Religious Dynamics and Cultural Diversity
ICG/ASCA, University of Amsterdam
Research Report 2012

This interdisciplinary research group (located within the UvA Humanities research institutes ICG and ASCA) focuses on historical and current practices of religion in Europe, situated in its wider Mediterranean and Eurasian context, as a complex, plural field which is characterized by continuous processes of change and transformation over time.

Contrary to traditional notions of a monolithic “Christian occident” (das Christliche Abendland), our emphasis is on religion in Europe in its full diversity. We are particularly interested in processes of discursive transfer and exchange of practices and ideas in and between Jewish, Christian, and Islamic communities, the literary transmission of “pagan” and other traditions within these contexts and the emergence, since the 18th century, of a new religious landscape under the impact of processes of modernization, secularization, individualization, romanticization, commercialization, as well as – beginning in the second half of the 19th and gaining particular force from the second half of the 20th century onwards – of migration and globalization. Complex processes of competition by means of polemics and apologetics, persecution, exclusion and syncretism, innovation and inclusion by means of selective borrowing can be observed in all these contexts.

The research group intends to be not just multidisciplinary, but also interdisciplinary and even transdisciplinary: participants come from a variety of specialisations and disciplinary backgrounds (e.g. historical research, textual analysis, anthropology, sociology, psychology, study of the arts, methodological approaches and history of science), but are encouraged to collaborate across traditional disciplinary and geographical boundaries. In order to stimulate such an approach, the research output will be categorized not according to the affiliation of scholars to specific disciplines, but on the basis of the actual contents of their various publications from year to year and existing or upcoming collaborations in research projects.

The research group organizes seminars, meetings, and workshops, and will serve as a platform for the discussion about and preparation of funding applications. As such, it aims to become a centre of expertise for bringing together and coordinating all research concerned with religion at the University of Amsterdam. Scholars from all disciplines in the Faculties of Humanities and of the Social and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Amsterdam may participate.
Research Projects and Output 2012
(in alphabetical order)

Egil Asprem
Ph.D. Candidate (ICG)

Esotericism and Scientific Naturalism in the 20th Century: Dialogue and Polemics
This research project takes the Weberian notion of Entzauberung (“disenchantment”) as a starting point for analysing relations between the natural sciences, religion, and esoteric discourses in early 20th century intellectual culture. While Weber famously stated that all “mysterious incalculable forces” had vanished from the world partially as a result of modern science, his colleagues in biology, chemistry, and physics were forced to think twice about central concepts such as causality and mechanism. And while Weber saw a distinct chasm between science and religion, requiring the religious believer to make not only a jump of faith, but also an “intellectual sacrifice” of scientific rationality, new types of “natural theology” were being formulated by European academics in the first decades of the century, significantly influencing modern religious thought. Suggesting that disenchantment was an intellectual problem rather than an irrevocable process, this research project looks at a series of responses in the period from 1900-1939, that cut across cultural spheres from the natural sciences to the study of “psychic phenomena,” from academic and popular philosophy to “the occult.”

Book


Book Chapter


Book Reviews


Lectures


“Opening address.” *1st International Conference on Contemporary Esotericism*, Stockholm University, August 27.

**Conference Organization**

*1st International Conference on Contemporary Esotericism*, Stockholm University, August 27-29.


**Tessel M. Bauduin**  
Ph.D. Candidate (ICG)

**The Occultation of Surrealism: A Study of French Surrealism and Occultism**

French Surrealism has often been linked with occultism, or with western esotericism more generally. This has been fuelled by Surrealism itself; for example, in his *Second Manifesto*, surrealist front-man André Breton demanded “a veritable and profound occultation” of Surrealism. But what, in fact, does such “occultation” entail? This Ph.D. research project investigates why connections between Surrealism and occultism or esotericism have been made, on what they have been based, and further, what the associations of Surrealism with occult or esoteric trends such as spiritism, alchemy, or magic in fact imply.

**Dissertation**


**Articles**


“Modern Art Revisited: A Fascination for the Occult,” *all-over: Magazin für Kunst und Ästhetik* 2, 44-51


Book Reviews


Lecture


Jacob A. van Belzen
Professor of Psychology of Religion (ICG)

Theory and Method in Psychology of Religion
This project deals with the psychology of religion on both a theoretical and a meta-theoretical level. On the one hand, it involves an ongoing exploration of new developments in the motherdiscipline of psychology, inquiring into the possibilities of applying insight into empirical research of religious phenomena. On the other hand, it aims at a contextual analysis of the development of both theory and empirical research, also contributing to the international historiography of the subdiscipline and to a critical appraisal of its status quo.

Religion and psychic functioning
This project deals with issues central to psychology in its various relationships to religion. Next to a theoretical and methodological part, an important part is devoted to classic topoi in the psychology of religion (like religious experience, mysticism, conversion, spirituality and other phenomena considered religious), esp. to the prominent subtheme of the relationship between religion and mental health. In this latter part, the orientation drawn upon is a cultural psychological one; a number of empirical cases are studied in depth.

Edited volume


Articles


“Markt van min en meer: Recente publicaties op het terrein van de godsdienstpsychologie.” Psyche en Geloof 23, 41-61.


“Psicopatologia e religião: Uma análise psicobiográfica.” Multitextos 1:1.

**Book Chapters**


**Book Review**


**Lectures**

“Religion and Music: Psychological Perspectives.” Invited paper to Research Group of Social Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Université de Louvain-la-neuve (Belgium), 25 September 2012.


