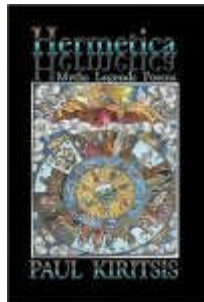


*Interview with Paul Kiritsis, Author of “Hermetica: Myths, Legends, Poems”*



**Hermetica: Myths, Legends, Poems**

Paul Kiritsis

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Reviewed by *Cherie Fisher* for Reader Views (2/08)

Today, Tyler R. Tichelaar of Reader Views is happy to be joined by Paul Kiritsis, who is here to talk about his new book “Hermetica.”

*On the 15th July 1979, under the protective lap of the Cancerian sky, Paul Chris Kiritsis was born in the jewel called Melbourne, Terra Australis. At the age of 26, he can say that only now does he feel he has started to come into his own. With a background in the behavioral sciences and arts, the cosmos within the human mind and the ways by which it defines itself are what interest him the most. Within academic study, his favorite areas are mythology, theosophy, history, philosophy and English literature. He has completed degrees in the behavioral sciences and professional writing. He hopes to continue onto a Ph.D. in English in the not too distant future. Many of his poems have appeared in periodic anthologies. “Origin: Poems from the crack of daw” is his first collection of poetry. The upcoming “Hermetica: Myths, Legends, Poem” marks his first literary collection. His interests outside of the academic arena are plentiful and include fitness instruction, body sculpting, music, thrill-seeking, traveling and meeting seductive people from all walks of life.*

**Tyler:** Welcome, Paul. I’m happy you could join me today. To begin, will you explain to us a little bit about the theme or focus of “Hermetica”?



**Paul:** Hi Tyler, thanks for having me. “Hermetica” is first and foremost a literary collection which has as its main focus the mythology of ancient Egypt. What do we mean by literary collection? A body of works, whether they be stories, poems, verse-dramas or dialogues that are highly intellectual and impart important morals and lessons to its readers. These morals and lessons can be blatantly obvious or more subliminal in nature, or a combination of both. At once, you might find that the morals echoed by many important literary works might

only be relevant to their contextual setting or the time in which they were written. The amazing thing about ancient Egyptian literary works is that their themes relate well to any period of human civilization.

**Tyler:** Paul, will you explain further how literature written in ancient Egypt, thousands of years ago, can possibly be relevant to our modern lives?

**Paul:** Sure. To most, if not all people today, it is blatantly obvious what is morally right and what is morally wrong. You don't need the Bible or the Koran to tell you that it isn't right to murder, steal or cheat. But on the other hand we are the product of the societies in which we live, societies that have standards of conduct in one form or another. These standards of conduct had to come from somewhere. Christians, Muslims and Jews get theirs from their religious literature; pagans from Gnostic and Neo-Platonic wisdom literature; atheists usually get theirs from a solid foundation of good common sense. At the end of the day, this theoretical framework of views and values that pervades our lives had to come from somewhere. We can find them in the written sources of ancient Egypt. One autobiography from an Egyptian official states that:

*'I spoke ma'at and I did ma'at, I spoke well and I reported well....  
I rescued the weak from the hand of one stronger than he when I was able;  
I gave bread to the hungry, clothing [to the naked], a landing for the boatless.*

Ma'at is a difficult word to translate. At best, the modern equivalent would be something along the lines of truth, order and equilibrium. In this passage the official is identifying with *truth*, which in ancient Egyptian also denoted the morally right. This concept of truth being morally right and falsehood being morally wrong comes from a society which thrived over two thousand years ago. In the ancient Egyptian "Book of the Coming Forth by Day," the dead are judged by declaring their innocence. This is done by reciting a negative confession of crimes they didn't commit in the presence of the god Osiris. For example:

*I have not killed,  
I have not ordered to kill,  
I have not made anyone suffer.  
I have not taken milk from the mouth of children.  
Never did I take the property of any person.*

Here, the dead person is denying any misconduct while alive to be allowed existence in the afterlife. These simple teachings which were a source of moral authority for the ancient Egyptians are heavily embedded in our collective consciousness and still apply to our society today. The few examples I've given above are simplistic in nature. There is a wealth of more complex morals that explore the correct relationships between people and life lessons to be learned in Egyptian poetry, narratives and manuals of instruction.

