

Call for Papers

OCCULTURAL TRANSFERS BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH



Fantasy, 1895

@Artwork Magnus Enckell

Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, 1-3 November 2023

In the last decade, a number of studies in the history of literature, art and ideas have approached the mutual cultural transfers between Northern and Southern Europe. In so doing, these studies have also discussed established conceptualizations of “North” and “South” and proposed new ones. In approximately the same time period, several efforts in the field of religious studies have emphasized how selected works of art and/or literature have negotiated spiritual knowledge and at the same time emphasized specific national and/or regional cultural traits from North and South Europe respectively.

What has been much less – if at all – studied, is how these two avenues of research intermingle, i.e., how cultural transfers between Northern and Southern Europe have contributed to negotiate, exchange, rework and elaborate esoteric and occult knowledge in the production of literature, painting, music, architecture, and the arts at large. The osmosis between esoteric/occult and artistic discourse, which scholars have termed “occulture”, has mainly been studied from a national perspective and drawing upon case studies from the last 60 years. Such lack of comparative knowledge and studies is somewhat surprising if one takes into account the impact of esoteric and occult materials from a wider “South” (including not only Southern Europe, but also Northern Africa and the Mediterranean Basin) that has made its way in Northern Europe since at least the end of the 19th century, focusing, but not limited to, Sufism, Egyptosophy and Freemasonry, or, conversely, about the continuous forms of inspiration that Nordic alternative spirituality has had on artistic production in Southern Europe (e.g. with the proliferation of Nordic paganism in occultural discourse). The proposed conference aims at filling this scholarly gap, open up avenues of research and discussing new ways of approaching and conceptualizing occultural phenomena with a North-South perspective as a starting point. We understand “North” and “South” as including, respectively, the Nordic, Baltic, German and English-speaking countries in Europe, and Southern European, Mediterranean, and African countries/areas.

Themes

The organizers welcome papers that in one way or another address one or several of the following overarching topics:

- Case studies of Nordic and/or Southern occultural transfer
- The influence of Nordic and/or Southern culture in esoteric and artistic activities
- Conceptualizations and imaginations of “the North” and “the South” in esoteric and occult discourse
- Theoretical and methodological reflections on “occulture” in a comparative North-South perspective

Organizers

- Dr. [Giuliano D’Amico](#), Associate Professor at the University of Oslo and director of the research network [Esotericism and Aesthetics in the Nordic Countries](#)
- Dr. [Marco Pasi](#), Associate Professor at the University of Amsterdam and director of the [Centre for the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents](#)
- Dr. [Francesco Piraino](#), Research Fellow at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice and director of the [Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations and Spiritualities](#), Cini Foundation

Abstracts and Texts

Abstracts up to 300 words, accompanied by a short CV, should be submitted in English by the 15th of April to civilta.comparete@cini.it. A notification of acceptance will be forwarded by the 15th of May. Two months after the Conference, we will ask participants to send us their full paper, to be published in a special issue of the scholarly journal [Religiographies](#) at the end of 2024. We welcome submissions from doctoral students, early career researchers and established scholars.

Timetable

1. The call for papers is open – 24 January 2023.
2. Abstracts (300-500 words maximum) and CVs to be received by 15 April 2023.
3. Notifications of acceptance will be given by 15 May 2023.
4. The conference will be held 1-2-3 November 2023.
5. Final papers to be received by 1 March 2024.
6. Publication of the special issue in late 2024, early 2025.

Practicalities and Funding

The organizers will provide accommodation on San Giorgio Island, coffee breaks and lunches for all participants. Participants will arrange and pay for their own transportation. Extra funding may be available to cover the travel expenses of a limited number of scholars who cannot obtain funding from their own institutions. If extra funding is needed, please indicate this in the email with which you submit your abstract. The Library of the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilizations and Spiritualities will appreciate it if participants can bring and donate one book they authored or in which they have participated.

CONTACT: civilta.compare@cini.it