and by rumors that her son and heir Paul was associated with the masons, she suppressed the lodges and arrested Novikov. Masonry revived in the reign of Alexander I. Some scholars claim that Alexander himself was a member of the Lodge Astrea, where he and persons close to him discussed projects for reforming Russia, including the abolition of serfdom. But Alexander too, became frightened and turned against the Masons in 1812. The extent to which members of the lodges took the occult teachings seriously differed greatly. For some, occult

language and rituals were a means of organization and contact, for others much more. D.S. Merezhkovsky (himself a mason) insisted that the Decembrists idealism derived from mystical freemasonry, not from Enlightenment rationalism.

For most of the 19th century, interest in the occult by the Russian elite was confined to a few circles, but in the 1880s the cultural climate began to change. The fading appeal of the official Orthodox Church, the spiritually unsatisfying atheism and positivism of the intelligentsia, the destabilizing impact of the rapid industrialization of the 1890s, political upheaval, cultural disintegration, and the association of rationalism and materialism with the West, combined to create a climate of personal confusion and religious quest which was receptive to the occult. New occult systems attracted many serious and dedicated adherents from among the intellectual and artistic elite. Spiritualism, for example, was introduced into Russia in the 1860s by A. N. Aksakov (1823-1903) and A. N. Butlerov (1828-1903), both University Professors, who claimed that the doctrine was a science. Spiritualism attracted so many adherents (seances were even held at the royal court), that a special commission, headed by the famous chemist Mendeleev, was named, in 1874-75, to test its claims. Not surprisingly, the commission found against it. Nevertheless, Spiritualist experiments in mental telepathy and parapsychology aroused interest in psychic phenomena and in mind-body interaction; later these subjects were pursued by early Russian psychologists. By 1881, Spiritualists were able to form their own Journal Rebus (1881--1917; the title is the same in Russian); it featured articles on spiritualism, astrology, palm-reading, mystical freemasonry, vegetarianism, homeopathic medicine, Theosophy, and experiments in psychic research, mental telepathy and hypnotism in particular. The spiritualist seances were not open to the public, but invitations were not difficult to obtain. At one time or another, the famous philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, his brother Vsevolod Soloviev, and the symbolist poet Valery Briusov, were interested in Spiritualism.'

## 2. The Russian Fin de siècle

As the spiritual/cultural crisis intensified, some Russians who wished to deepen, supplement, or

reinterpret Russian Orthodoxy, became interested in the mystery religions of pagan antiquity, yoga, Buddhism, and the Jewish Kabbala. Vladimir Soloviev was particularly interested in the latter; mainly through him, the Kabbala, albeit in poorly understood or even distorted form, became part of the general legacy of the Russian occult. Russian writers and artists who visited Paris learned about French fin de siècle occultism, French Symbolism, and Nietzsche, and introduced them into Russia. Particularly important was D. S. Merezhkovsky, popularizer of French symbolism and Nietzsche, advocate, after 1900, of a "new religious consciousness," based on the assumption that the Second Coming of Christ was imminent, and, after 1905, of a "religious revolution," which would establish the Kingdom of God on Earth. He and his circle were called "God-seekers." The "God-seekers" tended to idealize Classical Athens and Medieval Western Europe as organic societies, in which artist and people were united. They hated the new forces of capitalism which were transforming Russia, destroying old elites to which some of them belonged.

The Symbolists believed that art had theurgic powers, that they could literally create a new world by means of art. They also believed in the "magic of words" (title of an important essay, 1909 by Andrei Bely), a belief that can be traced back to Ancient Egypt. The Egyptians believed that the word creates all things and that it has supernatural effects. Invoking the name of the gods, for example, gives the invoker power over them, but it must be spoken with correct intonation and rhythm, that only the priests know. Symbolist occultism was part of a complex weave that included, in various degrees depending on the individual, Apocalyptic Christianity, Nietzsche's Prometheanism, Wagnerian aesthetics, Soloviev's philosophy, especially his doctrine of Sophia, and Fedorov's hope of resurrecting the dead by means of science. With the exception of Fedorov (see below), Russian occultism (and also mysticism) is characterized by its emphasis on a female principle, on the Great Mother, for example.

Theosophy was particularly attractive to artists and intellectuals seeking a new unifying principle, a way to reconcile religion, art, and philosophy.<sup>1</sup> It

provided a structured world view which could also accommodate other forms of mysticism, while its claim to be a world religion meant that there was no need to renounce Christianity. The symbolist poet Andrei Bely, the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, the priest Pavel Florensky, were all interested, at one time or another, in Theosophy, partly as a means to supplement or revitalize Russian Orthodoxy. Variations of theosophy developed. George Gurdjieff, in association with Peter Uspensky, a popular Theosophist lecturer and writer, developed his own variant of Theosophy, which included Islamic mysticism (Sufism). Nikolai Roerich developed Agni-Yoga, a synthesis of European and Asian esoteric and spiritual thought. Agni-Yoga, published in Riga in 1931, also includes ideas on health, education, daily life, and human relationships. Roerikh, Uspensky, and Gurdjieff emigrated after the Bolshevik Revolution. Until recently, their primary impact was in the West but their formative years were in Russia, and there is tremendous interest in them there today.

Interest in the occult cut across political divisions. Maxim Gorky, the famous writer, friend of Lenin, and future architect of Socialist Realism was interested in Theosophy, as was Anatole Lunacharsky, future Bolshevik Commissar of Enlightenment. Theosophy did not posit a personal God, and the doctrine condemned egoism and accumulation of material goods--elements compatible with socialism, in a vague sort of way. Maxim Gorky was fascinated by Naum Kotik's studies in hypnotism, recognizing their potential as a means to influencing the masses. There are clear occult elements in the poetry and plays of the young Anatole Lunacharsky, future Bolshevik Commissar of Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, as late as 1919, when he was already Commissar, he wrote an occult play "Vasilisa the Wise," that was intended to be part of a trilogy. Roerikh asserted that Jesus was the first Communist; he visited the Soviet Union in 1926, and met with Lunacharsky, Chicherin, and Krupskaya. In the emigre community, he was believed to be a Soviet agent.

Gorky and Lunacharsky formulated "God-building," a Marxist surrogate religion (to which Lenin vehemently objected), during the Revolution of 1905, for they recognized the power of religion

and myth to inspire people to sacrifice, even die, for their beliefs. "God-building" preached a collective immortality which dissolved the individuum in the cosmos, a positivist version of the Gnostic contempt for the material world. Energeticism stimulated "God-builders'" hopes of tapping the latent energy of the masses. In Gorky's novel *Confession* (1908) an assembled crowd, using its collective energy, heals a paralyzed girl.

On the popular level, there was a surge of interest in the occult. Peasants moving to the cities took their superstitions with them; confused in the new situation, they resorted to fortune-tellers, magic, and faith-healers for help and guidance. So did the intellectual and cultural elite.

