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PART FOUR

A MASTERS TYPOLOGY
Introduction

The present research has been premised upon an ideology of objectivity, in so far as all claims made in behalf of the Masters’ ontology have been considered from a perspective of scholarly agnosticism. Such a methodological standpoint, rather than delimiting the research possibilities, is actually the most viable means of approaching the data without causing intentional or accidental bias to upset the selection and examination of materials, or damage to any heuristic outcomes. This last point is of great significance. In a nascent discipline, poor methodological apparatus (or good apparatus, poorly-applied) can easily taint a particular domain, and litter the field with obstacles for future scholars to have to confront.

An empirical methodology also fosters collaborative problem-solving. Unlike the common epistemological and semantic divide which characterises religionist-reductionist discourse, empiricism *qua* empiricism can only ever be tentative and incremental. The fact that empiricism encourages hypothesis and provisional postulation, rather than the discernment (or imposition) of absolutes, means that a particular heuristic can be tested and retested by a community of scholars whose axiomatically-held opinions have been suppressed as far as possible. To this degree, a theoretical construct, abstracted from the data, can never assume anything but a provisional status; the valency of a particular theory can only be measured by scholarly consensus and, in certain cases, broad applicability.

What little attention Theosophy has garnered within the academy has tended in the main to be sociological and psychological. Sparse focus has been directed toward the ideational constructs of Theosophy. As a consequence, whatever interest the Masters have generated has tended to concentrate upon facticity and notions of religious credulity. With one notable exception, the entire literature appears to be blatantly or subtly polemical, with the physical existence of the Masters considered to be the
fundamental, or even sole, question.¹

Given the methodological position espoused by the present work, such a question simply cannot be asked, and certainly never answered. Yet, even if sufficient metaphysical apparatus were somehow made available, the question would still remain of only peripheral concern - for the simple reason that, for the period under scrutiny, it is phenomenologically self-evident that the Masters were deemed to exist. Even in the face of harsh opposition, tens of thousands of people in the years from 1875 have believed that the Masters were overseeing the Theosophical Society and the actions of its members.

For all of its necessary limitations, empirical methodology does not disallow diachronic analysis, nor any interpretive or hypothetical framework that might result. Consequently, the foregoing study of the Masters gestalt has led the present author to certain provisional hypotheses which might have some applicability for future research into Theosophy and related domains. It is hoped that such hypotheses, by avoiding the barrenness engendered by concentration on the physical existence of the Masters, can assist in the project of establishing a locus for Theosophy within the historical, socio-cultural, and epistemological paradigms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Further, the academic study of esotericism(s), being only in its infancy as a discrete discipline, has understandably tended to concentrate on data from the distant past in order to map the esoteric terrain and to discern such staples of academic discourse as appropriate nomenclature, causal influence, and heuristic definitions. As a consequence some imbalance has entered the field, with the result that more modern formulations have sometimes tended to be considered ersatz or unimaginatively derivative. It is hoped that the following discussions might assist in placing Theosophy more firmly within the living tide of esotericism such that its sui generis character and significant contribution to the history of ideas might be more fully appreciated.

¹ Paul Johnson's research into the possible modelling of Blavatsky's Masters upon men within her acquaintance is the only substantive work in the field which avoids obvious religionism or reductionism: see Johnson, The Masters Revealed. Nevertheless, because Johnson is dealing solely with the human identities of the Masters, and not the meta-empirical claims made in their behalf, his valuable research avails little for those who wish to understand the Masters qua Masters.
Although the Masters *qua* Masters are presented as being highly mercurial, with shifting characteristics and morphology, there is nevertheless sufficient consistency in the accounts to suggest the appropriateness of positing Masters-typologies. Such typologies do not seek to isolate the characteristics or attributes of particular Masters, but rather to view the Masters generically, and to concentrate upon their functions within the Theosophical meta-discourse. (Those functions which can be deemed to possess a predominantly sociological or psychological foundation have not been examined, as they fall outside of the methodological parameters of the present research).
It should be noted that the following discussions are highly provisory and that the typologies are by no means exhaustive. In all instances the hypotheses are intended primarily to illuminate avenues for further investigation. As a consequence, surveys of particular trends and philosophies have been kept necessarily brief, and referencing has been, for the main, maintained at a minimum. It might not be inappropriate to suggest that each of the following typological categories warrants significant individual scholarly analysis; certainly, such treatment lies beyond the purview of the present

