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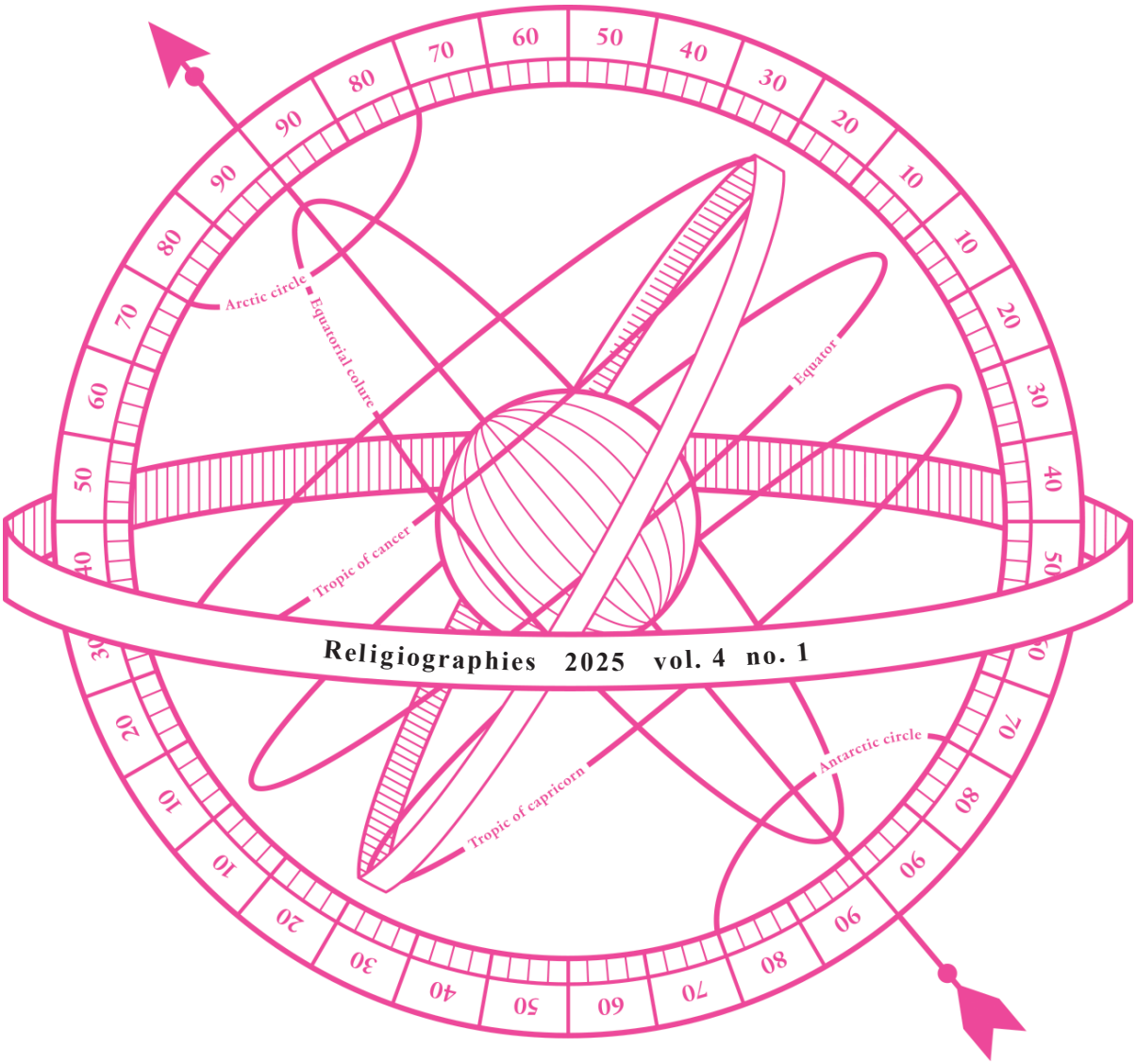

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Literature and Writers at Eranos: Overview of a Missed Appointment

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Abstract
This article offers an overview of the place held by literature and writers at Eranos from the early occult era, at the beginning of the 1930s, to the end of its first phase in 1988. Using both the guestbook and the texts of the conferences published in the *Eranos-Jahrbücher*, the analysis below offers a comprehensive overview of the writers who attended Eranos, whether as members of the audience or as speakers—whether or not they spoke of literature. It also explores how literature was addressed as a conference topic in its own right, whether by writers or academics. The various complications that arose from emphasizing interdisciplinarity and from enduring hesitations as regards the status of arts at Eranos made writers both welcome and irrelevant. However, this ambiguity did not prevent the emergence of a form of coherence in the way literature was discussed—i.e., as an illustration of philosophical, psychological, and/or theological theories—and in the reasons that encouraged writers to attend: they did so mainly because they lived nearby and were interested in spiritual matters, and not because they were artists seeking inspiration.

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Introduction

It is a well-known fact that Eranos intended to explore the importance of spirituality, symbolism, and myth in modern culture, following the path of German romanticism in its fight against disciplinary barriers. In addition, its major distinctive feature was its openness towards imagination; as the years went by, its original focus on the study of religion, in particular the interchange between "Eastern" and "Western" forms of spirituality, widened and became inclusive of psychology, art history, music, and natural science.[1] One might spontaneously conclude, from this whole picture, that it was consistently open to the arts. However, it seems that Eranos never truly adopted a clear and coherent attitude towards them, and the point of this paper is to try and explain why. Focusing on its first phase (1933–1988), it will explore its diverse and rich relationship with *literature* as a topic of discussion tackled by writers and non-writers, and *writers* as both speakers and members of the audience—thus sidelining music and the visual and plastic arts. This original research is based on archival materials such as the guestbook held in the Eranos Foundation at Ascona, and the texts of the lectures published in the *Eranos-Jahrbücher*.