The Revolution of 1905 resulted in the partial introduction of civil liberties to Russia, including relaxation of the censorship and legalization of organizations such as the Theosophists. Private quests became public. In some circles the Revolution of 1905 was interpreted as the beginning of the apocalypse that would usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth. Seeking signs and portents of the End, and also trying to orient themselves in a rapidly changing world, people of all classes turned to the occult for direction and guidance. During the Revolution of 1905, political cartoons featured monsters and demons devouring Russia, personified as a ravished maiden. After 1905, scores of new journals were founded, among them: *Vestnik teosofii* (Herald of Theosophy), *Voprosy psikhizma i spiritualisticheskoi filosofii* (Questions of Psychism and Spiritualistic Philosophy) *Teosofist* (Theosophist), *Izida* (Isis), and *Stinks*, (Sphinx). The works of French occultists, e.g. Edouard Schure (1841-1929), Papus (pseudonym of Gerard Encausse), were translated into Russian for a growing popular market, as were new translations of the occult classics of late Medieval and early Modern Europe, e.g. Agrippa, Paracelsus, Boehme, and Swedenborg. They appealed to Russian seekers of a higher harmony that could transcend the social fragmentation, class conflict and cultural chaos of their own time.

Intellectuals seeking to bridge the gulf between themselves and the people, began to utilize folk themes in their work and became fascinated with popular legends and with the rituals and practices

of the pre-Christian Slavs and the mystical sectarians, which included occult elements. Tapping into the immense reservoir of folklore, they became acquainted with popular beliefs, myths, and unsystematized ideas that are simultaneously archaic and modern, pagan and Christian. This applies not only to the symbolists, but to new schools of art that developed after 1909--futurism, cubo-futurism, suprematism, and primitivism. Dr. Badmaev's "Tibetan powders" were in great demand. Stravinsky's famous ballet, "The Rite of Spring," concludes with the sacrificial ritual of the pagan Slavs. Roerikh wrote the first part, which is quite different in tone; it depicts round-dancing, social harmony, organic union with nature (a kissing of the earth scene). The first futurist group called itself *Hylaea*, after the home of the Scythians, the fierce nomads of Central Asia. Some intellectuals saw survivals of pagan mystery cults in mystical sectarianism and paradoxically regarded the sects as the expression of authentic popular Christianity, because sectarians rejected the established Church and regarded the Tsar as the Antichrist. Khlebnikov's works draw on a variety of sources: folk magical traditions, e.g. on the power of specific herbs, shamanism, and Paul Sedirs occult botany.<sup>1</sup> Writers and artists of peasant origin, e.g. the sculptor Sergei Konenkov (future winner of the Lenin Prize), the poets Sergei Esenin and Nikolai Kluev, featured occult images and themes in their work, which was hailed as an authentic expression of the folk spirit.

Coincidentally, in the early 20th century, new studies of Siberian shamanism by writers in political exile in Siberia (V. Bogoraz, L. Sternberg, and V. Iokhelsen) appeared. Shaman stems from the word "to know". The shaman has supernatural powers; he leaves his own body and, in a trance, proceeds to other worlds, by way of his drum, to learn how to heal this world. Shamanism fascinated the creative intelligentsia. Peg Weiss has depicted its impact on the painting of Kandinsky, who was a trained ethnographer.<sup>1</sup> Images of the *dvoeverie* appear in his paintings as well. Kandinsky and other modernist painters viewed the artist as a kind of shaman, a healer of Russia. The incantational language of the Shaman was one of the sources of the futurist concept of *zaum* (transrational



language); another was the glossolalia (speaking in tongues) of the mystic sectarians.

The occult, again blending with other ideas, especially Nietzsche's "beyond good and evil," was a factor in intellectuals rejection of traditional norms of morality and behavior, especially as relates to sex and the family. Gurdjieff believed that evil was an illusion, manifest to those mired in the chains of this world. As in Western Europe, the ideal of androgyny was used to justify bisexuality, homosexuality, and lesbianism, but with a twist unique to Russia--arrangements, including menages a trois, based on the mystical significance of the number three." Fedorov preached sexual abstinence; he thought that people should devote their energies to resurrecting the dead fathers rather than continuing the endless chain of procreation. Berdyaev specifically opposed the family as tying men and women to this-worldly concerns. Preaching sublimation without actually using the term, he also believed that wasting the male seed weakens the individual and blunts creative powers, a tenet found in many occult doctrines.

The occult, combined with apocalyptic Christianity and radical political ideas, anarchism as well as Marxism, helped foster a kind of mystical revolutionism. During the Revolution of 1905, the symbolist writer Vyacheslav Ivanov and the anarchist George Chulkov, future author of *The Veil of Isis* (1908), preached mystical anarchism, by which they meant revolt against any and all constraints that are external to the individual, including government, law, morality, and custom. They opposed individualism but championed individuality, creativity and self-expression. Love and a new religious synthesis, a new myth, would unite the new society. Occult beliefs, mingling with the Joachimite idea of a Third Revelation, led Merezhkovsky to believe that the Revolution of 1905 was the beginning of the Apocalypse that would usher in the new heaven and the new earth.

A similar cluster of ideas led a group of writers called "The Scythians," to accept the Bolshevik Revolution, even though they opposed Marxist materialism. Bely, regarded the Bolshevik Revolution as the negative apocalypse and expected a positive apocalypse, a third spiritual or

cultural revolution, to follow and complete the political and social revolution. The influence of Anthroposophy and other occult doctrines is clear in the writings of Bely, and in those of Ivanov-Razumnik, the organizer of The Scythians. Haters of rational bourgeois civilization, they regarded capitalism as the embodiment of the forces of evil.

Occult beliefs and practices played a prominent role at the Imperial Court. The influence on the royal couple of the faith-healer Rasputin is well known. Robert Warth has shown that Rasputin was preceded by a long chain of charlatans and mystics, including a Baron Phillippe, from France. In 1902, before Rasputin's arrival at court, Baron de Rothschild told Serge Witte, then Russian envoy to France, that "great events, especially of an internal nature, were everywhere preceded by a bizarre mysticism at the court of the ruler." He may have had in mind the popularity of Mesmerism and of charlatans such as Cagliostro in prerevolutionary France. In any case, Rasputin was the symbol of a malaise that would soon lead to revolution. Mircea Eliade's observation also holds here: "as in all the great spiritual crises of Europe, once again we meet the degradation of the symbol. When the mind is no longer capable of perceiving the metaphysical significance of the symbol, it is understood at levels which become increasingly coarse."

Occult beliefs permeated the growing anti-semitism of the period. They contributed to Sergei Nilus's dissemination of the notorious forgery, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion."" Rabble-rousers such as Iliodor and John of Kronstadt blamed the ills of the era on demons, whom they equated with Jews. The Beilis Case, the frame-up, by the government, of a Jew, Mendel Beilis for the ritual murder of a Christian boy, was a consequence of the demonology of the right. Occultism and anti-semitism connect in the writings of the occultist Vladimir Shmakov, who even served as a volunteer attorney for the prosecution, and in Vasily Rozanov's articles on the Beilis Case, which were so scurrilous that even the reactionary newspaper *Novoe Vremya* refused to print them. Rozanov misused the Kabbala to 'prove' that ritual murder was inherent in Judaism. Emigre writers perpetuated the idea of the Bolshevik Revolution as

a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy; their works entered into Naziism and are circulating in Russia today.

