

Päivi Mehtonen

Abstract: Suppressed Sophia Literature and Dissident Craftsmen. Boehmenism in Finland 1780–1830.

Sophia, the personification of female divine wisdom in the Old Testament and esoteric mythologies, was a popular figure in European Boehmenist literature (after the cobbler and protestant mystic Jakob Böhme, 1575–1624). Boehmenism was banned in Lutheran Finland, then part of Sweden and, from 1809, Russia. At the turn of the 18th century, small circles of craftsmen and peasants – the so-called Ostrobothnia mystics – nevertheless produced vernacular manuscripts of foreign Sophia literature (e.g., J. Böhme, J. Pordage, J.G. Gichtel). The unpublished material is stored in the archives of the Finnish Literature Society and the National Library of Finland. This article explores the connections between Sophia literature that promoted ideas of femininity and social order that deviated from Lutheran dogma and the conditions of mystically oriented craftsmen and journeymen in Finland and Sweden. By means of textual criticism and conceptual history, the article detects ways in which the marginalized Sophia literature provided the literate lower societal groups with a means of conceptualizing and channelling societal critique. The rights of ordinary people as well as their share in the public sphere were strictly controlled by secular and religious authorities despite the development of the concepts of freedom of speech and conscience.

Keywords: Boehmenism, Sophia wisdom, Finland, manuscripts, Ostrobothnia, mysticism

Ringa Takanen

Abstract: Saviour as a human being. Changing iconography and esoteric influence in the Finnish Gethsemane altarpieces in 1870–1910.

Gethsemane, representing Christ praying in spiritual agony before his imprisonment, became one of the most popular altarpiece motifs at the turn of the 20th century in Finland. Before the middle of the 19th century, the altarpiece typically depicted Crucifixion or Transfiguration. In contrast to motifs concentrating on Christ's divinity, Gethsemane emphasizes his human nature. The article explores the motif's internal change and the reasons for its popularity in the era by means of iconographic analysis and cultural historical interpretation. The main focus is on the paintings of Alexandra Frosterus-Sältin. However, other artists' works are studied likewise. The novel mode of representation that had arisen implies a change in mentality of the era. Social factors and the changes in spirituality are central agents to the motif's popularity and to its changing iconography. In the article, it is suggested that although a critical attitude towards esoteric currents prevailed within the church, these ideas still "leaked" into congregations. Many Finnish artists became acquainted with

esotericism, especially Tolstoyism and Theosophy. The movements considered Jesus as the ideal human but, against the Christian doctrine, forbade his divinity. The representations of Gethsemane fit well in the era's devoutness which emphasised the individual's own responsibility before God instead of collective belief. There was a visible change in the motif as the angel that previously arrived through a "Heavenly portal" was either given the role of a comforter or was excluded from the picture. Thus, Christ was alone in the silence of nature.

Keywords: religious art, iconography, affect, Finland, modernisation

Marjo Kaartinen

Abstract: Vera Hjelt's theosophical work.

This article discusses the theosophy of Vera Hjelt (1857–1947), inspired by Annie Besant. Hjelt led an active life as a school teacher, factory owner, writer, work environment inspector, member of parliament, and finally as the creator and curator of the Social Museum in Helsinki. Through her many friends she was an integral part of various social networks, especially Swedish speaking ones. Hjelt experienced a theosophical awakening in the summer of 1894, at the latest, after which her theosophical endeavour in Besant's spirit and in imitation of her, becomes crystal clear in Hjelt's letters to her friend Cely Mechelin. These letters have not previously been used in scholarly study. The article argues that it is not possible to understand the underlying ethos behind Hjelt's activities without considering her esoterism. In the worldwide unity of all creation, all bad deeds done to one were done to all. Thus, it was essential to improve the working conditions of women in factories, for instance. For example, when Hjelt experienced difficulties in her position as inspector during the strike in Voikkaa and became much hated by the workers against all her wishes, she was comforted by her theosophical thinking. The article in its part shows the many ways in which western esoterism had an influence on late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Finnish culture, politics and policy making.

Keywords: Vera Hjelt, theosophy, Annie Besant

Mikko Kempainen

Abstract: "May the highest be with us!" Author Hilda Tihlä and theosophy in Finnish working class papers 1910–1918.

