

2 Egyptosophy and Hermeticism in Esoteric European Tradition

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2.1 The Origins of Egyptosophy

On the symbolic horizon of Freemasonry, it was Egypt above all which took on an axial value, as repository for a heritage of continuity over the millennia.

What Egyptologist Erik Hornung calls ‘Egyptosophy’¹ – that is the fertile and heterogeneous complex of traditions which attribute to Egypt the source of every occult wisdom and knowledge – has remote origins, deeply rooted in European culture.² The mother of this system of wisdom and the keystone of Egyptosophy is Hermeticism, a doctrine concerning the divinity and spiritual elevation of Man, through an initiatory *Way*, full of astrological and alchemical contents and Egyptian magical practices. The home of the Hermetic tradition is considered to be Egypt, and its founder Hermes Trismegistus, the Greek name for the Egyptian god Thot; however only a few doctrinal precedents of Hermeticism can be found in Pharaonic

¹ Shalash, *Al-Yahūd wa-al-māsūn*, 11.

² Cf. Hornung, *L’Égypte Esotérique*; Baltrušaitis, *La quête d’Isis*; Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt*.

Egypt. These were especially present during the decline of that civilisation, in the Late Period (664-332 BCE) when Thot, already the divinity of wisdom associated with the moon and inventor of writing, turned into a universal God presiding over the world of astrology and occult sciences. However, the typical features of Hermeticism (including alchemy)³ reveal themselves as typically Hellenistic and in debt especially to oriental contaminations.⁴ They were especially widespread in the Ptolemaic court (305-30 BCE), a time of fertile syncretistic cross-pollination between the Greek and the late Egyptian cultures, and found their supreme expression in the *Corpus Hermeticum* and in the *Asclepius* - traditionally attributed to Hermes Trismegistus himself⁵ and hence deemed to be extremely ancient. The collections of dialogues which make up these works, considered to be the foundation of wisdom of the Hermetic and Egyptosophical tradition of every age, but actually probably compiled in Greek in the second and third centuries CE, are substantially nourished by popular Greek thought, where one mainly finds strains of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoa and the Gnostics, as well as Judaism and probably Zoroastrianism. They outline what Frances Yates defined as:

Actually a religion, a cult without temples or liturgy, followed in the mind alone, a religious philosophy or philosophical religion containing a gnosis.⁶

It was against this Hellenistic intellectual background that, in the name of Hermes/Thot, Greek scholars began to refer to a legendary Egyptian wisdom - which progressively took on a mythical dimension -⁷ establishing a canon which would spread through Europe and become a fixture in the esotericist traditions of the Old Continent. It would accompany the diffusion of the Hellenistic cult of Isis ("generated by Hermes" according to Greek aretalogies of the first century BCE) which, from the Greek islands and the Piraeus reached Rome in 38 CE,⁸ after having crossed Sicily and Campania and then left its

3 There exists no trace of alchemy in Pharaonic Egypt, though the oldest alchemical texts (dated second century BCE and all in Greek) attribute its origin to the mysteries of Egyptian temples. Hornung, *L'Égypte Esotérique*, 47 ff.; Daumas, *L'alchimie a-t-elle une origine égyptienne?*

4 Cf. Ramelli, *Corpus Hermeticum*; Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismegiste*.

5 It was only toward the end of the second century BCE that Thot, whom the Greeks equated with Hermes, became for the Egyptians the 'Three Times Greatest' - hence the Greek name Trismegistos, which first appeared in the third century CE.

6 Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, 5.

7 Cf. Froidefond, *Le Mirage égyptien*; Vasunia, *The Gift of the Nile*.

8 It was Caligula who ordered the construction of the temple of *Isis campensis* in the Campus Martius.

traces throughout the Empire to Gaul and Germany.⁹

In the Middle Ages, when Christianity prevailed, interest in Hermeticism and Egyptosophy declined but never completely disappeared; indeed, it is beyond doubt that some myths arose in popular milieux in those days - first of all, the one about the foundation of Paris on the site of a temple of Isis - ¹⁰ but it should also be remembered that Hermes Trismegistus was mentioned as a philosophical authority of the past by Augustine, Peter Abelard, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventura.

Egyptosophical themes cross the Middle Ages like an underground river, gradually growing as European culture began to receive the Hermetic wisdom cultivated in the Orient by the Arabs and transferred to the West through the Holy Land during the Crusades, but especially through southern Italy and Muslim Spain. The phase of confrontation and encounter with the Islamic world, which characterised the centuries from the eleventh to the fourteenth, would be decisive for the recovery of the Egyptosophical myth in European culture and its later introjection into masonic culture.