**Tyler:** I understand the book is written in both prose and poetry. Will you tell us about the organization of the book and why you chose to include poetry and prose both?

**Paul:** Yes it contains both poetry and prose. The poetry section is further subdivided into six categories: alchemica, astrologica, mythologica, philosophica, musica and erotica. Notice that the names of these are subjects that the people of antiquity held in the highest honor. The prose section contains seven stories. There is also a prologue which talks about folklore in general, beginning with a general discussion on myths, legends and folktales and then goes on to describe some of the better known literary works of ancient Egypt, ending with a small dissertation of what the known literary work of the same name, "*Hermetica*," was all about and its connection with my book. The main reason for combining both poetry and prose into this volume stems from the fact that ancient folklore began as dramatic and epic poetry. It is well known that the Homer's Iliad and Odyssey told the stories of the Trojan War in Asia Minor and the subsequent adventures of one of its greatest heroes, Odysseus, who struggled for ten whole years before reaching his homeland, Ithaca. This large body of myths was a poem. Prose as a story-telling form came much later. My book honors the transcendent ability of folklore to find voice in variant literary forms, both poetry and prose.

**Tyler:** Paul, I know our readers are thinking, "erotica"! What exactly was erotica in ancient Egypt?

**Paul:** Erotica in the ancient world was distinctly different to what it is today. In ancient Egypt, it was the demonstration of sensuality and love through poetry, literature and dreams. There was nothing dirty, twisted or degrading about it. These people were comfortable with intense sensuality. You can see it in their literature and art. It was also socially acceptable for men to demonstrate their emotions and feelings quite openly, remnants of which survive in some southern European countries today. (In France, Italy, Spain and Greece men greet each other by kissing on the cheek.) On the contrary, this outward expression of emotion is still taboo in American society. The word erotica actually comes from *erotas*, the Greek word for romantic love.

**Tyler:** What is it about mythology that you find so fascinating, and why do you think readers are interested in it?

**Paul:** Well mythology has all the elements of today's Hollywood movies, only better. It allows readers to escape into a world outside of the 21st century where fathers sleep with their daughters, queens are seduced by beasts, gods are in a constant state of disarray about their own state of affairs as well as the affairs of their human counterparts (which is why they always intervene), and heroes sweep breathless princesses off their feet. In a way, mythology is a portal into that ideal world that we all secretly yearn to live in but are too afraid to admit it openly. It's no coincidence that romance is the most popular fiction genre in America today—with all their burdens people just want to bury themselves into books that open up realms of pleasure and happy-endings, not melodramas of psychological warfare and torture. (Even though those are sometimes really good!) Mythology is also appealing because it can be interpreted on so many different levels. Myths help us understand the scientific world view or the cosmology of people who to us seem more primitive in their thinking. German psychiatrist Carl Jung was one of the first to suggest that myths were psychological metaphors for hidden spiritual truths. Sociologists tackle them from a different angle altogether, seeing them as projections of human dilemmas relevant to a culture at any particular time. There are other theories also, many of which are actually quite plausible. These insights into the substratum of meaning in mythology and its hidden, even mysterious inner workings boost one's appreciation of it even further.

**Tyler:** Why specifically do you focus on Egyptian mythology? What is its appeal to you and do you feel it somehow is superior to Greek mythology or even what many conceive of as the mythology of the Bible or any of the other great myths like the Norse or Arthurian myths?