There have been three successive steps in the history of Eranos's relationship with literature. In its early "Bailey" phase, between 1930 and 1933, it was open to the occult and the arts. However, things deeply changed between 1933 and the end of World War II. Under the influence of Carl Gustav Jung, who wanted to give the event a distinctly academic veneer, speakers were reluctant to discuss literature, even though writers still attended the event. Eventually, during the post-war period, literature made a comeback and became a legitimate topic. The difference with the beginning of the 1930s was that from then on, the lecturers were all academics. Probably because writers had ended up feeling out of place, far fewer attended the event. A glance at the chronology therefore shows that throughout its history, Eranos theoretically welcomed writers among its audience members, and literature as a topic of discussion—as long as it had anything to do with Eranos's concerns—while at the same time giving the impression that writers were irrelevant because of the academic nature of the event, and the accent put on both spirituality and psychology.

1 Hans Thomas Hakl, *Eranos: An Alternative Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2013), 11. The historical details of this article come from Hakl's monography, especially the introduction and the first four chapters.

Eranos Before Eranos: The Ghost of the *Salon* Tradition

The uncertain status of literature at Eranos originates from the early hesitations of Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn regarding the organization of the conferences and the type of people to invite. Her initial idea was not to dismiss the arts at all, and during the first occult Bailey phase, several writers attended as speakers. Violet Tweedale, a Scottish writer and spiritualist, presented her occult novel *The Cosmic Christ* at the first meeting in 1930.[2] The Anglo-Irish writer James Henry Cousins signed the guestbook three times between 1930 and 1933. The way Hans Thomas Hakl sums up Fröbe-Kapteyn's thoughts on the project right after the death of her father aptly illustrates this point: "With the inherited wealth, she could now enter fully into the role which she had long felt called, namely to invite artists, poets, and people of esoteric interest to her home. She was free to pursue her religio-philosophical

2 Hakl, *Eranos*, 29.

interests and her theosophical inclinations."[3] There is no reason to believe that in the early vision she had of annual gatherings organized in her home, she thought of the artistic and the spiritual as incompatible.

Fröbe-Kapteyn's spontaneous openness towards literature during the pre-Eranos phase is directly related to what she had been doing in the previous twenty years. In 1909, she married a Croatian orchestra conductor of Austrian parentage called Iwan Fröbe, who later died in an air crash in 1915.[4] When she was married, she regularly took part in artistic gatherings which were close to traditional literary *salons*. Together with her husband, she first lived in Munich before moving to Wannsee, in the suburbs of Berlin. At that time, the Dutch-German philologist André Jolles also lived there with his family. Jolles had known Fröbe-Kapteyn's parents and had gathered around him a circle of friends that included painters, musicians, and writers, who would meet once a week for readings or musical performances.[5] After the death of her husband, Fröbe-Kapteyn relocated to Zurich where she kept the *salon* tradition alive and organized readings. She was friends with several poets and literary enthusiasts, like the Swiss writer and academic Robert Faesi, André Germain, and Alastair. Later on, in 1926, she met the Dutch poet Adriaan Roland Host at the *Semaine européenne* in Lausanne. Among all the artists and writers with whom she mingled over these years, the most important remains Ludwig Derleth,[6] whom several women of good society are said to have worshiped as a spiritual guide. Because Fröbe-Kapteyn had feelings of love towards him, she was deeply influenced by him, especially in the 1920s.[7]

After the departure of Alice Bailey, apparently related to an argument regarding her daughters' erotic adventures with residents of the nearby Monte Verità,[8] Eranos moved away from the esoteric "Summer School" atmosphere and adopted a different tone under the influence of C. G. Jung. This turning point is of course connected to his vision and personal preferences, but it would be over-simplistic to analyze it merely as a sign of Fröbe-Kapteyn's passivity. It is indeed indisputable that when she launched the first phase of Eranos in 1930, she wanted to start something new. She was then a 50-year-old woman who had been a widow for fifteen years, and who had been living in almost complete solitude in Ascona for some ten years.[9] During this long period of seclusion, she explored and deepened her interest in spiritual issues, which took precedence over the artistic ones. Hermann von Keyserling's Schule der Weisheit,[10] where she met C. G. Jung for the first time in 1930,[11] became a model. She also made her intention to break free from the past particularly obvious when she burnt all her old letters and photographs at the beginning of the 1930s.[12]

However, despite a firm shift towards the academic and the spiritual, Eranos remained open to literature, particularly under the influence of Fröbe-Kapteyn. She was engaged in creative writing at the beginning of the 1930s, for instance authoring fairy tales for adults such as *Die Gleichnisse*.[13] In the years following the end of World War II, at a moment when the *salon* model seemed like a distant memory, she is said to have left Talbot Mundy's occult novels in her the rooms of her guests.[14] It might have been an attempt to indirectly support the idea that literature was an excellent source of spiritual exploration and

3 Hakl, *Eranos*, 16.

4 Hakl, 13.

5 Hakl, 13.

6 Hakl, 17

7 Hakl, 20.

8 Hakl, 31.

9 Hakl, 25.

10 The German for "School of Wisdom."

11 Hakl, *Eranos*, 38.

12 Hakl, 17. Hakl takes this piece of information from Catherine Ritsema's *L'Œuvre d'Eranos*, which I was unable to find and consult.

13 Hakl, 43.

14 Hakl, 153, 170.

as such had a rightful place at Eranos.

What Did it Mean to "Talk about Literature" at Eranos?

Canonic Authors and Ambitious Projects

During Eranos's Jungian era, after the occult was set aside, so were the arts. They disappeared completely from the lecture topics because they had become out of place in this new context. In the course of these dozen editions, the only lecture dedicated to an artistic topic was that of Carl Moritz Cammerloher in 1934, on the place of art in the "contemporary psychological worldview."[15] As for literature specifically, no one spoke about it over those years.