2.2 Egyptosophy in Medieval Masonic Tradition

Speculative Freemasonry, from its origins, explicitly mentioned the Middle Ages as the era of its foundation. In fact, the first Constitutions, drawn up by the Reverend Anderson and published in London in 1723, contained the “History, Laws, Charges, Orders, Regulations, and Usages, of the Right Worshipful Fraternity of Accepted Free Masons; Collected from their general Records and Their faithful Traditions of many Ages”,¹¹ that is the statutory documents of the medieval guilds which the new masons claimed to be the heirs of, taking on their symbolic and mythological aspects, and dismissing the operative ones.

It is not important here to establish the reliability of an alleged derivation, or to try to unravel the extraordinarily intricate thread which influences and genealogies have generated across the centuries among currents or bodies with a real or assumed esoteric and initiatory vocation in Europe. In the absence of documentary evidence, the question is and probably will always remain open and debated among scholars.¹² From the specific point of view of this study,

⁹ Baltrušaitis, *La quête d’Isis*, 9-12.

¹⁰ Baltrušaitis, *La quête d’Isis*, 81-111.

¹¹ Paillard, *Reproduction of the Constitutions*, 1-24 of the original document.

¹² The transition from operative to speculative Freemasonry, about which various theories exist, is a question which has not been solved by historians. The theory which

which focuses on the history of ideas, continuity among the various orders has a mythical and symbolic value. According to this key, one can examine some contents which operative and speculative masonic mythopoiesis appear to imply.

Medieval and Renaissance Masonry was varied and regionally and locally diverse. The most ancient statutory document known for operative Masonry are the *Statutes of Bologna* of 1248, but the texts that Anderson's Constitutions were based on, and which are closest to them, were of British origin: they are the *Old Charges*, especially the *Regius Poem* (1390), the *Cooke Manuscript* (1410-40), the *Melrose Manuscript* (a copy of 1674 which refers to an original of 1581) and the *Grand Lodge No.1 Manuscript* (1583). Of a later date are the *Dumfries No.4 Manuscript* (1710), the *Sloane 3329* (1700), the manuscripts of the *Haughfoot* collection (1696-1715) and the *Wilkinson Manuscript* (1727). To these, must be added the *Schaw Statutes* (1598-99) drawn up in Scotland.

Without going into the specific features of each text,¹³ the masonic mythology which normally preceded the statutory part in these documents, later taken up by Anderson, told the origins of the Craft in the following terms: God as creator of the Universe gave Man the Arts, including the most important of all, Geometry which measures the Earth. In the science of Geometry, the mason's Craft is what is most important, since - as the Bible says - it was the first to be created. The first founder of Geometry and Masonry was Jubal, direct descendant of Adam and overseer of works when Cain built the city of Enoch. From then onwards, the masonic tradition was handed down through the millennia. Members of the Order included: Abraham, who transmitted the teachings to the Egyptians; Noah who saved mankind from the flood; Moses; David, under whom masons began building the Temple; Solomon; Pythagoras and the philoso-

enjoys most credit - the *transition theory* illustrated in the imposing *History of Freemasonry* by Robert Gould and better defined by Harry Carr in the 1950-60s (Carr, "600 years of Craft Ritual"; *Harry Carr's World of Freemasonry*; "Transition from Operative to Speculative Masonry") - holds that speculative Masonry already began in the 16th century in Scotland, when the so-called 'accepted' masons began to join masonic lodges. These were men - nobility, bourgeoisie, clergy - whom the brotherhood wanted to honour, or who brought honour to the brotherhood by their presence, even though they did not work as craftsmen. The phenomenon increased considerably following the Reformation which led to a decline in the building of churches and convents, and hence also in the number of construction workers. In England, in the second half of the 17th century, the prevalence of accepted masons led the lodges to lose all their professional features and turn into cultural and philanthropic associations which made use of rites and symbols inherited from ancient guilds of freemasons. Cf. Giarrizzo, *Massoneria e illuminismo*; Cazzaniga, "La Massoneria come problema storiografico" and "Nascita della massoneria"; Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry*.