**Jacqueline Borsje**  
Senior Research Fellow (NWO-VIDI)(ICG)  
NGO Lecturer Cultural History of Christianity (ICG)  
Professor of Medieval Irish Culture and Religion, University of Ulster, Ireland

**The Power of Words in Medieval Ireland**

This research project studies medieval Irish ‘words of power’ – words with which one believed to be able to influence and transform reality. These words were uttered for good or for evil: for example, to protect, to harm, to exert power, to heal and to inflict diseases. Such words are commonly known as e.g. curses, blessings, spells, charms, incantations, and prayers. The aim of the project is to supply a survey and analysis of medieval Irish forms of ‘words of power’, by way of philological, diachronic and multidisciplinary study. A sample of the various forms, based on medieval Irish classifications, will be analysed with regard to 1) the contemporary use and context of the words; and 2) the ideology involved in world-views reflected in the texts and in the terminology used. Two sub-projects are envisaged: 1) on the words themselves; 2) on the users of the words.
Medieval Irish words of power have been neglected in modern studies of medieval European ‘magic’. These ambiguous verbal expressions challenge the dichotomies designed by modern research. They cannot be classified as either pre-Christian or Christian; they are often seen as a popular phenomenon and yet, the elite preserved them in manuscripts. Because they usually are an intricate mix of religious elements, they cannot simply be seen as ‘reconstructions of the pre-Christian past’ either. A fresh study of this fascinating material is needed for the full picture of the diversity in belief and the complexity of the literary inheritance of medieval Ireland; the results will contribute to our knowledge of medieval European culture.

**Book**


**Articles**

“Zlo i meniajutshujusia priroda tchudivitsh v renneirlandskih textah,” *Atlantika* 10, 3-20.

“Love Magic in Medieval Irish Penitentials, Law and Literature: A Dynamic Perspective,” *Studia Neophilologica* 84, Suppl. 1, 6-23.

**Book Chapters**


**Lectures**

“Epaid (spell, charm) in The Vision of Mac Con Glinne.” Invited paper at the 34th University of California Celtic Studies Conference, held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Celtic Studies Association of North America, UCLA, Los Angeles, USA, 9 March.

“Poëzie en bezwering.” Perdu, Amsterdam, Perdu Avonden, 12 October.


**Interview**


**Radio appearances**


**Mònica Colominas Aparicio**
Ph.D. candidate (NISIS/ICG)

*Mudejars and the Politics of Identity: Authority, Loyalty and Religious Polemics in Late-Medieval Iberia*
This research project investigates the politics of identity of Muslim minority communities living under Christian rule (*mudejars*) in the North-East of the Iberian Peninsula in the later Middle Ages. It focuses on Arabic and *aljamiado* manuscripts from Aragon and Navarre and it aims to shed light on the function of polemical writing as a discursive means for the construction of Mudejar identities and social realities in the period of relative tolerance that preceded the forced conversions of the sixteenth-century.

**Lecture**

“The End of Muhammad’s Law in a Prophecy of El Escorial.” *International Medieval Meeting Lleida*, University of Lleida, 26-29 June.

**Peter J. Forshaw**
Universitair Docent History of Western Esotericism Early Modernity (ICG)

*Christian Cabala in the Early Modern Period*
The goal of this project is to write a study of Christian Cabala in the early modern period that will provide a sound foundation for students unfamiliar with the subject and at the same time be of interest to specialists in the history of esotericism. From a brief introduction to Jewish Kabbalah, the work then investigates, for example, the Genesis of Christian Cabala; the presence of Cabala in occult philosophy and practical magical treatises; the impact of Cabala on alchemical theory and practice; the new wave of Lurianic Kabbalah; Kircher’s Saracenic Cabala; critical responses, including Colberg’s condemnation of Cabala as ‘Fanatic Theology’ and Brucker’s ruminations in *Historia critica philosophiae*.

*Ora et Labora: Alchemy and Religion*
The “New Historiography of Alchemy” rejects a monolithic view of the subject, recognising the rich variety of approaches by which practitioners from many schools of thought competed and coexisted. In the process of challenging earlier representations of alchemy, however, there has been a reaction against late nineteenth- and twentieth-century spiritualised or psychologised interpretations of
alchemical endeavour. This project investigates the relations between alchemical and religious thought in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. The focus is on the Christian West, though, as alchemical texts contain a great deal of material from earlier periods, the intended monograph and articles will include a fresh historical-critical appraisal of evidence from the middle ages and antiquity, including relevant Greek, Arabic and Hebrew sources. Research themes include: exegesis, images, vision and revelation, confessional identities, "spiritual," "supernatural" and "theosophical" alchemy and "the experience of transmutation."

**Book Review**


**Lectures**

“As Above, So Below: Medieval and Early Modern Conjunctions of Astrology and Alchemy,” Guest lecture at *EMPHASIS*, London, 4 February.


“‘Utterly unphilosophically, they separate the Oratory and Laboratory!’: An Early Modern Theosophical Alchemist on Christ and the Philosophers’ Stone,” Conference *From Alchemy to Chemistry*, Invited Speaker, University of Galway, 13 April.


“‘Morbo spirituali medicina spiritualis convenit’: Paracelsians, Madness, and Spirits,” *Purgatio Spiritus: Banishment and Purification of the Spirits in the Sixteenth Century*, Invited Speaker, University of Tübingen, 5-7 October.


“Why Study Western Esotericism - And How Should We Do It?”, Invited Public Lecture, University of Gothenburg, 27 November.
Radio Interview


Webinars

“Infinite Fire Webinar Series - Introduction,” *Hermetically Open*, in collaboration with the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam, 2 September.