**Paul:** I feel that many courses on mythology tend to focus intensely on classical mythology, that being Greek and Roman. In comparison, Egyptian mythology is only briefly mentioned and too often under rug swept altogether. Because of my background, my initial exposure was to Greek mythology which I happen to love beyond comprehension, but through my love for the culture of ancient Egypt I suddenly unearthed a small treasure of literary worth. As I studied the ancient Egyptian myths and folktales, I became even more convinced that these masterful tales deserved greater recognition. That's why I focused on Egyptian mythology, trying to fill in the gaps inherent in the known material with my own. In no way do I think that classical mythology or the great Celtic, Norse and Arthurian myths are inferior, mainly because they express an individuality and originality (if we exclude the motif of the valiant hero which is common to all) which sets them apart from the older Egyptian myths. The bible myths on the other hand are inferior because they are recycled versions of Egyptian myths. The Immaculate Conception, the resurrection of Christ after three days, the concept of god as trinity, baptism in the sacred river and the sacrament of the Eucharist are all Egyptian in origin. Isis immaculately conceived her son Horus before Mary conceived Jesus; Osiris was murdered and resurrected after three days before Jesus did the same thousands of years afterward; the triad of Re, Horus and Osiris represented divine providence in early Egypt before the father, son and holy ghost did the same for the latter Christian tradition. There are too many similarities for the whole thing to be purely coincidental. I read a fantastic two volume encyclopedia by Gnostic author Gerald Massey a few years ago which described in exhausting detail Egypt's astronomical mythology and the parts Christianity borrowed to create its own world-view, bridging the two faiths with endless comparisons. It's so true that every new world springs from an older one, as a Greek proverb says.

**Tyler:** Wow, Paul. I didn't realize ancient Egyptian myth influenced the Bible so much, but it stands to reason since the ancient Israelites supposedly were slaves in Egypt for four centuries. Why do you think the Greek myths are so commonly known today while the Egyptian ones are not? Do you think it possible the Christian church purposely tried to repress the Egyptian stories? Also, would you tell us the name of Gerald Massey's book for people who want to read further into this matter?

**Paul:** My take on it is plain and simple. The Greek myths are commonly known because in the third century BCE the great Alexander the Great disseminated Greek culture and tradition to the known world. From ancient Macedonia in modern-day Greece, he conquered areas as far as Mesopotamia, Egypt and India, thus beginning the classical age. During this time, the Greek language, its customs and its mythology became cosmopolitan. Most scholars today agree that Western civilization is the product of ancient Greek and Roman thought. In the period between 300BCE and 300CE, some of the most important works were written in Greek—The New Testament and the Hermetica. The most important classical playwrights, Sophocles and Aeschylus, and the world's leading philosophers of antiquity, Plato and Aristotle, all wrote in Greek. On the other hand, Egyptian culture was esoteric by nature. The Hellenes and their Roman counterparts openly acknowledge that a vast amount of ancient wisdom proliferated from Egypt, though Egypt itself was never really interested in promulgating its culture and mythology to the rest of the world. Solon, the Greek politician, lawmaker and poet who visited Egypt in the 6th Century BCE noted that the Egyptian priest-philosophers were quite secretive about imparting their knowledge of astronomical mythology to foreigners. It is therefore safe to imply that the only crumbs of Egyptian mythology that the Western world would have attained would have come via Greek and Roman sources. As for the Roman Catholic Church, well they've been guilty of suppressing any kind of knowledge and critical inquiry that contradicts their cosmology since Christianity was conceived. They have successfully managed to suppress the much older Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian religions from which they have plagiarized a large proportion of material including the flood story (Noah's Ark) common to all three. For people who would like to investigate this most interesting topic further, the

name of Gerald Massey's work to which I refer to in the previous question is "*Ancient Egypt: The Light of the World.*"

**Tyler:** Paul, let's get back to your own writing. Your book's title comes from Hermetic literature. What exactly is Hermetic literature?