### Occultism in The Early Soviet Period.

The Bolshevik Revolution did not end occultism. Occult beliefs and doctrines, mingled with other ideas taken from apocalyptic Christianity, Nietzsche, Wagner, anarchism, and Marxism, fostered the Utopianism of the period. The Free Philosophic Academy (Volfila) in Petrograd and the Moscow Spiritual Academy provided forums for the discussion of Theosophy, Anthroposophy, and other occult ideas. Some Theosophists and Anthroposophists found employment in Soviet cultural institutions, including TEO, the theatrical division of the Commissariat of Enlightenment, IZO, the fine arts division, and Proletkult, the extra-Party organization founded by Bogdanov and his supporters to liberate the Proletariat spiritually and culturally from the bourgeois past. The occult tenet that the individual is a microcosm of the macrocosm and traditional Orthodox injunctions against self-will, led Vyacheslav Ivanov, Sergei Bulgakov, and Pavel Florensky, to aestheticize rather than oppose the Bolshevik suppression of the individual.

In 1922, as part of the anti-religious campaign initiated that year, Theosophy and Anthroposophy were suppressed, along with other forms of Idealism (ideas not based on a materialist world view). Berdyaev, Bulgakov, and other leading religious philosophers, were exiled. Occult circles went underground. There are clear suggestions of Anthroposophy and also of Fedorov and Florensky, in the theories of the Soviet psychologist Aaron Zalkind, who believed that a new man with new organs and new sensibilities was being formed.

The new regime itself utilized occult motifs in its propaganda. Posters cried "Purge the Unclean!" a clear allusion to traditional beliefs. The very word purge (*chistka*) implies a ritual cleansing of unclean forces. References to the "many-headed hydra" of reaction connote old folk monsters. Lenin decried vampires and bloodsuckers. Leon Trotsky was certain that Zinaida Gippius, an enemy of Bolshevism, was a witch, but admitted ignorance as to the length of her tail! The Russian text of the document which formed the Communist International (Comintern) prohibited former Masons from joining

the Communist Party, probably because of the threat posed by their secrecy. Leading members of the Provisional Government, including Kerensky, had been masons.

In the villages, peasants continued to resort to faith healing and magic rather than consult doctors. Indeed much of our knowledge of the occultism of the 1920s stems from Soviet ethnographic expeditions and from the reports of political activists, especially members of the Komsomol (Young Communist League), complaining about the prevalence of superstition. To the latter, of course, Christianity itself was a superstition. Yet, even the Bolsheviks were not immune, especially those who grew up in the countryside. During the Civil War, for example, according to a Soviet source, a Commissar confiscated grain from a reputed witch, when she was not at home. After finding out who did it, she confronted and then cursed him. Although a young man, he withered and died within the year!"

Occult motifs permeated Soviet culture of the 1920s and became embedded in later Soviet culture. The decision to embalm Lenin reflects the abiding influence of occult doctrines which trace their origins back to Egypt and of Fedorov's belief in resurrection through science. Leonid Krasin, a formulator of the Lenin Cult was an open admirer of Fedorov. The Lenin Mausoleum was shaped like a cube, symbol of eternity to Malevich who designed it. The occult novels of Vera Kryzhanovskaia, e.g. *Death of the Planet* (1925) who began her career before the Revolution, enjoyed a wide audience. All sides in the artistic and literary wars of the 1920s acknowledged the incantational and theurgical properties of the Word--at issue was whose Word would prevail. Numerological codes and gematria appear in the writings of early Soviet writers. They are important in Boris Pilniak's *The Naked Year* (1919), which can be read as an allegorical meditation upon the Revolution's meaning or lack thereof.

A major source of early Soviet ideology that has been neglected until recently, is the philosophy of Nikolai Fedorov (1828-1903). Tolstoi, Dostoevsky, and Gorky had esteemed him and his ideas before the Revolution, as did certain symbolists and futurists but his greatest influence was after 1917.

Fedorov spoke in the language of science, but the major sources of his vision can be traced to the occult. Arguing for a kind of "right" to immortality, Fedorov maintained that the "common task" of humanity was to resurrect its dead fathers from particles scattered in the cosmic dust, a kind of transmutation in which science replaces the alchemist's philosopher's stone. Fedorov also advocated colonizing space in order to make room for the enlarged population, solar energy, controlling the climate, and transforming nature by means such as irrigating Arabia with icebergs hauled from the Arctic. According to V. V. Ivanov, Fedorov set the agenda for Soviet science. Svetlana Semenova, the leading Soviet student of Fedorov, interprets him as a theorist of love and cooperation. Bolsheviks and Stalinists, however, discerned and perpetuated the authoritarian and totalitarian implications of his philosophy. Trotsky's labor armies stems from Fedorov's idea of a 'common task'.

The illegitimate son of Prince Gagarin, Fedorov lived on the family estate, but, probably through his mother, identified with the Russia of poverty and hardship, and with the "unlearned to the learned." He never married and, so far as it known, never had a sexual relationship of any kind. Throughout his work the sex drive is treated as a negative, natural force that must be regulated by man. He is the most patriarchal of Russian thinkers: unity, order, control, regulation, restoration, autocracy, strict devotion to the narrow task, return of the past--these are his passwords. Fedorov's visions, interpreted as the conquest of nature, appealed to worshippers of technology inside and outside the Communist Party.

In the utopian atmosphere of the 1920s, the boundary between magic and science disappeared. Technology became the force that will rescue Russians from poverty and backwardness, build socialism, create a beautiful, happy, and prosperous new world. Magic and fantasy are prominent in the writings of Yuri Olesha, Vsevolod Ivanov, Marietta Shaginian (also a former associate of the Merezhkovsky circle), Olga Forsh, Andrei Platonov, Ilya Ehrenburg, and Alexis Tolstoi, especially his novel *Aelita* (1925) about space travel. In Marietta Shaginian's novel

*Mess-Mend* (1926), for example, the evil occult forces of capitalism are defeated by the benevolent occult forces of Soviet technology.

After the Revolution, all sorts of epithets, neologisms, and new contracted compound words were formed, and key words changed over time. The political police, first known as the Cheka, was renamed GPU, then NKVD, then MGB, and finally KGB. The name of the ruling Party also changed. "To the ordinary Russian, this all sounded originally like nonsense language, devoid of meaning yet portending something mysterious and sinister, since certain letters threatened life while others constituted its foundation, like some magic formula for reality." Sinyaysky may well be picking up an occult sub-text for this phenomenon--the Kabbalistic practice of *Notarikon*, which Agrippa also used--and which pertains to abbreviations in which each letter of a word is the initial of another to constitute talismans or magical formulas and/or to conjure up a new reality. This is not to imply that all acronyms derive from the occult, but rather than in the minds of ordinary people they acquired occult force.

### The Stalinist Assimilation of the Occult.

The official culture stressed rationalism and science, but elements from the occult were put to practical political use. The prominence given to the "conquest of nature" in the First and Second Five Year Plan and the post World War II attempts to transform the climate of Soviet Asia, reflect, partly, the ideas of Fedorov, some of whose admirers reached high positions in the Soviet regime. Stalin insisted on making lemon trees grow in the cold Russian climate. The occult themes of Soviet literature of the 1920s were transformed into magical or fantastic elements that Western observers have noted in Socialist Realist painting and literature. Gorky's insistence on optimism in literature and art was partly inspired by early twentieth Century studies on hypnotic suggestion and mental telepathy. Failures of the five year plan were blamed on "wreckers and saboteurs," an industrial version of the peasant belief in "spoiling." The fantastic scenarios of the show trials dispensed with empirical evidence on the innocence of the accused and constitute a corruption of the occult belief that empirical reality does not exist.