When literature made its comeback at the end of the war, it was addressed by the lecturers according to roughly two principles. On one hand, they would never challenge the literary canon, meaning they always chose famous, widely-discussed authors. Graham Goulder Hough, a scholar and a poet who taught at the University of Cambridge between 1966 and 1975,[16] epitomizes this tendency. He attended Eranos in 1971 to discuss W. B. Yeats's poetry[17] and spoke about Shakespeare's last plays in 1973.[18] In third place after these emblematic figures, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was one of the most popular authors discussed. Paul Schmitt, a Swiss publisher and journalist, wrote a text on Goethe, for instance, in comparison with Saint Augustine for the volume offered to C. G. Jung on his seventieth birthday,[19] and delivered a conference in 1946 on the concepts of nature and spirit in Goethe, in relationship with the natural sciences.[20] After an absence of twenty-five years, Goethe was back on the scene in 1972 when Shmuel Sambursky, a German and later Israeli physicist and historian of science, offered a lecture on Goethe's theory of light and color.[21] Other famous literary figures could be added to these, but they tended to be lone wolves. For instance, Yves-Albert Daugé, a French Latin teacher who attended in 1983, gave the only Eranos lecture dedicated to Virgil.[22]

On the other hand, lecturers could take a step back from the texts and engage in broad considerations, with the risk of firmly favoring content over form and literariness. It was commonplace for these academics to embrace sweeping views and come up with extremely ambitious goals. David Lee Miller, a lecturer on nine occasions between 1975 and 1988, did not hesitate to choose topics as far-reaching as "modern literature"[23] or even "language and literature."[24] Sir Herbert Read, who also spoke nine times between 1952 and 1964, offers many examples of a similar type of ambition. He wrote the following lines in his 1956 speech entitled "Poetic Consciousness and Creative Experience": "To answer all these questions would require a treatise even more comprehensive than Aristotle's, and my ambition does not extend so far! This lecture cannot attempt much more than a definition of the problem of poetic creation . . ."[25] In the context of Eranos, "the problem of poetic creation" could therefore seem like a reasonable topic of discussion and one appropriate for lectures. However, speakers were sometimes aware of this tendency, and open to self-criticism, as can be seen in the 1988 lecture of David L. Miller, in a passage where he offers three reasons for why he has "taken the first half of [his] presen-

15
Carl Moritz Cammerloher, "Die Stellung der Kunst im psychologischen Weltbild unserer Zeit: Ein Beitrag zur Funktionenlehre," in *Eranos-Jahrbuch 1934: Ostwestliche Symbolik und Seelenführung*, ed. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1935), 449–86.

16
Peter Schwendener, "In Quest of Graham Hough," *The American Scholar* 67, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 139.

17
Graham Hough, "W. B. Yeats: A Study in Poetic Integration," in "Die Lebensalter im Schöpferischen Prozess," ed. Adolf Portmann and Rudolf Ritsema, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 40 (1971), 51–83. In this article, Hough discusses the creative evolution of Yeats's poetry. He points out that all his works tend to seek inspiration in the different stages of life, namely childhood, youth, and the stability characteristic of maturity.

18
Graham Hough, "Nature and Spirit in Shakespeare's Last Plays," in "Die Welt der Entsprechungen," ed. Adolf Portmann and Rudolf Ritsema, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 42 (1973), 43–77. Focusing on his plays (i.e., leaving aside his poetry), especially on *The Tempest*, Hough reflects on Shakespeare's "implicit philosophy" and the meaning of magic in his writing.

19
Paul Schmitt, "Archetypisches bei Augustin und Goethe," in "Studien zum Problem des Archetypischen: Festgabe für C. G. Jung zum siebzigstens Geburtstag am 26. Juli 1945," ed. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 12 (1945), 95–115.

20
Paul Schmitt, "Natur und Geist in Goethes Verhältnis zu den Naturenwissenschaften," in "Geist und Natur," ed. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 14 (1946), 332–84.

21
Shmuel Sambursky, "Licht und Farbe in den physikalischen Wissenschaften und in Goethes Lehre," in "Die Welt der Farben," ed. Adolf Portmann and Rudolf Ritsema, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 41 (1972), 177–216.

22
Yves A. Daugé, "Circuits de la lumière: la transfiguration chez Virgile," in "Physische und geistige Körperwelt," ed. Rudolf Ritsema, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 52 (1983), 113–56. This article offers an esoteric, Shaykhist, and Buddhist reading of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

23
David L. Miller, "Prometheus, St. Peter and the Rock: Identity and Difference in Modern Literature," in "Gleichklang oder Gleichzeitigkeit," ed. Rudolf Ritsema, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 57 (1988), 75–123.

tation in reviewing a twenty-five-hundred-year philosophical tradition and repeating a theoretical argument from twenty-five years ago that are already known."[26]

The lecturers had reasons for making conventional author choices and embracing "universal" literary issues. The vastness of the discussion was a way to fit into the Eranos lecture style in general, regardless of the topic. As for the use of literary figures known by all, it might have been a rhetorical strategy. People could not be led astray by details and would keep their focus on the main point of the lecture, which was not literary, but rather spiritual. Discussing a writer whom everyone in the audience had probably read extensively might also have been a way to create a feeling of community among the audience members.

Precedence of Theory Over Style and Aesthetics

The specialist of Sufism and Persian poetry Fritz Meier unofficially and unwittingly launched an analytical scheme for literature at Eranos with his 1944 conference on "The Spirit Man" in Farid ud-din-i 'Attar's *Ilāhīnāma*.[27] Meier uses this long narrative poem to illustrate an argument related to Islamic mysticism. The order in which he makes his various points reveals the precedence he intends to give to the spiritual over the artistic: only after lingering over the theological problem in the ten pages of the first section does he mention 'Attar's name and text for the first time. In spite of this clear hierarchy, Meier does not neglect the text's literariness and precise content. Following a lengthy summary, he extensively quotes from it; of the 6500 verses of the *Ilāhīnāma*, he copies around 400 (footnotes included). He does not hesitate to highlight its cultural importance: "This poem . . . in terms of form and content, is one of the masterpieces of world literature."[28] However, although Meier was aware of the aesthetic significance of this text and did not intend to downplay it, he preferred to treat it as a document illustrating a spiritual truth, rather than a piece of art, because this perspective was more consistent with his line of argument.