13 Cf. Bonvicini, *Massoneria Antica*; Knoop, Jones, Hamer, *The Early Masonic Catechism*; Langlet, *Les textes fondateurs*.

pher Hermes, who taught mankind the sciences; Euclid, one of the founders of geometry in Egypt. Always according to the myth, in the 10th century, King Æthelstan¹⁴ laid down the rules Masons were supposed to observe, according to which “the [a]foresaid art begun in the land of Egypt [...] and so it went from land to land, and from kingdom to kingdom”.¹⁵

The mythical references of these documents are basically Biblical, or in any case limited to the Christian tradition, including references to Hermes, who as a philosopher was often mentioned by theologians of the time. Masons’ guilds were immersed in the Christian holiness of their work, mainly focused on building churches and cathedrals, embodying the dwelling place and body of Christ. They illustrated the teachings of the Church, represented in symbolisms which define the orientation of buildings, the layout of the interior and their iconographic contents.¹⁶ Yet the influences and new elements derived from the Orient, which would give a significant contribution to the renewal of European symbolic references, also affected the masonic craft.

At the courts of the expanding Muslim empire, an extraordinary work of translation¹⁷ both drew from and added to the scientific and philosophical knowledge disseminated through a territory ranging from India to North Africa: first of all, Greek science and treatises (the works of Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Hippocrates, Galen) and then Hellenistic, Zoroastrian, Persian and other ‘oriental’ doctrines, cultivated by Arabs (Muslim and Christian) and Jews, together with studies of mathematics, algebra and astronomy, but also astrology, alchemy, Hermeticism, magic and Kabbalah.

Already in the 12th century, knowledge developed in the Orient penetrated into Europe from the Norman court in Palermo of Frederick II, and especially from the Spanish peninsula.¹⁸ In Toledo, reconquered from the Muslims in 1087, an academy of translators (Adelard of Bath, Plato Tiburtinus, Robert of Chester, Hermann of Carinthia, Rudolf of Bruges, Gerard of Cremona, not to mention the contribution of Spanish Jews: Hugo of Santalla, John of Seville, Maimonides, Isaac the Blind) worked at the Latin version of hundreds of Greek

14 Æthelstan (d. 939) was the first Anglo-Saxon king to rule over all of England.

15 *The Matthew Cooke Manuscript*. URL <http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/texts/cooke.html>. The text was further elaborated in dozens of other manuscripts, which added the theme of Noah’s Ark or expanded the narrative of Solomon’s Temple and its architect, Hiram Abiff, who appears for the first time in 18th century manuscripts.

16 Cf. Mâle, *L’Art religieux du XII siècle en France* and *L’Art religieux au XIII siècle en France*.

17 Gutas, *Greek Thought*.

18 Cf. Rodinson, *Il fascino dell’Islam*; Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*; Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*; Nallino, “Civiltà musulmana”; and, with all due caution, Hunke, *Le soleil d’Allah brille sur l’Occident*.

and Arab scientific and philosophical works (the *Collectio Toledana*).

Philosophical and scientific contributions (especially mathematics and medicine, where the *Canon* of Avicenna was commonly adopted) were often accompanied by the transmission of Hermetic doctrines, mainly propagated by Islamicized Spain. In this particular esoteric culture, alchemy met with special success. Since 1144, when Robert of Chester first translated an Arabic work on the theme into Latin, the Art began to circulate in Europe in the wake of the translations of Arab manuscripts, which in their turn had been developed from Greek originals. First of all, the *Tabula smaragdina*, which it was claimed Apollonius of Tyana had found under a statue at the tomb of Hermes, but was actually the work of an Arab alchemist of the 8th or 9th century, and which soon became the Bible of Western alchemists. Alchemical science spread further during the 13th century, and in the Renaissance it mixed in with works of sympathetic and astral magic, such as the *Picatrix*;¹⁹ no less influential than alchemy was the Kabbalistic doctrine,²⁰ transmitted by Sephardic Jews from Muslim Spain, an attempt to know God through magic operations based on elaborate mystic combinations of the ten *sefirot* (the most common names of God) and of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Greek, Arab and Jewish works played a decisive role in generating humanistic thought in the Middle Ages,²¹ the precursor of the Renaissance reawakening; and there is no doubt how widespread they were in the West, including Great Britain, where speculative Masonry was born. Masonic lodges, which reached their greatest development at the time, took on codes and by-laws where the new ideas and intellectual trends shared in redefining the cultural landscape, even though firmly within a Christian framework. In the preamble to the early fifteenth century *Cooke Manuscript*, is stated that: “The [a]foresaid art begun in the land of Egypt, [...] and so it went from land to land, and from kingdom to kingdom” and that the seven sciences, written on two pillars after the flood were found, and that “a great clerk that [was] called Pythagoras found that one, and Hermes, the philosopher, found that other”, evidence of how operative Masonry had introjected the new (old) canons so widespread at the time.