“The Alchemy of the *Amphitheatrum*,” *Hermetically Open*, in collaboration with the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam, 19 October.

“The Emblemata of the *Atalanta Fugiens*,” *Hermetically Open*, in collaboration with the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam, 30 November.

Workshop Organization

*ESSWE Magic Thesis Workshop*, University of Amsterdam, 6 July.

**Greer, J.C.**
Ph.D. Candidate (ICH)

**Countercultural Esotericism:**

**The Popularization of Esoteric Discourses in North America Between 1950-1970.**

In mapping the ways in which a close knit countercultural elite – specifically Alan Watts, William Burroughs, and Timothy Leary – confronted, evaded, and eventually overturned both literary censorship in America and cultural taboos in general, this project investigates the question of how the historically situated interplay of esoteric discourses in 1950s North America created the conditions for a mass popularization of esoteric discourse that would blossom into the cultural paradigm shifts of the 1960s and beyond.

Lectures


“Bob was a Futurist and I am a Luddite: Intersections of Esoteric Anarchism and Anarchist Esotericism between Robert Anton Wilson and Peter Lamborn Wilson.” *1st International Conference on Contemporary Esotericism*, Stockholm University, 27 August.
Wouter J. Hanegraaff
Professor of History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents (ICG)

**A Guide to the Study of Western Esotericism**
The goal of this project is to write a short and accessible guide that will help academic teachers and students in various disciplines of the humanities to find their way in the contemporary study of Western esotericism, and make it easier for them to differentiate between reliable and unreliable information in this domain. In ca. 150 pages the reader will be introduced to the main historical currents and themes that belong to the field, its relevance from the perspectives of the main disciplines in the humanities, theoretical and methodological approaches, problem areas and controversial aspects, and so on. The book will contain a bibliographical guide that will help students and teachers in finding reliable literature, an overview of relevant academic organizations and study programs, and a list of online resources with commentary.

**German Romantic Mesmerism and the Nightside of Nature**
This project will focus on the reception of Mesmerism in German Romanticism, with central attention to the neglected key figure of Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert (1780-1860), the author of *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* (1808), *Die Symbolik des Traums* (1814) and *Die Geschichte der Seele* (1830). Schubert’s concept of “the nightside of nature” became central to the novel conceptualizations of Mesmerist somnambulism by a range of contemporary authors, such as Justinus Kerner, A.K.A. Eschenmayer, and Franz von Baader. At least since Henri Ellenberger’s pioneering *Discovery of the Unconscious* (1970), it has been known to specialists that the foundations of modern psychology were created in this German Romantic mesmerist context, but an in-depth study is still missing; and especially in the English-speaking domain, virtually no reliable studies have been published after Ellenberger. The goal of this project is to fill that hiatus.

**Book**


**Articles**

“Западный эзотеризм: следующее поколение,” *Aliter* 1, 7-24.


“Per aspera ad fontes,” *Pentagram* 34:1, 18-25.

**Book Chapters**


Historical and Philosophical Aspects of the Study of Esotericism and Mysticism, St. Petersburg: Russian Christian Academy for Humanities, 113-129.


Book Reviews


Lectures

“How Hermetic was Renaissance Hermetism?” Invited Public Lecture, Singleton Center for Premodern Europe, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, U.S.A., February 13.


‘Rejected Knowledge’ en de geschiedenis van de filosofie.” Invited public lecture, Department of Philosophy, University of Groningen, February 29.

“The Cultural Roots of Resistance against Paganism and Entheogenic Shamanism.” Our Magical Mind: Paganism and Neo-Shamanic Ritual, its Function in Mind, Society, and our Technological Future, Behavioural Science Institute, Medical Faculty, Radboud University Nijmegen, March 20.

“Justinus Kerner and the Seeress of Prevorst.” Lichtenberg Kolleg, University of Göttingen, Germany, 22 May 2012.

“Will-Erich Peuckert’s Memories of a Magician.” Trance and Folklore, Workshop at the University of Siegen, Germany, June 22.

“Historiography versus Mnemohistoriography: The Case of Renaissance Hermetism.” Results and Desiderata of the Study and Documentation of the European Mnemohistory of Ancient Egypt, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Germany, June 28-29.

“Entheogenic Esotericism.” 1st International Conference on Contemporary Esotericism, Stockholm University, Sweden, August 27-29.

“Stefan George and Mythical Paganism.” Internationale Tagung Stefan George und die Religion, Universität Bielefeld, Bingen am Rhein, Germany, October 19-21.


“Heidense Christenen, Protestantse Exorcisten, en Obscure Verlichters”, Amsterdamse Alumni Vereniging (AVU), Study Day, November 3.

“Platonic Orientalism.” Expert Meeting Testing the Limits (Fault Line 1700: Early Enlightenment Conversations on Religion and the State), University of Utrecht, December 3.

Henten, J.W. van
Professor of Exegesis of the New Testament,
Early Christian Literature and Hellenistic-Jewish Texts (ICG/ASCA)

Josephus
My main current research project concerns a new English translation and commentary of books 15-17 of Flavius Josephus’ Antiquitates Judaicae, which concerns the periods of Herod the Great and his son Archelaus as rulers of Judea at the turn of the era. The commentary will appear in Brill’s series Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary (chief-editor: Steve Mason). In connection with this project I research topics in Josephus that are relevant for the commentary, including contributions on Josephus from a narrative perspective for Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative (edited by Irene de Jong; with Luuk Huitink as co-author).

