

CFP: Mystique and Politique MLA 2023, San Francisco (02.04.2022)

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From Mystique to Politique: Scholarship, Mysticism, and Politics in the 20th c.

Working Group, MLA Conference, San Francisco, Jan. 5th-8th, 2023

Submission Deadline: Saturday, **April 2nd, 2022**

<https://mla.confex.com/mla/2023/webprogrampreliminary/Paper19223.html>

This working group hopes to bring together scholars across a wide disciplinary and geographical range to investigate the cultural politics of the 20th century study of mysticism. Following the cataclysm of the Great War, thinkers in a wide range of fields—from philosophy to philology, from religious studies to history—turned to the study of mysticism, often in opposition to cultural forces of mechanization, materialism, and colonial domination. From interwar Egypt to Weimar Germany and beyond, this mystic turn coalesced into a suspect syncretism deserving of interrogation: Kabbalah, Sufism, and Hermeticism, but also Neoplatonism, Bergsonian intuitionism, and Theosophy all entered into a fraught dialogue. Taking our cue from Charles Peguy’s maxim “Tout commence en mystique et finit en politique”, our working group sets out to discuss the commitments, affects and concepts that impinged upon these scholars’ work. Possible topics include discourses on ‘the total Man’ (e.g. Ernst Kantorowicz, Henri Corbin or Abd al-Rahman Badawi), conceptions of the “irrational” (e.g. E.R. Dodds), spiritual or pneumatic conceptions of national tradition (e.g. Paul de Lagarde), aesthetic and literary engagements with “the mystical” (e.g. surrealists or Robert Musil), the group dynamics within which these studies were carried out (e.g. Collège de Sociologie or Eranos), and many more. We welcome contributions that study the implication of mysticism and politics across languages and tradition in the 20th century. In so doing we hope to both radically historicize—returning these studies of mysticism to the historical backdrop against which their cultural politics arose—while also giving due attention to the metaphysical elaborations that these scholars set out to forge.

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