There are numerous avenues for future research which the present work simply cannot encompass. Among the more obvious candidates for Masters-typologies can be found the following:

1) The influence of the Romantics, particularly the American Transcendentalists, on Blavatskian formulations. Schematically surprisingly akin to occultism (cf. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘Romanticism and the Esoteric Connection’, in van den Broek & Hanegraaff, eds, Gnosis and Hermeticism, 237-268), the Romantics combined a heightened temporalism, an Orientalising fervour, an acceptance of progressivist teleologies, and a fascination with various traditional esotericisms - often to rather baroque ends. In this context, it would be particularly worthwhile to examine Emerson’s notion of ‘representative men’ in relation to the Theosophical Masters. For Transcendentalism see Arthur Versluis, American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993; Jackson, The Oriental Religions and American Thought.

2) The influence of the tradition of the ‘wandering adepts’ of alchemy on Blavatskian formulations. Based in large part on Paracelsus’ prophecy that ‘Elias Artist’ (Elias the Artist, typologically related to the Biblical Elijah) would soon come and reveal the means to read the book of Nature, a mythologem developed in the seventeenth century which sponsored the notion of the travelling alchemical magus. Such magi were deemed to possess paranormal powers, and were believed able to teach the secrets of transmutation. Most celebrated, perhaps, is the ‘adept’ who visited Johann-Friedrich Schweitzer (‘Helvetius’, 1625-1709). Cf, e.g., William R. Newman, Gehennical Fire: The Lives of George Starkey, an American Alchemist in the Scientific Revolution, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994.


4) The influence of the novel discipline of comparative religion on Blavatskian formulations. Blavatsky professed great interest in the new mythologies and data which were mediated to her by comparative religionists. It is not improbable that the Master could thus have been something of an embodiment of nineteenth century religious relativism. For a related discussion, see Hanegraaff, New Age, 442-462; Godwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment, passim.
research. The following cursory notes are therefore intended as nothing more than an *entée* into such domains. In deference to Blavatsky, the Masters are here examined under seven names; many more remain unuttered.
CHAPTER 23

THE MERCURIAN MASTER

If there is a presiding genius of esotericism, it is surely Hermes, the god-man of antiquity. The classical aretalogies of Hermes, or Mercury in his Latin cognate, typically tell of his extraordinary mutability and subversive potentialities - qualities which underscore his ambiguous ontology. The Hermesian locus, it seems, is at the interstices of the human and the divine, heaven and hades, text and meaning. Unsurprisingly, then, the mesocosm inhabited by Hermes, and the mobility with which he can enter and alter other spheres, make him the supreme conceptual forebear for the Theosophical Masters.

The title of this chapter alludes directly to Douglas Brooks-Davies' 

The Mercurian Monarch: Magical politics from Spenser to Pope (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1983). Much indebted to the researches of Frances Yates (esp. Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century, Pimlico, London, 1993), Brooks-Davies resolved to limn the presence of Hermetic imagery and motifs in the monarchical panegyrics of Elizabethan and Stuart England. In so doing he established the presence of a link between charismatic authority, governance, and revelation - a link he suspected to have been consciously reinforced by allusion to the power of divine mediation accorded to Mercury. Brooks-Davies' notion that political, literary, and religious potentialities can be (more or less) seamlessly fused via the Hermetic leitmotifs has profound resonances for Theosophy. One is reminded of Ernest Lee Tuveson's comment:

Hermes was a god, and capable of many avatars. In the last as we shall see, he became a mortal, the Poet: fittingly, for essentially the Poet he was from the beginning (Ernest Lee Tuveson, The Avatars of Thrice Great Hermes: An Approach to Romanticism, Bucknell University Press, Lewisburg, 1982, 8).