Meier was no isolated case, as demonstrated by Read's lectures, which also offer various examples of a strong taste for theory. He for instance proposed several theoretical distinctions: between the *intensive* and *extensive* aspects of poetry in 1956[29] and between *form* and *composition* in 1960.[30] Another of his tendencies is his longing to embrace literature in the pseudo-universal manner common among scholars of the time; i.e., by focusing only on the great male writers of the Western world. In this context, Read enjoys drawing up literary catalogs transcending languages and historical eras. In "The Poet and his Muse" (1962),[31] he offers an overview of how the theory of inspiration evolved from the classical allegory of the Muses to a modern and psychological conception (i.e., brain waves directly originated by the unconscious). To illustrate this historical summary, he quotes Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, William Blake, Percy B. Shelley, William Wordsworth, Edgar Allan Poe, and Paul Valéry. He presents them as perfect illustrations of his meditation on consciousness in the creative process. It is hard not to compare these kinds of "literary" genealogies with the "ancient wisdom narratives" so popular in the Renaissance[32] that found their way late into the nineteenth century.[33]

24
David L. Miller, "From Leviathan to Lear: Shades of Play in Language and Literature," in "Das Spiel der Götter und der Menschen," special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 51 (1982), 59–109. In this article, Miller focuses on the concept of "mockery," jumping from Shakespeare to Montaigne, from Plautus to Job and Plato, from Pascal to Thoreau.

25
Sir Herbert Read, "Poetic Consciousness and Creative Experience," in "Der Mensch und das Schöpferische," ed. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 25 (1956), 357–89.

26
David L. Miller, "Prometheus, St. Peter and the Rock: Identity and Difference in Modern Literature," 90–91.

27
Fritz Meier, "Der Geistmensch bei dem persischen Dichter 'Aṭṭār," in "Der Geist," ed. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 13 (1945), 283–354.

28
Fritz Meier, 293–94: "Die Dichtung . . . gehört in Gestalt und Gehalt zu den Meisterwerken der Weltliteratur." Unless otherwise specified, translations are mine.

29
Sir Herbert Read, "Poetic Consciousness and Creative Experience," 360.

30
Sir Herbert Read, "The Origins of Form in Art," in "Mensch und Gestaltung," ed. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 29 (1960), 183–206.

31
Sir Herbert Read, "The Poet and his Muse," in "Der Mensch, Führer und Geführter im Werk," ed. Adolf Portmann, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 31 (1962), 217–48.

32
Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 7–12.

33
One of the most famous examples is Édouard Schuré, *Les Grands Initiés: Esquisse de l'histoire secrète des religions; Rama, Krishna, Hermès, Orphée, Pythagore, Platon, Jésus* (Paris: Librairie Académique Didier Perrin, 1889).

Another example of these literary catalogs could already be found in "The Flower of Peace" (1958).[34] After having summed up Tolstoy's fifty-page epilogue at the end of *War and Peace*, Read calls it "a penetrating *essay* by a great man who had given the best of his thought and genius to this problem";[35] that is, he presents it as theoretical, not literary. He then speaks of Wilfred Owen's poem entitled "Insensibility" as a modern rephrasing of Homer's thought that "man can fight against man, but he cannot fight against war."[36] In the second section of his conference, he successively quotes Henry Vaughan, George Herbert, William Blake, John Milton, and Edmund Spencer's *Faerie Queene*. Later on, Shelley is said to be "the reincarnation of Plato in English poetry."[37] Read was confident that he could have gone on much longer than he did: "We could spend a very pleasant hour tracing these archetypical images throughout classical and modern literature . . ."[38] He constantly minimizes the "literary" side of writers and prefers treating them as essayists or theoreticians. For instance, Yeats is not discussed as a poet or a playwright. In "Nihilism and Renewal in the Art of Our Time" (1959),[39] he is presented only as the theoretician who synthesized the complex system exposed in *A Vision*—and other speakers did as well. When Read talks about Schiller in the second part of "The Dynamics of Art,"[40] it is only as an essayist on aesthetics. Eventually, Read uses literature as a hat from which one can pull out countless illustrations for various theories. In "Beauty and the Beast" (1961),[41] when he quotes a line of Persius's *Satires* from Burke, he analyzes it by saying: "a line . . . which might be taken as a still earlier anticipation of the Freudian unconscious."[42] In the same text, he offers an interpretation of Madame Leprince de Beaumont's popular fairy tale in terms of a "dramatic symbolization of the four functions of consciousness,"[43] in line with Bruno Bettelheim's project in *The Uses of Enchantment*.[44]

Sir Herbert Read's Hesitation Between Conformism and Rebellion

The features I have just described could seem quite predictable if one reads what Kathleen Raine said about Read's intellectual identity in her first Eranos conference of 1968.[45] Raine might have intended to pay him tribute by reminding her audience how much he had influenced her when she was a student at the University of Cambridge; for when the conference took place that year, Read had only been dead for a couple of months. According to her, this era was marked by the complete disagreement of Read and T. S. Eliot on the definition of culture and creativity. In this context, she preferred what she calls Read's "psychological theory"[46] over Eliot's conservatism. Read indeed made constant references to psychology; at Eranos, he even regularly adopted the role of a teacher who reminded any ignorant listeners about some of the most famous concepts of psychoanalysis: in 1957, he offered a lengthy explanation of Jung's concept of individuation[47] and even once thought it would be useful to remind his audience of what psychoanalysis is all about.[48]

Read thus undoubtedly accepted tackling literary issues "in the manner" of other Eranos speakers. However, there are multiple ways of challenging the idea that he had come to Eranos to uniformly pres-

34
Sir Herbert Read, "The Flower of Peace," in "Mensch und Frieden," ed. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 27 (1958), 299–332.