Lev Kopelev alludes to the incantational quality of Stalin's speeches; "and these results he repeated--insistently, laboriously, monotonously, like the mumbo-jumbo of a shaman. Q20 Stalin's ban on hypnotism, in 1948, suggest that he was aware of its power and that the incantational quality may have been deliberate. Mediums such as Wolf Messing and Mikhail Kuni continued to operate as entertainers, all during the Stalin era. In tacit acknowledgement of the "magic of words," language was tightly controlled. Newspapers went through several proofreadings and the permissible vocabulary was sharply circumscribed.

Stalin himself was invested with magical powers. "Stalin waves his right hand--a city grows in a swamp, he waves his left--factories and plants spring up, he waves his red handkerchief--swift rivers start to flow." The entire culture stressed the miracles and marvels being achieved by socialist Construction. The Stalin Cult included a mystique of his name and its incantational powers. Aviator heroes claimed that Stalin's name gave them courage and protected them from danger. Soldiers charged into battle with the words "For the homeland! For Stalin!"

### The Current Scene

Destalinization and the collapse of Communism created favorable conditions for the occult revival that is so prominent a component of the current scene. Old beliefs have been rediscovered; underground groups that somehow survived the Stalin years have surfaced, and new strains are proliferating.

Post Stalinist literature was one of the first venues for the open expression of occultism. In *On Socialist Realism* (written around 1956, published 1959), Andrei Sinyaysky stated that realism of any kind is inadequate to describe the Soviet present; for that some sort of phantasmagoric art is necessary, a type of art "that will teach us to be truthful with the aid of the absurd and the fantastic." As models, Sinyaysky offered Hoffman, Dostoevsky, Goya, Chagall, and Mayakovsky. In his short story, "Liubimov" (1962-63), published as "The Make-Peace Experiment," time and space cease to be stable categories; a small Russian provincial town suddenly steps into a different dimension and becomes the arena of all sorts of occult

happenings. In "Good-night" (1983), the ghost of Stalin appears in a labor camp. Occult themes, often mixed with Christian, appear in Fasil Iskander's *Sandro of Chegem*, Yuri Trifonov's *Another Life*, the works of the "village prose" school, and the films of Andrei Tarkovsky.

The fading credibility of official ideology, combined with a feeling that Russians have been cut off from their spiritual and cultural roots, led to a rediscovery of prerevolutionary and Soviet writers whose work is permeated with occult themes. Circulating first in samizdat and then in official editions, the work of symbolists and "God-seekers," and of suppressed Soviet writers such as M. Bulgakov, provided additional conduits for the transmission of occult ideas. The Tartu School pioneered in new readings of such writers. Regularly scheduled "Fedorov readings" are held in the Lenin Library, but the interpretation has changed. Based on his statement that nature is a temporary enemy but an eternal friend, Fedorov is now regarded as an ecologist. Cosmism has become a prominent components of the contemporary occult scene, often with new elements such as UFOs. Russian translations of Latin American magical realist writers provided another source of occult images and themes.

Open interest in the occult surged in the Gorbachev years (1985-1991), triggered, perhaps, by his call for new thinking, and has grown steadily since the failed coup (August, 1991). Tengiz Abuladze's film *Repentance* (1980-81, released in 1987) utilizes symbolism, surrealism, and the occult to depict Georgia in Stalin's time. *Moskovskaia Pravda* went to far as to publish Gorbachev's horoscope (he's a Pisces).<sup>23</sup> On September 10, 1989, *The New York Times* introduced its readers to Dzhuna Davitashvili, the faith-healer who had tended Brezhnev, and to Anatoly Kashpirovsky whose prime time-TV program (now off the air) included faith-healing at a distance.<sup>24</sup> A Soviet scholar told me that Brezhnev's enemies managed to have Davitashvili's Moscow residence permit revoked, and that bereft of her ministrations he died. On (October 14, 1989) *The New York Times* editorialized that the "long suppression of religion... has given Russians a particular fondness for the supernatural;" the writer was not familiar with the long history of the occult

in Russia. There are also pragmatic reasons for the interest in psychic healing--the scarcity of medicine and the poor quality of medical care available to ordinary people. In 1991 a second edition of Eremai Parnov's *The Throne of Lucifer: Critical Sketches of Magic and Occultism* was published.

Theosophists, Anthroposophists, and followers of Gurdjieff and Uspensky began to emerge from the underground. Publication of *Vestnik Teosofii* resumed publication in 1993. New occult systems such as that expounded by Daniil Andreev in *The Rose of the World*, arouse widespread interest. Andreev's book, conceived while he was in the Gulag, circulated in samizdat in the 1980s and was published legally in 1991. Roerikh's ideas have spawned an authentic movement. There are at least 500 Roerikh societies in Russia today. Gorbachev himself publicly endorsed the "Roerikh idea" (apparently, a kind of spiritual communism) in 1987 and helped establish a major Roerikh center in Moscow to be devoted to Roerikh studies, conferences, and exhibitions.

Esotericism has gained scholarly respectability. The Institute of Philosophy in Moscow hosted a conference on it, on March 17, 1993. Papers were presented on alchemy, Chinese mysticism, esoteric aspects of ancient philosophy, esoteric interpretation of the Holy Trinity, and esoteric elements in Russian Sophiology. The Academy of Sciences will publish Sergei Vronsky's book on astrology and a book on Russian Cosmism has already appeared. There is a pragmatic reason for this---perestroika and economic austerity reduced or eliminated government subsidies, and the occult sells. Books and pamphlets on astrology, yoga, UFO's, tarot, palm-reading, numerology and interpretation of dreams, are prominently displayed on bookstands in the metro stations and on the streets, along with Russian translations of Western authors, e.g. the shaman Carlos Castaneda, favored by the New Age movement, whose antecedents can be found in the student revolt of the 1960s. The Russian rejection of rationalism, materialism, and science has a nationalistic subtext, because they are regarded as Western innovations, alien to the Russian soul.

Some Russian occultists are developing a new form of Russian messianism, an occult version of "The

Russian Idea." Steiner's appeal to Russians. it will be recalled, was that he assigned a special role to Russia in the new era. Roerikh once stated that the new Russian spirituality will benefit the whole world. Russian astrologers often quote the American astrologer, Alice Bailey, who stated that "out of Russia will emerge [a] new magical religion." Valentin Kuklev maintains that "the roots of the new age movement are undoubtedly in Russia." He predicts a "third culture" that is different from and superior to Marxism and liberalism. Such views recall the Slavophile position that Russia must follow its own path, rather than imitate the West, but they are also disquietingly reminiscent of Italian Fascist claims to have found an alternative to both communism and capitalism.

Indeed, a politicized occultism of the far-right has emerged. Reprints of emigre literature of the 1920s and '30s, which blamed a "Judeo-Masonic" conspiracy (for which no evidence exists) for the Bolshevik Revolution, and by implication for Russia's current problems are circulating. Many are poorly printed on cheap paper, but an illustrated attractively presented new journal--Aleksandr Dugan's *Dear Angel* (*Milii Angel*)--began publication in 1991. It features thinkers such as Joseph de Maistre, Nietzsche, and Julius Evola (a minor theorist of Fascist Italy, popular in neo-Fascist circles today), and assorted occult myths and legends. Anti-Jewish, contemptuous of liberalism and democracy, Dugan is in contact with his ideological counterparts in Western Europe, some of whom sit on the Editorial Board, and who may even be providing him with funding. The Russian far-right includes former Communist apparatchiks. Grigorii Klimov, for example, the author of *Red Kabbala*, identifies himself as an emigre and a former KGB agent. Klimov claims that "Hitler's [secret] Politburo" was actually comprised of Zionists who instigated anti-semitism as their means of controlling the world.