**Paul:** Hermetic literature or the "*Hermetica*" if you like, was a collection of philosophical, theological and occult works attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, a divinity that was an intermediary between the Greek Hermes and the Egyptian Thoth. In all probability they were probably written by select Gnostic scholars writing under the fictitious name of Hermes Trismegistus. These symbolist and mysterious texts were written in ancient Greek though the subject matter dealt largely, if not entirely, with Egyptian wisdom concerning divine revelation and the redemption of humanity through knowledge of God. Scholars are somewhat uncertain as to the exact time they were written, but most agree that it was sometime between 100 BCE and 300 CE, a time when the Greeks were firmly established as a ruling minority in Egypt. "*Hermetica*" seems to be a reflection of classical society's respect of ancient Egyptian wisdom, imparting important information on the social and intellectual high of the early Roman Empire. I've read through the "*Hermetica*" a few times. It's jam packed with great insights and knowledge of how the human soul works, subtly implying that man is indeed a mirror of the universe. What blows me away is that select people of that time had actually attained a high level of critical inquiry and understanding when it came to the sacred science of the universe; an achievement unprecedented for its time. Of course there are parts of it that are obscure, parts I can't really fathom, which probably has more to do with my modern-day mindset unable to grasp the subtler aspects of the ancient philosophies than flaws in the work itself.

**Tyler:** Will you tell us also about your book's focus on alchemy and how you became interested in that subject?

**Paul:** The word alchemy conjures images of medieval laboratories in which an aged, black-robed wizard is brooding over crucibles, books and potions, pulling his hair out in an attempt to discover the secrets of the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life, keys that will allow transmutation of metals and life everlasting. Let's face it, there is much appeal to the romantic notion that we could make gold from lead or live forever, immortalized in the millennia-long struggles of early, medieval and renaissance alchemists in their endless strivings. This wild goose chase was a charade to hide what they were really looking for—spirituality, enlightenment and personal transformation; the meaning of life. The façade was necessary because all this was happening at a time when the Catholic Church was at the height of its powers, condemning any inquiry into the mysteries of life that didn't quite fit in with the Christian doctrine. People, regardless of the time or place in which they live, seem to be wired with a desire to stand godlike on earth; to dig into the impenetrable pulp of unconsciousness and understand God. We are all united by a vision of man made in the image and likeness of God, a vision which we'd love to attain but fall short of every time. Why? Well, perhaps we're not meant to achieve it yet—if ever. Just like those mad medieval magicians and their paraphernalia, trying to understand the mind of God is exactly like trying to turn lead to gold and find the formula for eternal life. No matter how much you read and study, you realize that all you're doing is going around in circles. This is the principle that permeates my whole book. In fact, three of the stories in the book—"Creation Myth," "*The Contendings of Hathor and Anti*," and "*The Flawed Mirror*"—all have to do with alchemy, the magical transformation of consciousness into the material universe. In fact, "*The Flawed Mirror*," the piece most influenced by hermetics and esoteric knowledge, was based on a lucid dream I had where a woman swathed in black clothes and a veil told me the meaning of life and why the universe had come to be. As you might imagine, when I woke up I'd forgotten everything—naturally. The language of the unconscious mind only makes sense when you're sleeping. When you wake, it either doesn't make sense or you've forgotten it altogether. Alchemy fascinates me so much not only because it survived for many millennia and across variant cultures but because it captured the attention of some of the greatest thinkers the world has known—Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Galileo, Copernicus, Sir Isaac Newton, Carl Jung, Kant. In actual fact, Sir Isaac Newton dedicated more time studying number symbolism and alchemy rather than science. Carl Jung integrated same theories of alchemy into his psychological models which were then further advanced by his student and follower Erich Neumann. As you might imagine, alchemy has captured the imaginations of countless inquisitive people, and I myself am inquisitive by nature.

**Tyler:** Paul, the moment I saw your book cover for "*Hermetica*" I felt drawn in. Will you tell us what the picture on it represents?

**Paul:** Yes. The front picture is a renaissance painting with astronomical and astrological references. On it you can see the twelve houses of the celestial zodiac. The inner pictures represent the constellations in the heavens, while the outer ones the influence of these constellations on the earth below. With that in mind, the wheel itself comes to represent the influence of the stars on human fate. Around the zodiac you can see the four winds blowing, as if to drive the wheel of human fate forward, with the entire process being overlooked by the *Creator* of the universe and his angels. It sums up the world-view of "*Hermetica*" to a tee.