19 The anthology by Abū al-Qāsim Maslama al-Majrītī, dating back to the 11th century, was widely known in the fifteenth century through a translation from Arabic into Latin performed under the orders of King Alfonso the Wise of Castile in 1256. According to Garin (*Lo zodiaco della vita*, 53), the work “fits all the vast magical and astrological heritage of the ancient and medieval world into a theoretical framework which is both Platonic and Hermetic”.

20 Cf. Sholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* and *Alchemy and Kabbalah*; Busi, *La Qabbalah* and *La Qabbalah visiva*.

21 Cf. Le Goff, *Les intellectuels au Moyen Age*; Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*.

However, though the influence of oriental (Islamic or Byzantine) art on Medieval European art is undeniable,²² to actually claim the specific influence of Hermetic or alchemical culture on architecture and art of the time means to run after a will-o'-the-wisp.²³ Alchemical, astrological and Hermetic texts were already circulating in the twelfth century and, in the thirteenth century schools of Chartres, Solomon was already indicated as the master of oriental and Jewish science and of the Hermetic doctrine, father of magic knowledge and of the secrets and mysteries of science.²⁴ But it would be a bold step to claim that Hermetic contents had precociously infiltrated the Art of Masonry and that their allegories can be found in Gothic works.²⁵ Unmistakable Hermetic allusions burst into the fields of art and architecture starting in the fifteenth century. It was in fact during the Renaissance that Hermeticism met with its greatest fortune, and it was then that the Hermetic culture came to maturity, which would provide the decisive esoteric contribution to the establishment of eighteenth century speculative Masonry.

2.3 Egyptosphy during the Renaissance and the Development of Modern Masonic Culture

From the fifteenth century on, Hermeticism enjoyed its most important Western 'rediscovery', finding vast expression in artistic and literary milieux, mediated by alchemical, mystical and Neoplatonic circles of the times.²⁶ A decisive element in the new spread of Hermetic culture was the translation by Marsilio Ficino of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which came to Italy from the Byzantine Orient, and proposed

22 Baltrušaitis dedicated a large part of his volume on fantastic in the Middle Ages (*Il Medioevo Fantastico*) on the special influence which Islamic art had on Medieval iconography. Among the vast scientific literature on the influence that Islamic art and architecture had in Europe, see, for example, Howard, *Venice & the East*.

23 For example in Fulcanelli (pseudonym of an unknown alchemist of the twentieth century), *Le mystère des Cathédrales* and *Les Demeures philosophales*.

24 William of St-Thierry (d. 1148), a close friend of Saint Bernard, is alleged to have exclaimed: "The brethren of Mont-Dieu! They bring to the darkness of the West the light of the Orient, and in the icy weather of Gaul, the religious fervour of ancient Egypt, that is the solitary path, mirror of celestial life". Le Goff, *Les intellectuels au Moyen Age*, 28, 53-64.

25 Compare, for example, the dubious interpretation which Bonvicini (*Massoneria Antica*, 330 ff.) offers of some symbols of the Complex of Santo Stefano in Bologna, or *Le Symbolisme Hermétique*, by Wirth, with the aforementioned studies by Mâle on Medieval iconographies of French churches.

26 Cf. Calvesi, *Il mito dell'Egitto*; Garin, *Lo zodiaco della vita*; Zambelli, *L'apprendista stregone*; and especially Yates, *Giordano Bruno; The Art of Memory; The Occult Philosophy*.

Egypt as the depository of primordial wisdom. Hermeticism favoured the circulation of a concept of the divinity with a pantheistic and immanentist character, the divine/macrocosm Unity reflected in Man/microcosm, which this divinity sums up within Itself.²⁷ This vision nourished a special current of humanism,²⁸ which with Hermes' revelation, deemed to be more ancient than that of the Bible and anchored to the spirit of nature, also legitimated nascent modern science – Hermes is mentioned, for example, by Copernicus to justify his new cosmic system. In this outlook, Hermetic contents, blending with Platonic ones, nourished the culture of the Renaissance: they established a continuity of mysteries which, fed by a wisdom rich in magic, astrology, alchemy and Kabbalah (once and for all conjoined to Hermeticism in the philosophy of Pico della Mirandola) in the name of the Thrice-Great sought a reconciliation with Christian doctrine²⁹ yet at the same time sought to distance itself from it. Initiation into the mysteries of the macrocosm and the microcosm, secret practice of magic, symbolic representation were all organic components of Renaissance Hermetic thought, developed by Ficino, expanded by Pico della Mirandola and taken to its extreme consequences by Giordano Bruno.³⁰