Martyrdom
This research project concerns the topic of martyrdom in antiquity. I was commissioned to write a co-authored book about Jewish and Early Christian Martyrdom for the Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum series (CRINT) of Royal Van Gorcum/Forrest Press (with Friedrich Avemarie). I will contribute the sections on Daniel 3 and 6 as well as 2 Maccabees 6-7 and 4 Maccabees. The volume also includes a survey of the reception of the martyrdoms in Daniel and 2 Maccabaeans in the New Testament and other Early Christian writings up to Origen.

Edited volume

**Article**


“In de sterren: Isis en Maria in Openbaring 12,” *Schrift* 262, 117-121.

**Book Chapters**


**Book Reviews**


**Organization of conferences**

Host of the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and the European Association for Biblical Studies (Amsterdam, July 22-26).

**Invited lectures**
“The Demolition of Herod's Eagle.” Colloquium Juden und Christen unter römischer Herrschaft bis 135 n.Chr.: Selbstwahrnehmung und Fremdwahrnehmung in honor of Folker Siegert, Institutum Judaicum Delitzchianum, University of Münster, 19-20 April.

“Intertextual Connections between the Revelation of John and Graeco-Roman literature.” Conference Poetik und Intertextualität der Johannesapokalypse, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt/Main, 14-16 June.


Karin Hügel  
Ph.D. Candidate (ASCA, ARC-GS)

Queer Readings of the Hebrew Bible  
Not only have scholars since the latter half of the twentieth century interpreted the narratives about Saul, David and Jonathan in the Books of Samuel in a homoerotic way. There was already a long tradition of literary homoerotic receptions and appropriations of visual arts about this biblical texts and characters. Such works produce impressively homoerotic readings already prior and parallel to the scholarly interpretations of the 20th and 21th century. Because homoeroticism should no longer be the object of the discourse of biblical interpretation and to avoid heteronormativity I introduce several ways of queer readings that will be applied to selected texts of the Hebrew Bible. All the relevant texts of the Hebrew Bible concerning “homoeroticism” are presented within the framework of intertextuality: the legal texts Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 as well as the creations accounts (Genesis 1 and 2) and the stories of Sodom (Genesis 19:1-28), of Gibeah (Judges 19), of Ham and Noah (Genesis 9:20-25), of Saul, David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 16-20 and 2 Samuel 1:26) and of Ruth, Naomi and Boaz (Book of Ruth). Furthermore I discuss homoerotic Jewish interpretations of the biblical character Joseph.

Lecture

“A Queer Reading of Joseph: Jewish Interpretations of the Beautiful Young Man in the Hebrew Bible.” Winter Meeting of The Old Testament Society in the Netherlands and in Belgium (OTW), Amsterdam, 2 February.

Ammeke Kateman  
Ph.D. Candidate (ICG)
Defining Islam as a Modern Religion. Muhammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905) and his Interlocutors

Muhammad ʿAbduh's (Egypt, 1849-1905) late-nineteenth-century reinterpretation of Islam is an influential instance of rethinking what Islam was, is, or should be. In this research project, I study ʿAbduh's redefinition of Islam in relation to his concept of 'religion' (Arabic: dīn, but also diyāna). Starting from the idea that the concept of 'religion' is historically specific, as Talal Asad and others have argued, I seek to understand ʿAbduh's definition of Islam as a religion as a specific instance within the history of the concepts of 'religion' and 'Islam' in modern Islam. This history is intricately connected to the history of the concepts of 'religion', 'Christianity' and 'Islam' in European intellectual traditions, as Armando Salvatore and, more recently, Dietrich Jung have demonstrated convincingly.

Taking my methodological perspective from Reinhart Koselleck and Quentin Skinner, I analyse some exemplary texts of ʿAbduh in their discursive context, in particular in relation to a selection of the many and diverse discussions and conversations in the journals, societies, books and schools where ʿAbduh came into contact with his manifold contemporaries. Specifically, I focus upon how ʿAbduh and his interlocutors compared Islam and Christianity as religions in order to get a better understanding of ʿAbduh’s conception of Islam as a religion within a context of cultural contact dominated by colonialism.

Lecture


Conference Organization

Symposium Giving Meaning To The Passage Of Time: Discourses of History and Progress in Beirut from the Nineteenth Century to the Present, Beirut, Lebanon, 18-19 September. Co-organized by the Orient-Institute Beirut (Dr Stefan Knost), the Netherlands Institute Beirut, Dr. Richard van Leeuwen and Judith Naeff MA.

Gemma Kwantes
Docent Judaism / Ph.D. Candidate (ICG)

Contemporary(?) Jewish (?) Kabbalah (?).

This research project investigates four contemporary groups: Kabbalah Centre, Bnei Baruch, Jewish Renewal and Yehi Or – that can be considered religious, spring from an identifiably Jewish background and yet allow non-Jews to take part in them. Each also claims to offer Kabbalah. The research examines the four groups in a variety of contexts so as to determine how they relate to the classical Kabbalistic tradition (if at all); how they continue to identify Jewishly, and if so where they can be located on the Jewish spectrum in the U.S. or Israel; as well as how they interact with non-Jewish contemporary religious movements. The main thesis is that each of these four groups, in their own way, come to represent Kabbalah as an entry point into a religious tradition rather than its summum, and as exoteric rather than esoteric knowledge.