**Tyler:** On your website, you talk about your logo, which is ISIDUS and which you say is actually you. Will you explain that to us?

**Paul:** The logo can be seen on my website and on my first book, “*Origin*.” It represents the dawning of Cancer, the constellation under which I was born, and the coming of an age where people will begin to think more with their hearts and less with their minds. This ‘thinking with the heart’ will provide a unique window through which to view the world, one where sensitivity, intuition and understanding take the front seat. The logo is me personified because if you open up an astrology book to the zodiacal sign of cancer and read about their defining characteristics it would be as if you were getting to know me in person.

**Tyler:** Paul, will you tell us about your previous book, “*Origin*” and how “*Hermetica*” is different from it?

**Paul:** My first book “*Origin*” is a collection of poems, many of which have historical, theosophical and erotic themes. They are arranged into four sections that pertain to the four cardinal directions, each standing in for various stages of the wheel of life—birth, growth, middle age and death. All the poems in a particular section are united by a common theme. For example, the poems that belong to the cardinal direction of east are all about some kind of beginning. It could be revelatory, initiatory or literal. The poems belonging to the cardinal direction of west are all about some kind of ending, whether that be death, personal loss or mass destruction. “*Origin*” is different from “*Hermetica*” in that it contains only poetry. Despite its philosophical flavoring, “*Origin*” covers much more ground in terms of personal experience. There are poems in there about natural disasters, Australia, the moon, love, lust and other human endeavors. “*Hermetica*” on the other hand is much more specialized, focusing on hermetics, magic and esoteric knowledge.

**Tyler:** Do you have plans for more books, Paul?

**Paul:** Yes I do! I’m currently working on a memoir about my extensive travels through Greece, a country I consider my second home. The book will reveal my own insights, personal adventures and revelations, and attempt to bring some of the lesser known folklore of Greece to the forefront. Many of us know of the great classical myths but not many people have heard of the folklore that disseminate during Byzantine times and during the centuries of Arab, Venetian and Turkish occupation. Once that’s out I’ll get stuck back into my novel.

**Tyler:** What do you hope readers will come away with after reading your books?

**Paul:** That’s a tough one. I want readers to become more aware of the literary worth of long gone civilizations and develop a greater appreciation of ancient folklore. I want people to know that old myths and legends are often the underlying influence for great works of literature that are produced today. I want people to think about where we fall in the wider scheme of things; our relation to the universe, to religion, to one another in general. I want people to train themselves in divergent thinking. The myths and folktales in the book can be interpreted on many different levels—often enough, there is no one correct way of doing or seeing things. We all need to learn how to see things from other people’s perspectives.

**Tyler:** Paul, what kind of response have you had so far to your writing? Have you been concerned that it may not have an audience because of its focus on marginal literature and literary types?

**Paul:** You know this was one of my primary concerns when I published this book. I was worried that because it dealt with marginal literature most people wouldn’t care for it. On the other hand it is an avenue that not many writers, if any, deal with so it could work both ways. I think it’s just a matter of making the material accessible to modern audiences really. That and presenting it in a matter that will draw the modern-day reader in. Most people who read the book really liked it and said that it was quite unique to anything else they’d ever picked up so I guess that’s a good thing!

**Tyler:** Thank you for joining me today, Paul. Before we go, will you tell us a little bit about your website and what additional information may be found there about “*Hermetica*”?

**Paul:** Yes, certainly. The website is quite extensive with many sections and is constantly updated. There is a biography, samples of poems from both my books with accompanying analyses, commentaries, reviews, sound files were I can be heard reciting some of my favorite poems, book previews and an online store. You can reach me via e-mail at [paul@paulkirtsis.com](mailto:paul@paulkirtsis.com) if you wish to offer your own feedback and suggestions. Both books can also be ordered directly through me with free shipping/handling. It was a real pleasure talking to you Tyler and thanks for having me!

**Tyler:** Thank you, Paul. It was very educational, and I am determined to learn more about ancient Egyptian mythology myself after talking to you. Good luck with your future books.

**Paul:** Thanks Tyler!

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