Contemporary Russian occultism is a highly variegated and diffuse phenomenon. If history is any guide, some trends will prove to be ephemeral once stability is restored. Others will lie dormant until the next spiritual crisis, while still others will be incorporated into, or themselves become, the established truths of a new era. Just as Chemistry

grew out of Alchemy and astronomy grew out of astrology, advances in medicine, psychology, parapsychology, and ecology, may well come out of the new occult movements. Magical or shamanistic techniques that work, for reasons we do not yet understand, are dismissed or ignored because they do not fit into current medical or scientific paradigms. In the Soviet Union, Kurlian photography (photographs of the aura) is used for medical diagnosis and techniques that derive from the occult were used to train Soviet athletes for the Olympic Games. In the West, attention being paid to the mind-body interaction, has resulted in the use of biofeedback and other effective techniques. Occult doctrines fructified 19th and 20th century art and literature and may do so again in the 21st century. The approach of the millennial year 2,000 may serve as the signal for new fusions of the occult, apocalypticism, and radical politics, left or right.

Politically, the occult is dangerous. In prerevolutionary Russia, the idea that all are one, that the individual is but a microcosm of the macrocosm, fostered an indifference to legal rights and guarantees that protect the individual from other people and from the government. The same tenets could support a view that each individual has a unique, irreplaceable role in the cosmic order, but in Russia it did not work out that way. Contempt for material reality induced aesthetic escapism and militated against the very rational, pragmatic mind-set necessary to solve the all-enveloping crisis. Attributing control of human destinies to occult forces facilitated demonization of Jews in late Imperial Russia and of Old Bolsheviks, saboteurs and wreckers, in Stalin's time. All sorts of conspiracy theories were invented and could not be refuted, because empirical reality was merely an illusion. The occult was one factor in the creation of "a will to cult" (my phrase), a search for a new Messiah/Magus who could rid the world of demons and accomplish miracles. Whether Russians will learn from their own history, and whether other peoples will learn from the Russian's experience, only time will tell.

## The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture.

### ANNEX I

Nineteenth and twentieth century occultists sought to reconcile religion and science, humanize an increasingly impersonal world, and harmonize an increasingly fragmented society. That all are one is a tenet of many occult doctrines, which also, paradoxically, emphasize discovery of one's true self, understood as individuality, as distinct from egoistic individualism. We find a scientization of the occult, transfer to science and technology of hopes formerly invested in religion or magic. The occult was assimilated to other ideas, the philosophy of Schopenhauer (a believer in the supernatural) for example. Nietzsche was taken up by occultists as one of their own. Occultists perceived the scientific theories of Richard Avenarius, Ernst Mach, and Wilhelm Ostwald, which dematerialized reality as confirming what occultists had believed all along—that the material world is maya, illusion. Avenarius and Mach denied the existence of an objective reality and claimed that human beings can know only their own sensations. Ostwald regarded all aspects of matter in terms of energy or transformations of energy. Energeticism, the discovery of x-rays and radio waves, new theories of the atom—all invisible to the naked eye—were taken as empirical proof that normal optical experiences are illusory, that the authentic reality lay beyond or beneath matter, as occultists had been saying all along, and that authentic reality was accessible only to the artist. Some psychologists posited the existence of n-rays, a mental counterpart to x-rays, as the mode of thought transfer. Claude Bragdon, an American architect and Theosophist, and Charles Hinson regarded the fourth dimension, mathematical concept, represented by the cube, as our higher and immortal self that exists in a world beyond death, hence is the key to immortality. Subjects such as mental telepathy, formerly associated with the occult, began to be studied by serious scientists. Psychologists hoped to transcend the mind-body duality and fathom the nature of psychic phenomenon. Wilhelm Wundt, for example, claimed that sensations are physiological, i.e. material, but of a kind that act upon a person's soul or psyche either subliminally when the sensations

are weak or directly when they are stronger. Charcot studied hypnotism as a possible cure to mental illness. Theorists of society, aware of the limitations of reason in cementing the social order, became interested in the archaic layers of the human psyche, as expressed in myth, religion, and magic, which in turn led to research on tribal rituals, shamanism, and related phenomena.

New occult doctrines appealed to people unsatisfied by institutional religion, but uncomfortable with a purely secular world view. Spiritualism, one of the most important occult movements of the 19th century, was born in England, home of the industrial revolution and of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, which seemed to contradict Biblical theories of creation, deny personal immortality, and reduce humankind to a species in the animal kingdom. Janet Oppenheim has argued that Spiritualism, which affirms the continued existence of the dead and the ability of the living to communicate with them through specially gifted mediums, achieved tremendous popularity because it answered the unmet spiritual needs of people of all classes. She also shows that spiritualism accommodated a wide range of political and social views, including vegetarianism, homeopathic medicine, and socialism, the later Utopian Socialism of Robert Owen, for example."

Theosophy was founded by Elena Blavatsky (1831-91) and Henry Olcott in New York, in 1875. According to Blavatsky, one eternal truth, The Secret Doctrine, was given to humankind at the creation, but over time it had fragmented into different religions, and become adulterated by materialism. Theosophy would reconcile them. She claimed to have learned of this truth from Mahatmas living in the Himalayas. Theosophy focused on Christianity and Buddhism, but tilted more and more to Buddhism. In 1908, Annie Besant (Blavatsky's successor as head of the Theosophical Society), proclaimed a young Hindu boy, Krishnamurti, as successor to Christ. Shortly after, Rudolf Steiner, founded a new movement, Anthroposophy, which held that the birth of Jesus was the central event in the evolution of the entire cosmos, an evolution which he saw in physical and spiritual terms. Unlike Charles Darwin's theory. Steiner also called Anthroposophy Spiritual Science

and claimed to reconcile religion, philosophy, and science. As these doctrines spread through Europe, and through North and South America, they were assimilated to the particular national culture. Steiner, for example, placed great emphasis on Goethe's Faust. He regarded Goethe, not only as a writer, but as a great scientist, whose findings surpassed Newton's mechanistic world view. Goethe incidentally, was interested in alchemy, and believed in correspondences. Faust says, "All that exists is but a symbol.")

The center of the mid-19th century occult revival was, surprisingly, France the most politically unsettled nation in Europe (with the possible exception of dismembered Poland), and the cultural capital of Europe. The French Revolution, the Napoleonic era, the Revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the Paris Commune, unabated culture wars between supporters and opponents of the very ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity, created a climate of psychological and spiritual unrest in which occultism flourished. There are clear occult elements in the fantastic cosmogony of the Utopian Socialist, Charles Fourier, in the doctrines of the St. Simonian, Prosper l'Enfantin (especially his doctrine of a female Messiah), and in Auguste Comte's worship of the divine feminine. Persons alienated from the system, including socialists and nationalists, tended to cluster together in what James Webb calls a "progressive underground." "Constantly," he states, "we find socialists and occultists running in harness." Webb calls the occult "rejected knowledge," whose advocates are united by their opposition to the "Powers That Are." Polish exiles living in Paris introduced their hosts to Kabbala. The central figure of the French occult revival, Eliphas Levi (pseudonym of Alphonse Louis Constant, 1804-1875), had started out to be a priest, but left the Seminary, was briefly associated with the Saint Simonians, and was romantically involved with Flora Tristan. His major works were on magic, alchemy, and kabbala, but was a life-long Catholic. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, whose members included the Irish poet William Butler Yeats and the scholar A. E. Waite, built on Levi's works. The English magus, Aleister Crowley, dubbed 'the beast', claimed to be Levi's reincarnation. French translations of classic works of Hermeticism and new French works on the occult

were in turn translated into other languages. In some circles, occultism included black magic and devil-worship as inversions of Catholicism and/or the use of drugs to induce new sensations and enter into a "higher reality." Mircea Eliade asserts that the French occult revival constituted a rejection of the religious and cultural values of the West, not only Judeo-Christian but Greco-Roman as well."