Book Chapter
Middle Eastern Travel and Religious Discourse.
In the discourses constructed within the framework of Middle Eastern travel, both European travel to the Middle East and vice-versa, religion played a vital role. Evidently, for European Christians the Middle East was since ancient times associated with pilgrimage, especially to the Holy Land and Egypt. Because these were situated in the realm of Islam, the religious “other,” travel accounts were often structured around religious themes or within the domain of religious discourse. Conversely, for Muslims travelling in Europe the “unfamiliar” was often re-integrated into “familiar” contexts by mobilizing forms of religious discourse, or, alternatively, opposed to familiar religious practices and ideas. Thus the communication between Christianity and Islam through the experience of travel resulted in various way of defining and re-defining religious attitudes and concepts, either strengthened or weakened by the confrontation with the other. This research project will concentrate on the ways in which religious discourses both in Europe and in the Arab world were influenced and transformed by the experience of travel, from the rise of Islam until the 20th century. It will focus both on the consequences of the experience of otherness for self-definition and the definition of the other and explore the transformations generated by the intensification of contacts.

The Beginnings of Transnationalism in Modern Islamic Thought: Rashid Ridâ (1869-1935).
This project will focus on the transnational dimension of the religious and political thought and activism of Muhammad Rashid Ridâ, who was one of the precursors of modern Islamic reformism. Although he is usually considered to be the inheritor and conveyor of ‘Abduh’s ideas, especially after the latter’s death in 1905 he developed his own system of reformism and political activism. In 1898 he founded the journal al-Manâr, which was distributed throughout the Muslim world, and which became the source of inspiration of many reformist groups and currents in Islam. Transnationalism can be related to Ridâ’s ideas in several ways: first, through his exile in Egypt, which made him part of a transnational network of scholars and political activists; second, through his journeys to Syria, Istanbul, the Hijâz, India and Europe; through his interest in modern technology and means of communication, which became manifest in the publication of al-Manâr, the first “transnational”
Islamic journal; fourth, through his efforts to revive the idea of the caliphate, as a “modern” political concept; and, fifth, through his efforts to purify Islam from “superstitions” and to formulate the tenets of a uniform, fundamentalist faith, transcending political boundaries. These projects make Ridâ one of the forerunners of modern reformism and transnationalism in Islam.

Book

Sam; bir Osmanli sehri; vakıflar ve şehir, Istanbul: Kûre Yayinlari.

Book Chapters

“Conversion as a (Meta-) Historical Concept in the Epic Stories of the Thousand and One Nights,” in: S. Dorpmüller (ed.), Fictionalizing the Past: Historical Characters in Arabic Popular Epic (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 206), Louvain: Peeters, 125-137.


Lectures

“Translating the Thousand and one nights.” NVIC, Cairo, 15 January.


“Galland’s Mille et Une Nuit and the German Literary Fairytale from Wieland to Hofmannsthal." Conference The Syrian-French connection: Antoine Galland’s and Hanna Diyab’s Arabian nights; sources, transmissions and influences of the first corpus of the Nights,” University of Copenhagen, 2 June.

“Dialogues and Proto-Dialogues in the Thousand and One Nights.” Conference Le dialogue dans la culture arabe: Structures, fonctions, significations (Ville-XIIIe siècles),” Università degli Studi di Catania/ Università degli Studi di Venezia, Catania, 14 June.
“The *Thousand and One Nights* and World-Literature: Orientalist Appropriation or Literary Influence?” 1st Honeyman Conference, St. Andrews, 28 September.

“Time, History and Narration: Continuity and Disruption in the Work of Elias Khoury.” Colloquium *Giving Meaning to the Passage of Time,* Nederlands Instituut Beirut/ Orient-Institut, Beirut, 18 September.

“Bestaat het Oosterse sprookje? Genrekwesties in tekst en receptie van de *Duizend-en één-nacht.*” Symposium Meertens Instituut, Amsterdam, 26 October.

**Workshop organization**

*Giving Meaning to the Passage of Time.* Nederlands Instituut Beiroet/ Orient-Institut Beirut, 18-19 September.

**Selma Leydesdorff**  
Professor of Oral History and Culture (ICG)

**The Creation of Personal and Collective Memories in Oral Narratives and their Historiographic Challenge**  
Oral history and lifestories are one of the established ways to approach memory and to analyze how history is remembered. No historical account about the past can claim to be objective and true. Memories are always reconstructed as a result of time, place, and adapt in different ways to dominant stories and collective memories. They do so in many different ways. Especially in the case of traumatic events the process of memorizing can be radically disturbed. Hence the use of stories of traumatized narratives of traumatized people can only be approached with understanding, historical scrutiny and care. Still, there is a claim that where oral narratives are the only sources for certain forms of information we can learn a lot from it, while memories can give us new insights. The research is focussed on stories of genocide. The most recent has been the story of the “Long Shadow of Sobibor” where long life stories are made with the co-plaintiffs of the Demjanjuk trial in Munich and with survivors who live all over the world. In 2012 the last interviews were edited and put on the website. At this moment she is writing a contextual biography on the silence about Sobibor and the leader of the uprising of 1943 Aleksandr Pechersky. Aleksandr (Sacha) Pechersky was the chief organizer and leader of the most successful uprising and mass escape of Jews from a Nazi extermination camp during World War II, Sobibor He became a victim of anti-Semitic persecution after his ordeal during the Holocaust. First exploratory research travels have been made to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Moscow in 2012, Leydesdorff has started to learn the Russian language in order to do this research.

**Book Chapter**


**Articles**

“Een interview over Sobibor in Warschau,” Ex Tempore 31:3, 166-172.


**Lectures**


“The Value of Micro-Oral History.”, Local Stories; Methods and Approaches in Oral History, Istanbul Netherlands Turkish Institute, 19 November.

“When the Memories of the Holocaust/Shoah Change.” Graduierten Kolleg (Über)Leben mit totalitärer Gewalt, Duitsland Instituut, Amsterdam, 1 June.

