

While Severy provides ample food for thought and promising new perspectives concerning the tension that existed between the public and private roles of men and women in the imperial family, her careless treatment of some primary source material is cause for concern. For example, Severy makes several errors in her analysis of coinage, particularly her claim that coins depicting Livia's portrait were issued at the state mint of Lugdunum under Tiberius, when no such coins were issued there (234). Also, Severy states that the *carpentum sestertii* issued in Rome to commemorate Livia in AD 22-23 bear the obverse portrait of Tiberius, which is incorrect since the *carpentum* itself in fact graces the obverse. The reverse contains only Tiberius' name and titles around the legend S C. "senatus consulto" (240). Concerning literary sources, Severy provides text and translation for the Latin sources, but never gives the text for Greek sources. Such an inclusion would not only provide consistency but would also benefit readers who appreciate the immediate availability of the original text.

One drawback of the book is that the role and status of the aristocratic family under the developing principate is overshadowed by the emphasis which is placed on the Augustan family. Severy only briefly touches on the matter of the Roman elite in her discussion of Augustus' marriage and childbearing laws in Chapter 2, as well as in the concluding final chapter where there is a section "Public and Private Among the Non-Imperial Elite," which highlights the relationship of members of aristocratic families with the imperial family.

Although Severy's book is directed primarily towards an academic audience familiar with the Augustan age, she does make the material accessible to a wider audience by providing translations of Latin and Greek texts, illustrating her points with specimens of Roman art and coinage, and offering frequent summaries of key points. With this book, Severy has made a significant contribution to the understanding of the transition of the aristocratic family, in particular the Augustan family, from a private to a public institution in the early years of the Roman Empire. It is an important read for anyone studying family or gender roles in Roman society.

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The Place of Enchantment - British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern. By Alex Owen. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Pp. 257. \$37.50.

Owen's excellent book adds substantially to the recent scholarship into the links between the occultism of the *fin de siècle* and prominent forces active in the birth of modernism, which more and more seem to be deeply interpenetrating

categories. She is the author of a very well-regarded study of spiritualism in the first wave feminist movement (*The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England*, 1989) and articles about the occult in the period, including the brilliant piece "The Sorcerer and His Apprentice: Aliester Crowley and the Magical Exploration of Edwardian Subjectivity" (*Journal of British Studies* 26 (1997) pp 99-133 on Aliester Crowley's Choronzon working, that was adapted into chapter six in the present work).

Owen addresses the usual suspects in her examination of modernity: gender and sex role anxieties given political force with the suffrage movement, the pioneering sexology of Ellis and Kraft-Ebbing and the homosexuality trial and conviction of Oscar Wilde; the impact of evolutionary science on revealed religion; the emergence of socialism; the re-evaluation of both the individual self through the Freudian challenge and the social self through early anthropology. She also includes factors in her mix that have only recently begun to be considered – the secret societies and orders, and the links between modernist arts and the occult theories of Helena Blavatsky and the other Theosophists and the orders of practical occultism, the most prominent of which was the Order of the Golden Dawn. She explores the links between occultism and a newly conceptualized subjectivity and asserts that occultism was at the heart of the contemporary debate about consciousness (7) as an intellectual and rational spirituality (11).

It is a brilliant, theoretically complex, and extremely valuable work. Owen follows up on the work of Mark Carnes' *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (1989) which indicated that fraternal orders were a masculine religious counter-culture in the late-Victorian period, involving nearly a quarter of adult men, to argue that the occult orders and their interest in psychic abilities, hidden powers and secret histories, were a highly significant part of the intellectual and cultural landscape from the 1890s to the First World War period. She argues persuasively that the occult, characterized often as "the mystical", shaped discourse around religion, art, and psychology in substantial ways throughout this period and afterward. Because the three orders that she deals with – the Theosophical Society, Order of the Golden Dawn, and Ordo Templi Orientis – included both women and men, their gender dynamics and exploration of issues of sexuality were much more complex and overt than in the masculine lodges.

Her use of sources from the magical orders and their members illustrates the points that she is making very well. When she documents the wealth of connections between significant figures in the arts, philosophy, literature and science with the occult orders her argument is well supported. The main argument that she makes is that the dominant flavour of modernity, the reflexivity and instability of our conclusions, which is problematic in the ordinary way of thinking, tending to paralysis or tentativeness, is foundational to the magical mode of engagement. The magician takes the modernist experience and explores the spiritual realms with recognition of the polyvalence of all symbolism and the uneasy marriage of imagination and reason. The magician, Owen argues, is

essentially modern and the figures attracted to magic – W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Oscar Wilde, Joris-Karl Huysmans, Wassily Kandinsky, Florence Farr, Edward Carpenter, Evelyn Underhill, Annie Besant and numerous others – were significant figures in shaping the modern in their turn. Their ideas were in the air and can be distinguished in the vitalist philosophy of Henri Bergson (whose sister Mina was a prominent figure in the Golden Dawn), and Frederick Nietzsche's "supernman", as well as the art of the symbolists and surrealists.

The most interesting and unusual material that Owen includes is the detailed recounting of specific magical workings by several magicians of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and Ordo Templi Orientis. By going through their magical journals and other published and unpublished accounts of the workings, she is able to enter into the magical worldview and also to fit the magical worldview into larger social currents of the time.

These groups of magicians underwent training in the apprehension and negotiation of occult phenomena, and subjective claims were tested and measured against clearly established criteria (148). They applied experimental methodologies to explore spiritual states: creating, using and consciously adapting religious ritual as a tool toward more effective communion with the divine. This logical exploration of mystical states, the scientific approaches to symbolism and ritual, are essentially modern approaches, although the mystical states achieved and the spiritual grandeur of the project are also obvious. These magicians sought a spirituality that was not revealed, but self-consciously created as a joint project through ritual and symbolism utilized as tools for inner exploration.

The distinctions of cult, sect and church are no longer useful, and this is no Geertzian project of symbols using people. These categories are particularly inadequate when dealing with popular religion. The occult movements of the *fin de siècle* were popular religious movements, small in numbers of formal adherents, even when compared to the Spiritualist movements they were influenced by, but substantial in influence. The intellectuals that were involved in the occult were not deviant but unusual only in their access to money and time, with enough to dedicate to the Great Work.

The magical Great Work is substantially reaching outward and coming to an awareness of the divine, the mystical reality behind appearances. The *fin de siècle* magicians were undertaking experiments in "the breakdown of the personal sense of self as manifested by the ego, the uncoupling of the body from the 'I' and the dissolution of everyday consciousness"(210) but they were doing this as a regular routine practice in rational mysticism. The interrogation of subjectivity is a modern impulse, applied here to a religious goal, using secularized strategies to question their rational base.

Ultimately, the occult philosophy of consciousness contained no non-subjective guarantor of meaning and so gave birth to the irrationalism of nationalism and fascism in the early twentieth century. However, the modern enterprise has still not been completed, and these issues are still live questions.

Owen's fine contribution can be read in conjunction with Joy Dixon's *The Divine Feminine* (2001), which examines the role of Theosophy in the British first-wave feminist movement and Leon Surette's *The Birth of Modernism* (1993) in which the occult interests and practices of Yeats, Eliot and Pound, seminal modernist writers, are examined. These recent works, and others, challenge the prevailing view of the origins of modernity as necessarily involving a rejection of spirituality. This emerging perspective argues for the central role of an embrace and transmutation, or perhaps, transubstantiation, of spirituality through the occult in this period in the modernist milieu.

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