Occult doctrines and beliefs had a major impact on 19th and 20th century art and literature. Romanticism and Symbolism were pervaded with the occult idea of higher reality and of the artist as magus or theurgist. Blake, Baudelaire ("We walk through a forest of symbols"), Goethe, Novalis, the English pre-Raphaelites, The Nabis, Wagner, and many other artists and writers, were indebted to the occult in one way or another. The cubes, squares, and other geometric forms represent the authentic reality that abstract painters believed underlies the visible world. They regarded color as formless energy, as dynamic.' Occult ideas in Surrealist painting and literature, and in the architecture of the Bauhaus movement.

Occult movements had a special appeal to women, partly because of the male dominance of the Christian Churches. Women predominated among the Spiritualist mediums: they were thought to have a special gift for it. Mediumship enabled women to voice their inner experience and to be heard in a male-dominated world." Theosophy was founded by a woman, most circles were run by women, and Theosophy was closely connected with the woman's movement. Annie Besant (1874-1933) combined Theosophy and feminism with Fabian socialism. Theosophy esteemed intuition and its imagery revolved around the moon. Steiner's Anthroposophy reintroduced the male principle (Jesus Christ); his quasi--scientific-philosophical approach appealed to young men looking for a strong masculine role model." Even so, Steiner's emissary to Russia, however, was a woman (Anna Mintslova). Victoria Woodhull, Lilly Braun, the German Marxist, and Margaret Sanger, the American birth control advocate were all interested in the occult. Margaret Sanger used astrology to guide her life. Victoria Woodhull, President of the American Association of Spiritualists in the 1870s, was a committed socialist; in 1872 she published the first

English translation of The Communist Manifesto and tried to persuade Karl Marx that the goals of spiritualism were the same as those of the International Workingmen's Association. Also stressed by many occult doctrines were the healing powers of women and interest in alternative (natural) medicine, especially homeopathy.

On issues of sex and the family, there is no uniform occultist view; some occultists preached abstinence and self-control, but others urged sexual self-expression. The ideal of the androgyne as the perfect human being, found in Plato, some forms of Gnosticism, neo-Platonism, and Jacob Boehme, supported rejection of traditional male and female role models, and in some cases bisexuality, homosexuality and lesbianism. <>

### Summary of Conference Papers

Occult doctrines and beliefs were a major influence on late Imperial Russian and early Soviet Culture. A response to the upheavals (political, social, cultural, religious) of these years, they underlay the art and thought of this period and helped foster the mystical revolutionism of 1905 and 1917. Occult beliefs contributed to the Utopianism of the early Soviet period and were incorporated into Stalinism. The current occult revival is a response to destalinization and the collapse of Communism.

The following nineteen papers are the product of a conference held at Fordham University in the summer of 1991. The papers are available from the National Council (Tel. 202 387-0168) upon request.

### Michael Agursky. The Occult Source of Socialist Realism: Gorky and Early Twentieth-Century Theories of Thought Transference.

Maksim Gorky, the writer and future architect of Socialist Realism was deeply impressed by early 20th Century studies of mental telepathy and extra-sensory perception. He was attracted to such studies, which seemed to validate the existence of thought transfer, because they provided revolutionary intellectuals with a potentially powerful means to sway the masses. He adapted these findings to his own agenda. which ultimately sought to create a political system that would



permit the circulation of only "pure thoughts" and would defend its members from "dark forces".

**Valentine Brougher. The Occult in the Prose of Vsevolod Ivanov.**

Ivanov, best known for his story, "Armored Train, 1469" (1921), about a group of Red Partisans in the Civil War, was deeply interested in the fantastic, the supernatural, the mystical, and in oriental religions. His semi-autobiographical Tales of a Fakir and other works reflect these interests.

**Maria Carlson. Fashionable fin de siecle occultisms.**

Of the fashionable fin de siecle occultisms, Spiritualism had the most adherents, but Theosophy was the most influential, attracting major artists and thinkers who perpetuated its themes in their work. Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism, and mystical Freemasonry, also had their adherents. Many of whom were interested in several occult systems.

**Mikhail Epstein. Materialism, Sophiology, and the Soul of Russia.**

An unabashed admirer of Daniil Andreev, Epstein describes the nature and function of Sophiology in Andreev's new occult system, The Rose of the World. Conceived in the Gulag, the book circulated in samizdat in the 1980s, was published legally in 1991, and enjoys a wide readership today.

**Kristi Groberg. Satanism in Fin de Siecle Russia.**

Fascination with the image of Satan in fin de siecle art, literature, and music was a prominent feature of the occult revival in late Imperial Russia. Satanic imagery expressed political protest against the bloody suppression of the Revolution of 1905, and was also imbued with complex psychosexual motifs.

**Irina Gutkin. The Magic of Words.**

Socialist Realism drew on symbolist and futurist poets' belief in the magic of words. The symbolists hoped to enchant their audiences, by making poetry into music. The futurists attempted to develop a transrational language (zaum), drawing on the glossolalia (speaking in tongues) of the mystic sectarians and on Siberian shamanism. Socialist Realism used words to conjure up visions of a higher reality and to inspire people to create miracles.

**Michael Hagemeister. Russian Cosmism in the 1920 and Today: Its Connection with Occult and Mystical Tendencies.**

Russian Cosmism reflected and contributed to the Utopianism of the 1920s. The boundary between magic and science disappeared. Ideas such as the resurrection of the dead by means of science, conquest of nature, and space travel were perpetuated by Fedorov's admirers and by persons who developed similar ideas independently.

**Linda Ivanits. The Peasant Occult in Modern Russian Literature.**

Peasant beliefs in harmful spirits, spoiling, and sorcery were inherited from paganism and coexisted with Christianity in a dual faith (dvoeverie). These beliefs were part of high culture as well, as we see from the works of Dostoevsky, Turgenyev, Bely, and Solzhenitsyn.

**Edward Kasinec and Robert Davis. Russian Occult Journals of the Early 20th Century and Emigration.**

This is a guide to the rich corpus of literature produced by occultists in Russia and in emigration, much of which is available at the Slavonic Collection of the New York Public Library, where the authors are employed.

**Judith Kornblatt. Russian Religious Thought and the Jewish Kabbala.**

Vladimir Soloviev's interest in the Kabbala stemmed from his desire to apply occult teachings to confirm Christian truths, and from his appreciation of the active nature of Jewish mysticism and of Jewish culture as a whole. His successors misused Kabbala to justify anti-Jewish positions.