**Marco Pasi**  
Universitair Docent History of Western Esotericism 18th Century-Present (ICG)

**The Problem of Magic in Western Culture after the Enlightenment**  
This project focuses on the role played by the idea of magic in modern, post-Enlightenment Western culture. Few concepts have such a complex history as that of magic. Since its earliest use in classical Antiquity, it has often been used to designate ideas and/or behaviours perceived as dangerous, illicit, and exotic. During the Enlightenment, magic was equated with superstition, and it was understood that, with the forthcoming emancipation of humanity from the shadows of ignorance, it would soon disappear. The prediction, which was seen as self-evident throughout the 19th and the 20th centuries by generations of historians, anthropologists and sociologists, has been far from fulfilled. Magic has survived well into our contemporary, supposedly secular age and is still alive and well today. This research project aims at investigating the ways in which and the reasons why this “survival” has been made possible.

**Fernando Pessoa and Esotericism**  
This project will focus on the influence of western esotericism in the work of the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935). Pessoa has been long recognised as one of the most significant figures in 20th century literature worldwide. However, and unlike other similar cases such as William Butler Yeats, his deep fascination for esoteric ideas remains largely unexplored territory. Very little has been published on this subject, especially in languages other than Portuguese. This project aims at a careful study of Pessoa’s esoteric writings in view of a critical edition of the same and the production of a monograph on the subject. This project will also benefit from a resident fellowship of six months at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS).

**Articles**


**Book Chapters**


**Lectures**

“Um grande além mago e mudo: Fernando Pessoa and Esotericism.” Oporto meeting of Ouvroir d’Univers Potentiels (OuUnPo), Casa da Musica, Oporto, Portugal, 4 April.

“The Depths of a Purple Sea.” Public talk about Vincent Verhoef’s art exhibition “The Depths of a Purple Sea”, Galerie Fons Welters, Amsterdam, 5 May.

“Franc-maçonnerie et ésotérisme chez Fernando Pessoa.” Lecture series Présence de l’ésotérisme chrétien dans la franc-maçonnerie II, organized by the Groupe de Recherche et d’Étude des Mouvements Maçonniques et Ésotériques (GREMME), Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium, 8 May.

“Fernando Pessoa and the Study of Western Esotericism: Problems and Perspectives.” Conference Fernando Pessoa and the Esoteric Experience, Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS), Wassenaar, 23 May.

“The Historical Study of Western Esotericism: An Introduction.” Invited Lecture, University of Graz, Austria, 5 June.

“Lea Porsager, Occultism and Contemporary Art.” Lecture at the Anational Congress of the Multi-Breasted Monstrosity, organized by Lea Porsager for dOCUMENTA13, Kassel, Germany, 26 Juli.

“Bodily Fluids and Contemporary Art.” Copenhagen Art Festival, Copenhagen, Denmark, 30 August.

“Ésotérisme occidental et orientalisme: À l’origine de la notion d’ ésotérisme occidental.” Invited lecture in the framework of the Erasmus exchange program, University of Lausanne, Switzerland, 12 November.

“The Anatta Experiment.” Public talk with artist Lea Porsager, organized by Kunsthuis SYB at Kunstvlaai, Amsterdam, 1 December.

“Fernando Pessoa and Western Esotericism.” Public lecture for the research group “Religious Dynamics and Cultural Diversity”, University of Amsterdam, 7 December.


Conference Organization

Fernando Pessoa and the Esoteric Experience. Conference, Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS), Wassenaar, 23 May.

Panel for the “Western Esotericism” group at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Chicago, USA, 18 November.


Joyce Pijnenburg
Ph.D. Candidate (ICG)

Giordano Bruno’s Lampas Triginta Statuarum (LTS), its Place in his Oeuvre and Time. Giordano Bruno’s Lampas Triginta Statuarum (LTS), its Place in his Oeuvre and Time Bruno’s later works from his so-called ‘German period’ (1586-1591), primarily LTS, display a renewed metaphysics and epistemology. These are identified in this dissertation as effects of the metaphysical crisis enhanced by his acceptance of heliocentrism and the concomitant infinity of the universe. These new foundations of philosophy, which gave room for innovative appropriations of Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, informed Bruno’s ideas about science and nature as well as his system of memory and classification of knowledge. This Ph.D. research project describes Bruno’s LTS in detail, focusing on its
metaphysics, epistemology and use of imagery. These will be placed in the context of the philosopher's works, especially the later ones. The study will also reveal aspects of Bruno’s “modernity” and his influence on and from the German intellectual culture he found himself in in late 1580s and early 1590s.

**Article**


**Lecture**

“Moed, magie en moderniteit: Giordano Bruno’s antwoord op een zich verwijderende God.” Vrije Gemeente Amsterdam, 1 April.

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**Ulrike Popp-Baier**

Universitair Hoofddocent Psychology of Religion (ASCA)

**Individual religion: Theoretical Concepts, Methodological Perspectives, Empirical Studies.**

The aim of this research project is to study “lived religion” as individual religion in modern Western culture. The theoretical background is the so-called individualization theory in the social sciences; the methodological approach is linked to qualitative research (including secondary analyses of data from quantitative research) with an emphasis on biographical perspectives. The project includes the analysis of critical terms (e.g. individualism, identity, experience), the development of methodological approaches (e.g. variants of the life story approach, critical assessments of quantitative research) and the conduct of empirical studies. As a (preliminary) result of theoretical analyses and recent empirical case studies the type of elf-controlled religiosity has been formulated. This concept denotes a combination of (or oscillation between) critique, consumption, accommodation and (sometimes) commitment with regard to religious traditions. It also serves as a starting point for raising awareness about the complexities and varieties of individual orientations in the “religion” discourse, which merit far more attention than they have received thus far. The central question of this project concerns the study of (lived) religion in a biographical context. The research includes the analysis of critical terms (e.g. identity), the development of methodological approaches (e.g. variants of the life story approach) and the conduct of empirical studies (e.g. studies of religious conversion).