Against such a cultural background, iconographies and esoteric allegories with specific Hermetic references entered the very heart of Catholicism;³¹ but above all it was architecture which in those days underwent a new theorisation, inspired by Neoplatonic and Hermetic principles, whereby architects imagined churches founded on an ideal circular plan – which finally took on almost magic values – as representation of the macrocosm reflected in the microcosm,³² protected by a dome, the image of the cosmic vault. As Leon Battista Alberti (d. 1472) wrote, “whatever decoration is used on walls and pavement should pertain to ‘pure philosophy’”.³³ Leon Battista Alber-

27 The formula of the *Tabula smaragdina* states: *quod est inferius est sicut quod est superius, et quod est superius est sicut quod est inferius ad perpetranda miracula Rei Unius.*

28 Cf. Garin, *Medioevo e rinascimento* and *La cultura filosofica.*

29 Hermes, as contemporary of Moses, is supposed to have prophesied Christianity.

30 Busi, Ebgì, *Giovanni Pico*; Yates, *Giordano Bruno.*

31 Witness to this can be found in the depiction of the Trismegistus on the floor of the Cathedral of Siena, made around 1482, where Hermes appears next to a figure wearing a turban; or where he appears, together with rich Egyptian-inspired iconography, in the Hall of the Saints of the apartments of Pope Alexander VI Borgia in Rome, made by Pinturicchio between 1492 and 1494. His court was also attended by the alchemist, astrologer and egyptologist Annius of Viterbo, who imagined the origin of the Etruscan and Italic peoples to lie in Egypt. Giarrizzo, *Massoneria e illuminismo*, 32 ff.

32 Wittkower, *Architectural Principles.*

33 Wittkower, *Architectural Principles*, 9.

ti is also believed to be one of the possible authors of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, an allegorical romance steeped in pseudo-Egyptian mysticism, which operates a Hermetic synthesis of Hellenistic, Arab and Jewish wisdom.³⁴

While theorisation of the golden section, which made an explicit synthesis of harmony and mysticism through mathematics, opened up new architectural prospects, Vitruvius' *De Architectura*, while not unknown in the Middle Ages, was translated several times and took on exemplary importance for Renaissance builders steeped in Hermetic culture.

One author who adopted Vitruvius for an evident and particular metaphysical representation was Giulio Camillo (d. 1544), an outstanding personality of the sixteenth century who combined the Platonic and the Hermetic-Kabbalistic ideas transmitted by Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola with the Art of Memory. This was a memorisation technique of Greek origin (but according to Giordano Bruno, invented by Hermes Trismegistus), with a purely practical aim, useful as a support for rhetoric, based on visualising emblematic images able to evoke concepts and words and placing them within an architectural framework (rooms or buildings). Starting in the Middle Ages and especially in the Renaissance, the art of memory gradually took on meaning tied to symbolic and esoteric considerations,³⁵ nourished by the Hermetic and Kabbalistic thinking of the times.³⁶ Giulio Camillo, basing himself on Vitruvius, imagined a wooden *Theatre of Memory*, famous throughout Europe because it contained, depicted and 'memorised' in its shape and decorations the harmony of the universe, where the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm expressed itself through a 'veiled' or occult symbolism.³⁷

Considering the extensive contribution by Hermetic currents in the context of construction as well, it would be surprising if their principles had not passed into operative masonic milieux – or at least into some of them: the same canons, repeatedly taken up in mason-

34 The *Hypnerotomachia*, more commonly attributed to a certain Francesco Colonna, was illustrated and printed anonymously in Venice by Aldo Manuzio in 1499. We refer especially to the image of the *Three Doors*, where a youth must choose among three models of knowledge or 'paths' typical of the Hermetic tradition: theology (*theodoxia*), science (*cosmodoxia*) and love (*erototrophos*), represented by three doors, dug into the rock on the side of a mountain, symbol of Wisdom. Each door is surmounted by letters indicating the 'path' in Arabic, Hebrew, Greek and Latin, as if to underline the contribution of such traditions to late Medieval and Renaissance culture. Calvesi, *Il mito dell'Egitto*, 10, 14-15.