Svetlana Kulyus and Irina Belobrovtsseva. The Master and Margarita as an Esoteric Text. Bulgakov's masterpiece, written in the 1930s, and not published in the Soviet Union until close to thirty years later, is a coded commentary on the first years of the Stalin era. It can be read on three levels, all of which correlate with one another: magic, alchemy, and freemasonry.

Hakan Lovgren. Sergei Eisenstein's Magic Circle.

The great Soviet film director was interested in the occult, as well as in ritual and myth. In 1918, he was initiated into the Rosicrucian order, and this experience is reflected in his film, "Ivan the Terrible." His private drawings and doodlings contain many Alchemical symbols. as possible clues to transforming (transmuting) consciousness.

Renata von Maydell. Anthroposophy in Russia.

Anthroposophy, an explicitly Christian form of Theosophy, assigned a special place to Russia in the new world order that was being born. Anthroposophists regarded the revolutions of 1917, including the Bolshevik revolution as part of an eschatological transition. Some of them worked in early Soviet cultural agencies until the society was suppressed in 1922.

W. F. Ryan. Magic and Divination--Old Russian Sources.

The occult legacy of the Russian people stems from ancient times and from numerous sources. This paper treats one aspect of that legacy--magic and divination--showing how they stem from Pre-Christian Russian, Byzantine, Jewish, Oriental, and Western sources.

Dmitri Shlapentokh. Fedorovian Roots of Stalinism.

Like many thinkers, Fedorov can be read in different ways. Stalinism incorporated the nationalist, conservative, and authoritarian elements of Fedorov's views. The emphasis on the conquest of nature in the first five year, and the miracles and

marvels to be accomplished by technology, stem partly from Fedorov.

Holly Denio Stephens. The Occult Scene in Contemporary Russia.

The Occult Scene is fluid and changing. The occult systems of the late 19th and early 20th century has been revived and new movements, centers, and prophets, and healers have appeared. To predict which will prove to be ephemeral and which will last, is impossible at this time.

Anthony Joseph Vanchu. The Magic of Technology in Early Soviet Literature.

Soviet literature of the 1920s reflects the transfer of hopes formerly invested in magic or religion to science and technology. In Yuri Olesha's works, technique or technology replaces magic; in Andrei Platonov's, it replaces religion, and in Marietta Shaginian's adventure novel, Mess-Mend, the beneficent occult forces of communism defeat the demonic occult forces of capitalism.

George Young. Fedorov's Transformations of the Occult.

Fedorov disparaged the entire esoteric tradition, but shared its goals and concerns, including: the notion of a hidden reality, orientalism, the transformation (transmutation) of matter, timelessness, recovery of the lost knowledge, and restoration of ancient power centers in the Pamir mountains.

Wojciech Zalewski. The Constantinoff Collection of the Stanford University Libraries.

The curator of Stanford University's Slavic Division introduces scholars to the materials available in the newly acquired Constantinoff collection. <>

Essay: Russian Martinism: A Biography of Georgi Ottonovich Mebes of the St. Petersburg School

At St. Petersburg in Russia, around fifty years ago, there was a group of esotericists who composed the flower of the capital's "intelligentsia". This group was internally hierarchical, i.e. composed of "grades" -- Martinist, Templar and Rosicrucian. It was, properly said, a school of teaching and training comprising three "courses" or "classes" --

first or Martinist, second or Templar, and highest or Rosicrucian.

At the head of the whole school was the professor of special mathematics from the Pages College (Pageskiy Korpus) in St. Petersburg, Professor Gregory Ottonovitch Mebes.

Now, it was after the Bolshevik revolution (which, it goes without saying, put an end to this group and its work) that the one who is writing these lines met some members of this dispersed group and became friends with them. The friendship being true, i.e. based on unreserved mutual confidence, they (who belonged to the so-called "Rosicrucian" elite of the group) transmitted all that they knew and recounted everything concerning the work of their group, including the crises and painful experiences that they had undergone. This was in 1920. It was then that the one who is writing these lines -- although he had already studied the masterly work by the engineer Schmakov, Velikiye Arkany Taro ("The Major Arcana of the Tarot" -- a book almost twice as large as, for example, Oswald Wirth's *Le Tarot des imagiers du moye age* or Paul Marteau's *Le Tarot de Marseille*) and the book on the Tarot by P.D. Ouspensky in 1917 -- was struck to learn to what degree collective work on the Tarot can be fruitful for study, research, training and advancement in the esoteric domain. For the whole work of the Martinist-Templar-Rosicrucian group was founded on the Tarot....

It is a matter, therefore, beyond the two reasons concerning the scope of meditative work on the Tarot and the significance of the number twenty-one, of putting a "memorial wreath" on the non-existent tomb (i.e. non-existent here below) of the group of St. Petersburg esotericists from the beginning of the [20th] century. -- Meditations on the Tarot, LETTER XXI THE FOOL, by Anonymous

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A teacher of mathematics, physics and French language, Collegiate Councilor Georgi Ottonovich Mebes (1869-1930) was a prominent teacher in Tsarskoye Selo from 1904 – 1905 where he taught at a classical secondary school as well as physics and mathematics in the Nikolai Gymnasium and physics for the women's public education facility.

Recollection of his teaching activities practically does not exist. We found only a small fragment of his in 1908 of graduation from the Page (Royal Page) Corps. B.H. Tretyakov, remembers name of Mebes, recalling that, "Nervous Mebes who fiddled his mustache and broke chalk on a blackboard initiated us in the intricacies of Newton's binomial theorem."

Apparently, Giorgi was an excellent teacher because he was teaching in privileged schools as Page Corps where he taught the Russian aristocracy. By remembrance of B.C. Brachev, Mebes was teaching in the Page Corps and Nikolai's Corps in 1906-1911. The modest teacher of mathematics, physics and French language was one of the leaders of Russian Masonry and the Rosicrucian Order and an active member of the Martinist Lodge and theorist of occultism. The Martinist Lodge was a branch of the French Kabbalic Order of the Rose and Cross. It was started in Russia by the French Occultist Gerard Encausse (Papus). In 1912 there was a schism between members of the Lodge and the St. Petersburg part of the order guided by Mebes which declared its autonomy. From 1911 to 1912, Mebes was writing under the pen name GOM, was giving lectures in Petersburg entitled *A Concise Encyclopedia of Occultism*, which was following theories of Papus. The lectures were extremely popular. There are many recollections of them which are written in the history of Russian occultism at the beginning of the century. In his lectures, GOM drew in kabbalah and Tarot cards into a single entity based on magical kabbalic Arcana of the Tarot. Mr. A.M. Aseev remembers GOM:

"The appearance of GOM was giving us impression of great internal strength. He was large with broad shoulders, a little stooping, his hard-featured face with heavy, hooked nose and bushy brows appearing above calm and attentive grey eyes. A bushy mustache and wedge-shaped beard. He had red, graying hair, and usually was dressed in his black frock coat. His manners were very quiet, a little old-fashioned. He was speaking courageously sometimes inserting in his speech a couple of jokes. Unlike other members of mystical orders which were following political goals, GOM had task of teaching the youth the knowledge of

the order. One of his students in Nikolai gymnasium who was poet, Nikolai Gumilev. Perhaps owing to Mebes, his later poetry concerns mystical teachings and interest in Kabbalistic symbols.