**Articles**

“Biografie en Religie in een sociaalwetenschappelijk perspectief,” *Tijdschrift voor Biografie* 1:3, 60-68.


“Wunder geschehen nicht, sie werden erlebt,” *Aviso* 1, 20-23.
**Book Chapter**


**Lectures**


“The Emergence of Post-Traditional Spirituality: Megatrend or Methodological Artefact?” European Sociological Association Midterm Conference *Transformations of the Sacred in Europe and Beyond*, Potsdam, Germany, 4 September.

**Markha Valenta**
Postdoc Onderzoeker Geschiedenis

**The Politics of Urban Religion in World Cities – Amsterdam, Mumbai and New York**

This project examines the relation between religion and urbanity in three world cities – Amsterdam, Mumbai, and New York – that are postcolonial port cities known for their long traditions of pluralism, cultural innovation, geographic influence, and financial productivity. The goal of this project is to compare urban religion’s public life and politics in these three cities within the framework of neoliberalization and the globalization of diversity politics. This entails an analysis at two levels. On the one hand, a consideration of their long-term historical development within and in response to the political, social and economic structures of the modern nation-state (and the "national city"). On the other hand, a consideration of their transformation through more recent structural and ideological effects of neoliberalization: dis-aggregation of the state; ideologies of risk and technocracy; the precaritization of our worlds of work and pleasure; a valorization of competition, profit, and consumption; and the world’s urbanization (the "transnational city"). A particularly suitable site/object to analyze in this regard are religious buildings. These give very visible, localized form – often over long stretches of time – to the complex social, political and religious processes this project analyses. Correspondingly, at the empirical level, this project entails the close analysis of how religion, urbanity, economic and political processes take shape in and through religious buildings in these three cities. This in turn enables a broader analysis of the interdependence of urbanity and religion under globality.

**Articles**


“Religie in een publiek domein dat niet is wat het was," in: Pieter Jan Dijkman, Erik Borgman, Paul van Geest (eds.), *Christendemocratische verkenningen* 12.3, 66-71.
(subsequently published as *Dood of wederopstanding? Over het christelijke in de Nederlandse politiek*, Amsterdam: Boom)

**Book Chapter**


**Lectures**


“What’s Islamic and What’s Feminist about Islamic Feminism?” Guest Lecture, *Experiencing Differences: Muslim Feminism*, University of Amsterdam, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Amsterdam 18 April 2012.


“Where Are We: Dutch Society, Religion and Diversity.” Invited Lecture, Young Diplomats from Pakistan and Bangladesh, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, The Hague, 26 April 2012.


“Building Religion in the Postsecular City.” *Compassion, Charity and Hope in the Postsecular City*, Groningen, 31 May 2012.


“Als religie terug van weggeweest is, waar was het dan? Religie als leefstijl, mensenrecht en materie.” Invited Keynote, Congress Kerkhistorisch Gezelschap, Utrecht, 11 June 2012.


**(Co)organization Conferences and Panels**

*Regimes of Religious Pluralism in 20th Century Europe*, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 19-21 April 2012.

*Donner in de Balie*, De Balie, Amsterdam, 19 April 2012.

*Godsdienst onder druk? Vrijheid, angst en conflict*, Publiekssymposium van de tijdschrift Religie & Samenleving, Amsterdam, 1 June 2012.


**Caroline Vander Stichele**

Universitair Docent Biblical Studies (ASCA)

**Herodias: Scapegoat or Killer Queen?**

This research project focuses on the cultural reception history of Herodias, who appears in the biblical story about the death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29). In my analysis of that history, I look at more traditional as well as modern media in an effort to deconstruct the boundaries between (high) art and popular culture, but also between religious and secular art. This approach allows me to explore this figure across media, such as visual art, literature, music, film, and animation. Factors, such as textual indeterminacy, the filling of gaps in the story, the interests of interpreters and the possibilities offered by the media in which Herodias appears, inform the way she is represented and shift the blame in one or other direction. I analyse what elements play a role in that process and how that affects the depiction of this figure.

**Edited collections**

[with H. Pyper, eds.], *Text, Image and Otherness in Children's Bibles: What is in the Picture?* (Semeia Studies 56), Atlanta: SBL.

[with W. Weren, eds.], *Dood in de Bijbel en de Moderne Kunsten*, thematic issue *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 52:2.
Articles


Book Chapters


Lectures


Sipco Vellenga
Universitair Docent Sociology of Religion (ASCA)

**Bridging and Polarization: The response of Christian, Jewish, Humanistic and Muslim Organizations to Islam Criticism in the Netherlands** (in collaboration with Gerard Wiegers). Since the end of the 20st Century Islam has been target of harsh criticism in the Netherlands, just as in many other European countries. This project aims to analyze the way leaders of religious organizations has responded to expressions of Islam criticism, such as the film Submission of Theo van Gogh and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the Danish Mohammed-Cartoons en the film *Fitna* of Geert Wilders. How did they respond in public on these expressions and what did these expressions mean for the relationship between Christian, Jewish, Humanistic and Muslim organizations? The answer to these questions will
be based on interviews with leaders of religious organizations and extensive document research. The response of the leaders will be analyzed in terms of framing, self positioning, interests, ideology and strategy within the context of a polarized debate on Islam.