35
Read, "The Flower of Peace," 299. The problem under discussion is obviously that of war and peace. Italics mine.

36
Read, 305.

37
Read, 331.

38
Read, 321.

39
Sir Herbert Read, "Nihilism and Renewal in the Art of Our Time," in "Die Erneuerung des Menschen," ed. Olga-Fröbe-Kapteyn, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 28 (1959), 345–76.

40
Sir Herbert Read, "The Dynamics of Art," in "Mensch und Energie," ed. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 21 (1952), 255–84.

41
Sir Herbert Read, "Beauty and the Beast," in "Der Mensch in Spannungsfeld der Ordnungen," ed. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 30 (1961), 175–210.

42
Read, "Beauty and the Beast," 183.

43
Read, 200.

44
Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976).

45
Kathleen Raine, "Poetic Symbol as a Vehicle of Tradition: The Crisis of the Present in Modern Poetry," in "Tradition und Gegenwart," ed. Adolf Portmann and Rudolf Ritsema, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 37 (1968), 357–409.

46
Raine, "Poetic Symbol as a Vehicle of Tradition," 370. See 367–73, in particular 368–69 for the whole story about Read's and Eliot's opposition: "Herbert Read based his own thought upon romantic tradition . . . Thus while Eliot made his plea for tradition rest upon historic transmission, Herbert Read appealed to the permanent nature of the human imagination, and found his support in the then novel psychology of Freud and of Jung . . . It was in relation to Jung that Herbert Read defined his position . . ."

ent a "psychological" understanding of poetry and literary creation in line with what others did there. Regarding theory, while insisting on its importance, he criticized it for being artificial. After having theorized on the above-mentioned distinction between intensive and extensive aspects of poetry, he added:

> We now distinguish these aspects thanks to our powers of reflection, and on the basis of the poetic material that has accumulated in historical times. In other words, the distinction we make is artificial, as is the whole academic science of poetry, poetics in the Aristotelian sense. It is our failure to preserve a sense of poetry as a primordial activity of consciousness, distinct from poetic thinking or myth-making, that has so often led to a misunderstanding of the nature and function of poetry today, especially among psychologists.[49]

Read's relationship to psychology appears to not be as simple as Raine portrays it in her 1968 lecture. It could be labeled as conflictual, considering that on more than one occasion Read jibed at psychologists, hardly failing to be perceived as provocative given the composition of the audience. In "Poetic Consciousness and Creative Experience," he challenged the capacity of psychology to develop a relevant discourse on the creation of poetry:

> I do not think that any modern philosopher or psychologist would be so rash as to claim that he had solved the age-long mystery. But I think he would claim that the concept of the unconscious, and more particularly the concept of the archetypes, have thrown much light, if not into the sources of poetry, at least on the mechanism of poetic experience, the formative process in the imagination. The psychologist has penetrated some distance into the recesses of the poet's subjectivity and found there, not darkness, but a clever piece of machinery . . . A light, a glory, a fair luminous mist—we cannot find more precise words to describe the experience of poetry. But what we have to insist on, against the theologians on the one side and the psychologists on the other side, is the originality and integrity of the process . . . We have to admit that the illumination cast by modern psychology on these "fundamental problems" of creativity is almost nil.[50]

A few years earlier, in 1952, he offered the same type of criticism about art in general:

> Any discussion of the psychology of art must begin with an affirmation that is not always acceptable to the psychologist; or, if acceptable, is often conveniently forgotten. This is the fact that the work of art exists as such, not in virtue of any "meaning" it expresses, but only in virtue of a particular organization of its constituent material elements.[51]

In 1958, Read even went so far as to offer advice regarding the future

47
Sir Herbert Read, "The Creative Nature of Humanism," in "Mensch und Sinn," ed. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 26 (1957), 315–50. See in particular 332–33 for this passage.

48
Sir Herbert Read, "The Poet and His Muse," 234: "Psycho-analysis, as a theory and a therapy, rests on the hypothesis of a divided mind—part conscious, part unconscious."

49
Sir Herbert Read, "Poetic Consciousness and Creative Experience," 360.

50
Read, "Poetic Consciousness and Creative Experience," 381, 383.

51
Sir Herbert Read, "The Dynamics of Art," 255.

developments of psychology, which should work towards becoming a "human literature":

> A humanism of this kind is as necessary today as it was in the fifteenth century. Modern psychology may be compared to medieval scholasticism: it is an extensive corpus of expert knowledge for the most part written in a repulsive jargon, and before it can become human, a truth accessible to individual men, it must clarify its imagery and refashion its vocabulary. A science cannot renounce its technical terminology, but the meaning that is inherent in the jargon of psychology—ids, egos, superegos; sublimation, projection, individuation; all this hasty verbalization of an empirical science must be transformed into a *human literature* before it can have any wide effect on humanity.[52]

Ultimately, Read wanted to make it clear that psychology, as interesting as it might be for the study of literature, was wholly different and in no way could be called superior:

> The essential truth of the poetic experience is contained in the basic doctrine of Jungian psychology, but we must proceed to make distinctions, for poetry is not identical with dream, nor even with myth.[53]

The Difficult Assertion of the Writer's Identity

Read sometimes used literature in the Eranos style as a mere source of examples for psychological concepts, and sometimes talked about it while wearing the hat of a poet, thus presenting it as a superior form of expression that would never be exhausted by intellectual discourses; in this way, he firmly defended literature against theoreticians. To throw a bit of light on this paradox, I would argue that some of the writers who came to Eranos as lecturers were not content with the setting they found themselves in. They tried to fit in, but somehow failed to fully reach this goal. Whether they were academics or not, some of the speakers seemed like they would have preferred to give preference to the aesthetic over the spiritual, but this forced them into an impossible position. They therefore gave up on discussing their own experience as writers. Read might be the only one who chose to share what he went through as a creator of poetry: "I shall speak as a poet who is under the illusion that he has had authentic experiences of poetic creation."[54] He wrote a more detailed account in "The Poet and His Muse" (1962). This example is somewhat tricky because he asserts his identity as a poet while illustrating the psychological dimension of creation, ending up blurring the distinction between a poet's and a psychologist's perspective:

> I know, from personal experience supported by the evidence of other poets, that in the rare moments when I am writing poetry, I am in a "state of mind" totally distinct from the state of mind in which I composed this lecture, or am now reading this lecture; totally distinct, too, from the state of mind in which I go about my

52 Sir Herbert Read, "The Creative Nature of Humanism," 318. Italics mine.

53 Sir Herbert Read, "Poetic Consciousness and the Creative Experience," 369.

54 Read, "Poetic Consciousness and the Creative Experience," 373.

practical activities while awake—that is to say, while conscious.[55]

Moreover, that writers tended to embrace rhetorical self-deprecation constitutes another hint of this feeling of being out of place. Read himself was no stranger to this:

> But before I venture into this [i.e., a return to one of Plato's myths in the work of Yeats], to me, unfamiliar territory, let me explain that I do so with the hesitation and modesty, not only of one who is profoundly ignorant of the esoteric tradition of which it is a part, but also as one who is skeptical of all attempts to explain human phenomena by recourse to superhuman agencies.[56]

Read was, however, not an isolated case. In the first lines of the lecture he delivered at Eranos in 1956 on "The Creative Pattern in Primitive Africa,"[57] Laurens van der Post also spontaneously adopted the rhetorical mask of the humble man who does not know what he is doing there and whether or not he is entitled to speak:

> I have only one qualification for appearing before you today and that is that my own life, at many points and in many places, has touched the life of my time . . . I have very little learning, not much book knowledge, and precious little philosophy to offer to you. All I can do is to try and pass on to you an individual experience of the primitive pattern of creation . . .[58]

While downplaying his expertise and expressing doubts concerning the relevance of his status as an Eranos speaker, van der Post indirectly asserts his identity by adopting the role of the fascinating tale-teller who embodies a transmission between "Africa" and Western white scholars. His conference is indeed, at least for half of it, the retelling of tales he says he learned while staying with Bushmen in the Kalahari Desert. He complacently claims that he knows a great deal about their secrets because these people ended up trusting him with their beliefs. In this text, he offers an overview of his talent when it comes to blurring the frontier between fiction and reality. His pride in being an artist, and not a scholar, is glimpsed in the conclusion. After quoting a poem that a Bushman composed as a lament about a magician friend who was killed, he draws a comparison with the popular Eranos topic of Goethe:

> I had hoped to be able to show you the creative pattern as behavior, as human conduct in the Bushman society that I knew so well in the Kalahari. But I have just time to show you that all this material surging at the back of the primitive mind can be transformed into poetry. You will remember that Goethe spoke about *Gefühlsfaden*.[59]

Coherence and Continuities: The Example of Kathleen Raine

Besides the conflicted figures of Read and van der Post, Kathleen

55
Sir Herbert Read, "The Poet and His Muse," 233.

56
Sir Herbert Read, "Nihilism and Renewal in the Art of our Time," 346.

57
Laurens van der Post, "The Creative Pattern in Primitive Africa," in "Der Mensch und das Schöpferische," ed. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 25 (1956), 417–54.

58
van der Post, "The Creative Pattern in Primitive Africa," 417.

59
van der Post, 452.

Raine provides a different model. She proved that it was possible to make the effort to reconcile academic and artistic viewpoints by adopting the ethos of both a poet and a critic and, to a lesser extent, by playing the role of a figure at the crossway of a network involving several writers and poets, directly or indirectly related to Eranos. She did not revolutionize the standard way of tackling literature at Eranos: she chose canonic authors who had already been discussed by previous speakers and was not primarily interested in aesthetics. Her point was to discuss large issues related to civilization and history. In both her conferences, she tried to reconcile literature and psychology. When analyzing Blake's "devils," "the inspirers of poets," she called them "the irrational energies of the Unconscious."[60] She insisted on the similarity of her own spiritual and literary interests, and those of Eranos:

> Yeats arrived at a concept similar to Jung's collective unconscious independently, through his early studies of the techniques of magic . . . For Yeats magic was less a kind of poetry than poetry a kind of magic. The symbols of poetry and the other arts have the power to evoke those universal forms which they embody.[61]

For several reasons, she represents a form of continuity at Eranos. By speaking about Yeats, on whom her work remains to this day an indispensable reference, she is of course connected to Read, but also to the pre-Eranos phase, through James Cousins—who had known Yeats and been part of the circle which included George William Russell (Æ)—and through Shri Purohit Swami, who signed the guestbook of Eranos in 1933, when he was working with Yeats on a translation of *The Ten Principal Upanishads*.[62]

Literature Made Invisible: Side Function of the Writer's Hat

Because Eranos speakers attended as scholars and not as artists, there was no need for them to mention their writing activities—which does not mean they did not exist. This is the case for some of the most famous figures who spoke there. Mircea Eliade was a novelist and an important figure in Romanian literature. Standard anthologies include texts by Eliade,[63] usually insisting on the importance of myths, folklore, and the fantastic in his work,[64] and most of all on his taste for Oriental and erotic themes.[65] Although it is rarely mentioned, Gershom Scholem was also a poet. Some fifty of his poems written between 1914 and 1974 were recently published together with some of his translations and theoretical considerations on poetry.[66] In continuity with Laurens van der Post as a teller of fairytales, or with Read's interpretation of "Beauty and the Beast," Martin Buber was interested in Hasidic tales and legends. As a young man, he felt that his vocation was to become a poet and a writer, and he was an ardent admirer of Hugo von Hofmannsthal.[67]

Some of the Eranos speakers could therefore be writers, but would not be perceived as such in that specific setting. This was also the case of lesser-known figures, like Max Pulver, a German-speaking Swiss writer especially interested in graphology and writing symbolism. He

60
Kathleen Raine, "Mental Worlds of Blake and Yeats: Two Diagrams," in "Die Vielheit der Welten," ed. Adolf Portmann and Rudolf Ritsema, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 44 (1975), 133–65. See 139 for these quotes.

