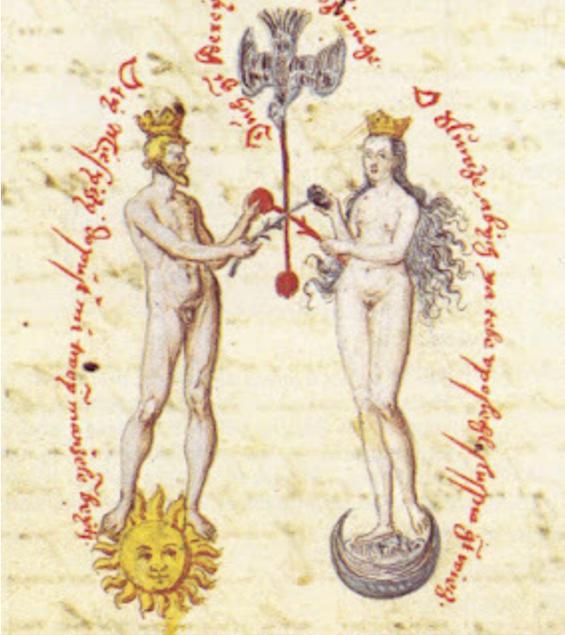


Review: The Forbidden Book

Occult fiction aficionados were in for a pleasant surprise earlier this year, with the publication of *The Forbidden Book*, a collaborative work by Guido Mina di Sospiro and Joscelyn Godwin. Unlike the popular genre of occult fiction spawned by Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*, *The Forbidden Book* is special for one key reason: the alchemical secrets woven into the story are all for real.



Although the framework and narrative may be fictional, the esoteric elements are not, and that makes all the difference. The notion of weaving occult teachings and elements into a fictional narrative is not at all new; the arts have been vehicles of esoteric thought for centuries, and many occultists in the last couple of hundred years have used fiction genres to preserve and disseminate esoteric thought to a

popular audience; one has only to think of Bulwer Lytton's *Zanoni*, or the multiple *ethopées* of Sar Péladan, or, if we go further back in time, Campanella's utopian City of the Sun or the mysterious Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz.

Rooted then, in a long-standing tradition, *The Forbidden Book* touches on multiple issues surrounding the exploration of esotericism and alchemy, connecting them to broader present-day sociopolitical issues and marking what might just be a fresh view of esotericism vis-a-vis the public eye.

The following review by David Metcalfe is both thoughtful and insightful, as he traces a good number of interlocking elements within the narrative and ponders the wider implications of the issues explored in *The Forbidden Book*. We welcome this new addition to the tradition of occult fiction and wish the authors every success – the fact that the book was first issued in electronic form by Disinfo Books and has now been picked up by Red Wheel/Weiser is an excellent development!

Sasha Chaitow