35 Yates, *The Art of Memory*.

36 In this context, the Scot Alexander Dickson, in 1584, wrote a treatise where the art of memory was placed in a Hermetic conceptual framework. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 266-86; Giarrizzo, *Massoneria e illuminismo*, 16 ff.

37 Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 157-8.

ic documents over decades and centuries, must have gradually enriched the symbolic meaning they transmitted, introjecting the new metaphysical projections which were becoming increasingly widespread in educated context. The hypothesis, repeatedly suggested by Yates,³⁸ seems to find confirmation in Stevenson's studies on Scottish Freemasonry.³⁹ In the peculiar environment which gave rise to speculative Freemasonry, a blending between the symbolic-esoteric aspect of operative lodges (rituals and secrets associated with initiation and the practice of a craft, including the *Mason Word*)⁴⁰ and the Hermetic aspect appears to be quite likely and is supported by several clues. It can hardly be by chance that article 13 of the *Masonic statutes* drawn up by William Schaw in 1599 says that every apprentice and companion should be examined in "the art of memorie and the science thairof". Schaw himself was "trained in every liberal art and excelled in architecture",⁴¹ had experience as a diplomat and had made many trips in Europe; especially, it has been ascertained that in the Scottish court, where he was well known, Hermetic ideas were circulating and interest was expressed in the Art of Memory, also thanks to the disciples of Giordano Bruno, such as Alexander Dickson.⁴²

The Renaissance long gone by, in the age of the Reformation, Hermetic thinking continued to nourish itself in European culture. In 1614, the first Rosicrucian manifestos⁴³ mysteriously appeared in Kassel, in Germany, followed two years later by the publication of the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* by the Lutheran pastor Johann Valentin Andreae. They gave body to a doctrine which was the direct emanation of the highest expression of Hermetic culture, in its mystic and occult aspects, expressed through alchemical and kabbalistic science. Rosicrucianism generated a vast following: in the seventeenth century, many esoteric bodies referred to the Rosicrucians, and this brought about a new wave of literature on Hermes Trismegistus and the superior wisdom of ancient Egypt.⁴⁴ The admission by Andreae himself that his had been a mere *ludibrium* - a 'joke'

38 Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, 274 and *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 206-19.

39 Cf. Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry*, 24, 125 ff.; Yates, *The Occult Philosophy*.

40 The Mason Word is a secret word or sign of recognition which was used in sixteenth century Scotland to allow masons belonging to a certain operative lodge to recognise each other. Numerous legends arose concerning it, for example that it could make those who used it invisible. Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry*, 125 ff.

41 From the tombstone inscription in Latin in Dunfermline Abbey. Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry*, 26.

42 Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry*, 85 ff.

43 Cf. Arnold, *Histoire des Rose-Croix*; Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*.

44 Cf. Borrichius, *Hermetis Ægyptiorum*; Kriegsmann, *Conjectaneorum de Germanicæ gentis origine*; Hannemann, *L'ovum hermetico*.

of little worth -⁴⁵ made no dent in the evocative power and the fertile reproductive potential of the message.

The Rosicrucian manifestos which circulated in the seventeenth century contributed to welding together Hermeticism, alchemy and kabbalistic symbolism inside British lodges,⁴⁶ where one finds the first evidence of acceptance of non-operative ('accepted') Masons, who stood out because of their special interest in esotericism. For example, I may mention Robert Moray (accepted in the Edinburgh Lodge in 1641), a military engineer, intimate correspondent of the Jesuit philosopher Athanasius Kircher, enthusiastic Egyptophile and son-in-law of Lord Balcarres, collector of Hermetic and Rosicrucian texts. Elias Ashmole, accepted in Warrington in 1646, on the other hand was an antiquarian, but also a well known alchemist, astrologer and kabbalist. Since the first known speculative Masons had a clear bent for Hermetic sciences, it may be legitimately suspected that these themes were especially listened to and developed in masonic milieux.

The spirit of the times emerges in Henry Adamson's poem, written and published in the 1630s, entitled "The Muses Threnodie, Or, Mirthfull Mournings on the Death of Master Gall":

Thus *Gall* assured me it would be so,
And my good *Genius* truly doth it know:
For what we do presage is not in grosse
For we be brethren of the *Rosie Crosse*;
We have the *Mason Word* and second sight,
Things for to come we can foretell aright⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 31.

⁴⁶ Maclean, "The Impact of the Rosicrucian Manifestos".

⁴⁷ Marshall, *History of Perth*, 520.