61
Kathleen Raine, "Poetic Symbol as a Vehicle of Tradition: The Crisis of the Present in Modern Poetry," 392.

62
The Ten Principal Upanishads, put into English by Shree Purohit Swāmi and William Butler Yeats (London: Faber & Faber, 1937).

63
Andreia Roman's bilingual anthology of Romanian literature includes an extract of *Huliganii*. See Andreia Roman, *Literatura Română/Littérature roumaine*, vol. 3, t. 3, *Perioda interbelică/L'Entre-Deux-Guerres* (Paris: Éditions Non Lieu, 2010), 377–85.

64
Roman, *Literatura Română/Littérature roumaine*, 3.3:379.

65
See George Călinescu's critical approach of Eliade's literay texts in *History of Romanian Literature* (Milan: Unesco; Nagard, 1988), 825–38. He calls Eliade "the most complete (and servile) embodiment of Gideism in our literature" and mentions his "refuge in exoticism" (827). He envisions the ubiquitous presence of erotic themes in his oeuvre in a negatively critical way: "What do Mircea Eliade's experiences consist in? Almost exclusively in feeling sexual sensations . . ." (828).

66
Gershom Scholem, *Poetica: Schriften zur Literatur, Übersetzungen, Gedichte* (Frankfurt: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2019), 11: "Nur wenige wissen, dass derjenige, der vielen Wissenschaftlern als einer der Begründer der Historiografie der Mystik und als Entdecker der häretischen Kabbala gilt, zeitlebens auch als Übersetzer und als Autor von Gedichten und Aufsätzen zu Sprache, Literatur und Übersetzung tätig war." ("Only few people know that the man who is considered by many scholars to be one of the founders of the historiography of mysticism and the discoverer of the heretical Kabbala was also active throughout his life as a translator, and as an author of poems and essays on language, literature and translation.")

67
Maurice Ruben-Hayoun, *Martin Buber, une introduction* (Paris: Pocket, 2013), 18.

gave five conferences at Eranos between 1940 and 1945, mainly on gnosis. He remained an active participant for about twenty years as he signed the Eranos guestbook a dozen times between 1933 and 1950, which means he attended both before and after the meetings to which he came as a lecturer. Pulver's most famous work might be his 1931 *Symbolik der Handschrift*,[68] but he was first and foremost a poet, before and after Eranos, albeit to a lesser degree. His first collection was published in 1916 in Leipzig,[69] and his last in Zurich thirty years later.[70] Has was also a translator of nineteenth-century French literature into German, for instance of texts by Émile Zola[71] or Théophile Gautier.[72] Because Pulver's presence at Eranos had nothing to do with his involvement in creative writing, it was not conspicuous to those who did not know his oeuvre as a whole.

Writers Among the Audience Members

It should not be forgotten that writers were not only presenters but also members of the audience—as shows with great precision the guestbook of Eranos kept in Ascona, especially regarding the first years. The habit of signing it unfortunately started to recede from the 1950s onwards. In spite of this, it is possible to argue that there was a gradual decrease in the attendance of writers over the years, undoubtedly related to the lasting shift of Eranos towards a more academic organization. Overall, the writers who attended Eranos do not seem to have been interested in it from a literary point of view.

Eranos was no trendy venue for big stars of the literary world; if they are related to Eranos, it is only in an indirect way.[73] The fact that several women related to famous, "canonic" writers attended the event does not mean they were even indirectly interested in literature. Mia Hesse-Bernoulli attended Eranos twice, in 1932 and 1935, when she was no longer married to Hermann Hesse. Ninon Hesse, the latter's third wife, came three times between 1941 and 1943, but she lived nearby in Ticino. Christiane Zimmer, the only daughter of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, attended Eranos several times because she accompanied her husband, the speaker Heinrich Zimmer.[74] It would be unfair to forget that, apart from being or having been married to Hermann Hesse, Mia Hesse-Bernoulli was a photographer and Ninon an art historian; but the question of the place allotted to women at Eranos is a vast topic beyond my scope.[75]

It was not rare that writers attended as neighbors. The above-mentioned case of Mia Hesse-Bernoulli, and that of Erich Maria Remarque, who attended in 1953, are relevant in this regard. The former lived in Ascona and the latter had been a resident of the Casa Monte Tabor in Porto Ronco since 1931,[76] which was only one kilometer from Eranos, and a place where Fröbe-Kapteyn herself had shortly lived before him.[77] Anne de Valenti-Montet, who went in 1941 (that is, during World War II, when far fewer people were able to attend), was a Swiss photographer and writer who lived in Switzerland. Aline Valangin, a Swiss psychoanalyst, pianist, poet, and novelist, attended eight times over twenty years, probably because she lived in Ascona from the 1940s on.

What most interested the guests were the topics under discus-

68
Max Pulver, *Symbolik der Handschrift* (Zurich: Orell Füssli, 1931).

69
Max Pulver, *Selbstbegegnung* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1916).

70
Max Pulver, *Übergang* (Zurich: Orell Füssli, 1946).

71
Émile Zola, *Die Bestie im Menschen*, trans. Max Pulver (Munich: Kurt Wolff, 1927).