The St. Petersburg Martinist Lodge continued to work after the revolution until its destruction in 1926 by the KGB. From 1918 to 1921, Mebes was reading lectures about the Zohar in St. Petersburg. His wife Maria Nesterova lectured about the history of religion with pronounced anti-Christian under-current. Besides just theory, the school provided practical training so that the members could cultivate the powers of telepathy and telekinesis. Some of his students from 1918 to 1925 were the well-known military historian G.C. Gabaev and the poet Vladimir Pyast.

In the middle of 1928, the newspapers "Leningrad Truth" and "Red Star" were reporting that the KGB found inside the great Lodge "Astraea", the virgin-goddess of justice, lead by a 70 year old black magic practicing and devil worshipper Mebes. The newspaper mentions that in Leningrad there existed grave Masonic lodges with many members with magisters and masters with initiations, oaths signed by blood, and membership and written communications with foreign countries, and membership fees.

We, Sar Nithaiah and Sarah Gladius Dei, officially declare that the Autonomous Sovereign Ancient Order of Martinista Martinists no longer exists (at least in the form in which it was built in Russia). We, being the main creators of the Order in Russia, announce its closure due to our voluntary break with Sar Lamech. For the reasons below: \*\*\* Hello, Brother Sar Lamech! We hope that you are doing well. After your arrival, we seriously thought about really starting everything from a clean slate, and take into account all previously unintended flaws that could be obstacles in our activities.

The Brothers and Sisters, of different Degrees and with various Martinist experience, that is, those with experience or fresh eyes, discussed how we can improve our work in the Order. The result of this detailed discussion are the following eight theses, which we offer to you for consideration and approval. Here are the given theses:

I. Independent choice of the name of our Lodges, the possibility of changing the name at any time by voting the Officers; independent choice of the name of the Great Lodge.

II. Reducing the minimum number of Lodges required for the formation of the Grand Lodge from 4 to 3, as worldwide.

III. Adoption of the Constitution and the General Regulations, and any amendments to them only in agreement with all members of the Order, and after the unanimous vote of all existing officers. Constitution and G.R. must meet our needs, reflect our aspirations and aspirations, and be a document governing the nuances that we consider important.

IV. Full-scale reform of ALL rituals from the 1st to the 3rd degree with the mandatory discussion of all our proposals, and the inclusion of at least 80% of our amendments to the texts.

V. Absolute Sovereignty of the Lodge or the Grand Lodge in relation to conflict situations on the territory of our jurisdiction. The intervention of the Grand Master is permissible only if there is strong evidence that the actions of the local authorities are inappropriate.

VI. Purification of the Order's Tradition from any forms of idolatry: members of the Order and individual Lodges have the right to prohibit any ceremonies or practices in their presence that appeal to this or that pagan deities.

VII. All power and all Sovereignty over the resolution of all questions about relations with those who for other reasons left the Order belong to the Lodge, or the Grand Lodge, which made the decision to resign, or the person's radiation, regardless of his degree of dedication.

VIII. All decisions taken based on the implementation of these items are not subject to rejection or review in the future and have retroactive effect.

We will be waiting for your reply. God bless you! With fraternal respect, Sister Sarah Gladius Dei.

\*\*\* Dear Sister Sarah Gladius Dei, I believe that this is about some other order not about SADO MM (AMMO). I did not create such an order and do not intend to head. If you accept these amendments, I will have to announce that your group has no

relation to the legitimate Martinist who created me the order. You are still Martinists to join other orders; Regards SAR Lamech \*\*\* Hello Brother Sar Lamech Thank you for such a prompt reply. We are grateful to you for the establishment of the Order, in which we worked on its creation. Unfortunately, we can no longer work in such conditions. We are forced to declare that we are leaving your jurisdiction because we are tired. We believe that it will be more fruitful, finally, to take care of ourselves and personal practices. Without the adoption of the amendments we have indicated, this is Sisyphean labor. We do not intend to create any Orders, we want only to be forgotten about us, and no conversations about us have been conducted anywhere and with anyone. Frankly, this is exactly the answer we expected from you. We were more than ready for the fact that you do not even try to look for any compromises. And don't even try to hear about our real needs. Well, let's disperse in an amicable way, as you usually say, and we, in general, are not against this option. Hope to stay in good relations. Regards, Sister Sarah Gladius Dei and Brother Sar Nithaiah.

\*\*\* Dear Sister Sarah Gladius Dei and Brother Sar Nithaiah, I respect your decision to leave the Order. I would ask you to return all the papers, charters of the lodges, the Great Lodge and the Chapter to my son A \*\*\*. He is now in Moscow on my phones. I will ask him to contact you. The Order in Russia will continue its activities, alas, without your participation. Unfortunately, compromises on the Statute of the Order on the part of the Grand Master are inappropriate. I believe that you understood this well when offered your conditions. I am sure that you will find yourself outside the Order and wish you every success in your new endeavors. Regards Sar Lamech.

\*\*\* Hello Brother Sar Lamech. Unfortunately, we cannot give you charters through a person who is not dedicated to martinism, simply because that they are written out on the profane name of Brother Sar Nithaiah. Moreover, since this is so, no one else can use them. If you want, we will give them to you personally, or, even easier, we will simply destroy them and provide you with evidence of this. As we said, we are not going to use them. Regards, Sister Sarah Gladius Dei. \*\*\* I really

hope that this is not an excuse, I would not want to multiply the bad. Pass the charter to your son. He knows how to keep secrets and I don't have any secrets from him. Your refusal to give him a charter will force me to take appropriate measures. I would like, that our relations would not pass from friendly into opposite.

\*\*\* Sorry, Brother Sar Lamech, about your tone: was it really a threat? 1. Everything you say to us now comes into direct conflict with what was said recently. 2 Your tone from the very beginning is not very friendly, but rather dismissively hostile. 3. Regarding the "appropriate measures" that you want to take there: after these words, in the tone in which you now speak to us, it is hardly possible to speak about anything at all, except the charters, cut into serpentine in the shredder. We are surprised at your inability to talk with people humanly, and absolute uncompromising, inability to listen, desire to impose your will on everyone you meet. We repeat once again: we are not going to work under your jurisdiction, we are not going to use your charters, but nobody will work through our names in the charters either, after such unfriendly treatment. Sites will also be eliminated. Talking to us in the tone of the chief also should not be. We no longer obey you. When we talked about in order to "get divorced in an amicable way," we meant normal communication based on the principles of mutual respect, and not intimidation of each other with something. Regards, Sister Sarah Gladius Dei. <>

### Note on Mircea Eliade's Rites and Symbols of Initiation

In Rites and Symbols of Initiation, Mircea Eliade begins his investigation into initiatory practices with a survey of the world's archaic cultures and a common shamanic religious foundation, specifically the importance of ritualistic death and rebirth. Eliade argues that all initiation rites involve in some way the death/rebirth symbolism. This essay will attempt to understand the significance of initiatory death and rebirth and then examine the initiatory rites of various ancient cults with respect to death and rebirth.

According to Eliade, the myth of archaic societies primarily concerns the origins of things and human events. History is a sacred narrative involving the

actions and manifestations of the invisible realm of the supernatural, of which this world, its inhabitants and institutions are a reflection. Whereas modernity places the human within the traction of a specifically human narrative culminating in the present and undoubtedly continuing into the human future, the archaic myth posits the supreme importance of first action which itself is a transhuman occurrence and worthy because of its originary creative power. Initiation is the event that transmits this sacred knowledge to eligible members of the society, and attempts to at best recreate through human imitation tried-and-true transhuman creative gestures. <>

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