Output: a research report, a book and several articles.

**Public Debates on Religion in Postsecular Dutch Society**

Religion is back on the public agenda in the Netherlands. Initially, the focus of the Dutch public debate was only at Islam but during the last decade it has been broaden to religion in general. This project aims to analyze the current public debate on religion in the Netherlands by studying discussions on four topics: Religion and integration, Religion, coercion and violence, Religion, emancipation (of women) and homosexuality, and Religion and (mental) health. What characterizes these debates? Which developments can be traced in these discussions? Which parties have participated in these debates? Which factors have contributed to the course of the debates? A debate is considered as an arena where different actors struggle for discursive power and is analyzed in terms of discourses, parties, power relations and identities. A comparison will be made with debates on religion in the after-war period. The intended method: contextual discourse analysis.

**Article**


**Lecture**

“Religie, binding en polarisatie.” Symposium *Religie als bindmiddel en religie als strijdmiddel*, Nationale Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid (NCTV), 22 May.

**Congress organization**

Organizer public symposium *Godsdienst onder druk? Vrijheid, angst en conflict*, Amsterdam, 1 June.

**Bart Wagemakers**

Ph.D. Candidate (ICG)

**Flavius Josephus and the humanitarian consequences of the first Jewish War (A.D. 66-70)**

In AD 66 the people in Roman Palestine revolted against the Roman domination. The Romans needed four years to break the uprising by destroying Jerusalem and its Temple in the year 70. Instead of focusing on the motives of and outcomes for the Roman authorities and Jewish insurgents, this Ph.D. research project will concentrate on the humanitarian consequences of this war for the civilians in this region. The question of what happened to the civilians that wanted to dissociate themselves from the war will be studied from the historical, archaeological and sociological point of view.

**Article**
“A New Photograph and Reconsidered Reading of the Lost Inscription Form Khirbet el-Khalidi (IGLSyr 21, 4 137),” Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 183, 176-178.

Lectures


“A New approach of Biblical Archaeology.” New Testament Seminar, School of Divinity, History & Philosophy, University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom, 2 May.

Wiegers, G.A.
Professor of Religious Studies (ICG and ASCA)

Polemics on Religion in the Early-Modern Mediterranean World:
A New edition of Ahmad b. Qasim al-Hajari’s Kitab Nasir al-din ala ’l-qawm al-kafirin
(The Supporter of Religion against the Infidels).
On the basis of new textual evidence and other discoveries by colleagues as well as ourselves, we will now prepare a completely new critical edition, including biographical introduction, Arabic text, and English translation of the polemical text written by the Morisco Al-Hajari in Egypt at the request of al-Sha’rawi in about 1637. The text focuses on al-Hajari’s discussions on religion with his –often learned- Christian and Jewish opponents in Spain, North Africa, France, and the Dutch Republic. The text is a rich source for further theoretical studies on polemics in the Early Modern Mediterranean and will be used as such.

After having been inaccessible in the Vatican for nearly four hundred years, permission was obtained by the researchers involved in this project in May 2011 from the ecclesiastical authorities in Rome and Granada to research on and edit the famous Granadan forgeries discovered at the end of the sixteenth century on the slopes of the mountain that is now known as the Sacromonte in that city. The Lead Books consist of Arabic texts engraved on about two hundred lead plaques which seem to contain pseudo-Christian documents. These documents, it will be argued, present us in reality with a fascinating anti-Jewish and anti-Christian polemic.
Output: critical edition, translation and study of the Lead Books (monography to be offered to an international publisher)

Bridging and Polarization: The response of Christian, Jewish, Humanistic and Muslim Organizations to Islam criticism (with Sipco Vellenga, see above)

Article

Lectures

“De Zuilen van de Islam.” De avond van de Zuilen van de Islam, De Nieuwe Liefde, Amsterdam, 29 March.


Congress organization

Organizer public symposium Godsdienst onder druk? Vrijheid, angst en conflict, Amsterdam, 1 June.

Radio appearance

Radio interview about CBS report Orgaandonatie en levensbeschouwing. In Schepper & co, 15 April.

Mike A. Zuber
Ph.D. Candidate (ICG)

Theosophical Alchemy in the Early Eighteenth Century
Considering recent developments in the historical study of alchemy, this project seeks to shed light on the relation between alchemy and religion by investigating 'theosophical alchemy'. This term refers to the phenomenon of iatrochemical and transmutational alchemy combined with Jacob Boehme’s speculative theosophy and natural philosophy, as well as radical Pietist and Philadelphian notions of faith and spirituality, including doctrines such as millenarianism and universal reconciliation. Around 1700, various factors led to a revival of what has been called 'theo-alchemy', which saw its first heyday
among Paracelsians and Rosicrucians in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: the wider availability of Boehme’s works (from 1682), the spread of Pietism (esp. from 1689/90), and the Amsterdam-based dissemination of Philadelphian works in German translation (around 1700). These developments led alchemists—such as Johann Conrad Dippel (d. 1734, Johann Philipp Maul (d. 1727), Georg von Welling (d. 1727) and the mysterious Sincerus Renatus (fl. 1700s; Samuel or Siegmund Richter)—to innovate in ways distinctly at odds with models of scientific chemistry, developed in London, Leiden and Paris around the same time. The attempts of these pious alchemists to bridge the widening gap between science and religion (heightened, for instance, through deism and Cartesian dualism) represent an important but untold story that will contribute to a deeper understanding of the Janus face of the early Enlightenment.

**Lecture**


**Workshop**