Finnish labour historians have quite unanimously stated that the working class movement abandoned theosophy after the movement's leading figures adopted socialist principles around the General strike in 1905. By studying socialist author Hilda Tihlä (1870–1944), I argue that this marginaliza-

tion of theosophy is founded on a gendered and simplified perspective. By analysing Tihlä's writings, published in the working class papers in 1910's, this article focuses on how socialism and theosophy formed a synthesis, which aimed to reform and build a new society. Furthermore, the article demonstrates that even though the political male elite of the Finnish working class movement rejected theosophy, it was not merely a marginal phenomenon in the movement.

Keywords: History of ideas, Hilda Tihlä, religion, socialism, theosophy

Juuso Järvenpää

Abstract: Pioneer of persecuted truth. Polemical formation of spiritualistic identity in early 20th century Finland

'Western esotericism' can be seen as the rejected "Other" by which modern culture has defined its identity. As a consequence, the "esotericists" themselves have often taken the rejected position as the starting point of their own identity formation. This is also true for Jaakko Jalmari Jalo-Kivi (b. 1878), who was the main character behind the founding of Suomen Spiritistinen Seura (The Finnish Spiritist Society) in the early 20th century. He saw spiritualism as a persecuted spiritual truth and himself as its pioneer, who – like all true pioneers – was bound to encounter active resistance. He attacked the enemies of spiritualism in his writings, which he published mostly in his own magazine *Spiritisti* (Spiritist). The article interprets Jalo-Kivi's struggle for spiritualism from the viewpoint of religious polemics, and analyses how he formed his spiritualistic identity in his polemical writings. The concept of 'persecution speech' is utilized to define the rhetorical strategy by which Jalo-Kivi emphasized his rejected position and tried to turn it to his own benefit. While drawing attention to the polemical formation of religious identities, the article also highlights the pluralisation of the religious landscape in a modernizing Finland.

Keywords: modern spiritualism, identity formation, religious polemics

Julia von Boguslawski

Abstract: The longing for a spiritual life. Anthroposophical spiritual science in Finland 1922–1935.

Anthroposophy emerged as a new religious or spiritual movement in Finland in the 1920s and 1930s. In this article, I examine how it was defined in relation to other existing worldviews, in particular the scientific worldview, Christianity, and other esoteric movements of the time, such as spirituality and theosophy. My analysis is based on the journal

that was published by the Finnish section of the international Anthroposophical Society, *Anthroposophy: a Journal for Spiritual Science* (*Antroposofia: Henkityeteellinen Aikakauslehti*) through the years 1922–1935. I discuss the complicated relationship anthroposophy had towards the abovementioned competing worldviews and how Finnish anthroposophists partly embraced and partly discarded elements from them in order to produce a worldview that would fit modern needs better. In addition, I analyse how Finnish anthroposophists took part in debates concerning the boundaries of science and religion that were widely discussed at the time. I claim that anthroposophy was an attempt to come to terms with conflicting aspects of modernity, and as such it is an example of the changing appearance of religiosity in Finnish society.

Keywords: anthroposophy, esotericism, religion, spirituality, modernity

Tutta Palin

Abstract: Spiritual Friendships. Ester Helenius, Her Artistic Production and Social Relations.

An interest in esoteric spirituality, and theosophy more particularly, was shared by many artists and cultural agents during the late 19th and early 20th century; spiritual friendship could serve as a vehicle for affective mutuality, intimacy, and social experimentation, constituting networks that facilitated an artist's career. In the oeuvre of the Finnish painter Ester Helenius (1875–1955) this interest becomes evident in a recurrent thematic of messianism and initiation in which spirituality is conveyed through a generalized topos of the closed eyes. Based on new empirical findings concerning the artist's life and her intellectual and ideological milieu, intertwined with a close analysis of the key motif of Christ and Saint John, an enactment of same-sex intimacy that is anchored in her personal life choices can be detected. Esoteric spirituality thus appears as something deeply social, as well as socially and politically complex. In the case of Helenius, it is embedded in a paradoxical coexistence of allegedly conflicting identity markers such as ardent Francophilia and Nationalism invoking the idea of a "Greater Finland".

Keywords: esoterism, theosophy, messianism, queer theology, artistic networks