72
Théophile Gautier, *Fortunio*, trans. Max Pulver (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1922).

73
Claudio Belloni, "Thomas Mann e le origini di Eranos," in *Pioniere, Poeten, Professoren: Eranos und der Monte Verità in der Zivilisationsgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Elisabetta Barone, Matthias Ridl, and Alexandra Tischel (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 45–55. See 45 in particular: "È indubbio che Thomas Mann abbia subito influssi anche molto significativi dalla costellazione spirituale di Eranos, e, questo nonostante la mancata partecipazione diretta agli incontri di Ascona." ("There is no doubt that Thomas Mann was also very significantly influenced by the spiritual constellation of Eranos, and that notwithstanding his lack of direct participation to the Ascona meetings.") Belloni focuses on Mann's relationship with Karl Kerényi and Heinrich Zimmer, but he also attended the meetings in Darmstadt.

74
Christiane Zimmer attended Eranos in 1934, 1938, and 1939. The fourth time she came, in 1948, Zimmer was not a lecturer.

75
It is worth pointing out that less than 5% of speakers at Eranos between 1933 and 1988 were women (7 out of 154). They almost exclusively spoke in the 1930s (Charlotte A. Baynes in 1937, Vera C. C. Collum in 1938, Caroline A. F. Rhys-Davids every year between 1933 and 1936) and in the 1970s (Marie-Louise von Franz in 1978 and 1985, Aniela Jaffé four times between 1971 and 1975, Kathleen Raine in 1968 and 1975, and Hildemarie Streich four times between 1973 and 1979). Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn had a reputation for being particularly ill-disposed towards women. Antoine Faivre recounts in his unpublished diary on August 29, 1974, that she once asked Mrs Scholem to leave the room, while the latter was immersed in her conversation, for women had "nothing to discuss with the professors" (Hakl, *Eranos*, 95). Hakl himself, being a man of his generation, was not always particularly critical of standard gender clichés, stating for instance that the continuation of the *salon* tradition at Eranos had to do with the fact that "the female sex simply has more social skills than the male" (Hakl, *Eranos*, 5).

sion: while the 1933 attendee Hans Bethge was a poet, he was also a sinologist who earned a PhD in Romance studies and could therefore have been interested in a "meeting place for East and West."[78] Efraim Frisch, who attended in 1934, was a novelist who had undertaken studies to become a rabbi during his youth and conveniently lived in Ascona—there could of course be a combination of the different factors I am describing. Ernst Wilhelm Eschmann, who attended several times at the beginning of the 1950s, was a German playwright but also a sociologist. The case of theopoetics as a field of study combining theology and poetic analysis[79] developed by Stanley Romaine Hopper, who was a lecturer once in 1965,[80] is an excellent example of a go-between linking the spiritual and the literary.

My point is that Eranos was not particularly sought out by writers for artistic inspiration, although this could have been the case for various reasons—the picturesque setting, the content of the lectures, and the ensuing discussions. In this regard, it is significant that many of the writers who signed the guestbook attended when they had completely ceased to write. Cordula Poletti, who came in 1933, was an Italian feminist and a poet who felt unable to write during the fascist period. At the time, she was absorbed in her spiritual and theosophical interests.[81] Frances Külpe might be the best example of this category. A German Baltic writer, she signed the guestbook every year between 1930 and 1935. Her attendance is not exceedingly surprising if we consider that she had decided a few years before to settle down in Ascona. Moreover, she clearly did not envision Eranos as a potential source of inspiration for her writing, because she stopped publishing exactly in those years after a thirty-year-long career. In her 1935 signature, however, she decided to add the word *Schriftstellerin*[82] after her name. She might have done this to remind people of her status, assuming that perhaps her name would not suffice; it is also possible that she felt the need to assert her specific identity in this group where a large variety of profiles coexisted.

Finally, are there any examples of writers who might have been interested in the meetings to spark their literary inspiration? This might have been the case of Raja Rao, who signed the guestbook in 1932 when he was only 23, of David Luschnat, or of Hans Sterneder, an Austrian writer defined as both a poet and a mystic by one of the few recent publications dedicated to his oeuvre;[83] he attended in 1949.

Concluding Remarks

Literature had a paradoxical status at Eranos. To some degree, it was everywhere—in Fröbe-Kapteyn's life, in the content of the conferences, in the lives of the keynote speakers, and to a significant though irregular extent, in the lives of the attendees. Although literature ended up playing a minor, non-central, and non-coherent role at these meetings, the domination of the academic tone never quite succeeded in reducing to complete silence what was mostly due to early hesitations regarding the place of arts at Eranos. These were never completely fixed because of the interdisciplinarity entailed in the *salon* model.

Alongside these uncertainties, there is a form of coherence in the way literature was generally approached by speakers. They were not

76
Thomas Schneider, *Erich Maria Remarque: Ein Chronist des 20. Jahrhunderts; Eine Biographie in Bildern und Dokumenten* (Bramsche: Rasch Verlag, 1991), 7.

77
Hakl, *Eranos*, 16.

78
Hakl, 29.

79
The Way of Transfiguration: Religious Imagination as Theopoiesis, ed. Stanley Romaine Hopper, R. Melvin Keiser, and Tony Stoneburner (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1992).

80
Stanley Romaine Hopper, "Symbolic Reality and the Poet's Task," in "Form als Aufgabe des Geistes," ed. Adolf Portmann and Rudolf Ritsema, special issue, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 34 (1965), 167–218.

81
Alessandra Cenni, "Ritratto di un'Amazzone italiana: Cordula Poletti (1885–1971)," in *Fuori della norma: Storie lesbiche nell'Italia della prima metà del Novecento*, ed. Nerina Milletti and Luisa Passerini (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2007), 43–71.

82
The German for "writer."

83
Thomas Eich, *Hans Sterneder, Dichter und Mystiker: Leben und Schaffen eines außergewöhnlichen Schriftstellers* (Werlenbach: Eich, 2008).

interested in literature for its own sake; that is, its stylistics or aesthetics. Because literature served rhetorical purposes independent of it, it was mainly envisioned as a tool serving as an example in the context of a theological, psychological, and/or philosophical argument.

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