Tuveson's research is very interesting, but should be avoided on technical points regarding the Hermetica.


In this context it should be remembered that Hermes is also considered to be the god of crossroads. It is interesting that the other figure well known in reference to crossroads, Hecate, has been adopted by modern Neopagan witchcraft (‘Wicca’) as a prototypology of modern witches (who see themselves as occupying such a place). This is interesting primarily because it is surely the Hermesian qualities of ambiguity and alocality which are the truer reference points. Such unacknowledged homages to Hermes are everywhere evident in modern esoteric structures, thus reinforcing the appropriateness of the term ‘Hermeticism’ as a broad rubric.

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Among the cluster of attributes of Hermes, none is so ubiquitous, nor so regularly overlooked, as the dynamogeny of presence and absence. Hermes is never content to undergo scrutiny; he is rather to be discovered in remnants, in the remains - in fact, in the effluvium of his activity. He is indeed ‘mercurial’ for he hints at rich treasures of meaning, yet flirtatiously withholds the elusive prize. He is just as unobtainable as his element quicksilver is uncontainable - always defying efforts to manage and 'own' it through its capture.

Hermes exists to subvert finite notions of truth and meaning. He flirts with the tumescent sureties of epistemology, and elicits a grudging demurral from those whom he touches. It follows that in his guise as trickster he adds grit to the epistemological 'oyster', forcing the production of ever more baroque pearls of meaning. Indeed, Hermes’ attire is cut to the latest fashion for, in keeping with his penchant for morphological plasticity, he has now become something of a daimon for modern deconstructionism. Just as during his earlier earthly visitations he was known as the god of destabilisation and disruption, so in latter days he has incarnated as the supreme hermeneutical irritant, chafing at ossified precepts and triggering novel outgrowths of meaning. (Unsurprisingly, much has been made of his paternity of the term


The essentially constructive play of Hermes has been undervalued by a tendency to overstate the self-indulgence of his thievery; as Faivre has astutely noted, 'Hermes, unlike Prometheus, steals things only in order to put them back into circulation'. That which he steals, he returns in altered guise; or, to adopt Faivre's concise analysis, his task is that of 'demystifier so as to remythify'. Thus it is that he can simultaneously embody a touching adolescent naïveté and a sage-like gravitas; when vested in his joker's garb he delights in challenging comfortable verities and pomposity, when adorned as savant and facundus he deigns to become the preeminent pedagogue whose task it is to mediate divine gnosis to humanity. For aspirants to arcane wisdom, then, Hermes came to be the ultimate hieratic intercessor, instantiating the key to a universal hermeneutic - as well as remaining the guardian of its keeping.

The constellation of attributes of Hermes/Mercury metastasised in the figure of the Alexandrian Hermes Trismegistus, to whom was credited the authorship of a large body of magico-philosophical texts, the most famed of which are known for the most part under the aggregate title of the Corpus Hermeticum. With one notable exception, the Asclepius, these texts did not reappear in the Latin West until Ficino's

As Faivre has noted:

"In hermeneutics there is Hermes, but Hermeneuein, 'to explain', is an explicatio quite different from that furnished by the new Hermocopides or Multilators [sic] of Hermes (to pick up on the image furnished by the events in Athens in the year 415 B.C.)" (Faivre, 'The Children of Hermes and the Science of Man' in Merkel & Debus, eds., Hermeticism, 430).

As Faivre has noted, the prime antique source for the etymology of 'Hermes' (as having to do with speech and language) is to be found in Plato's Cratylus, 408A.


8 As Faivre has noted, 'The Children of Hermes', 431.

translation of 1462 (published in 1471). Few scholars would now doubt the seminal influence of these treatises upon the Neoplatonically-inclined minds of the Medici court, nor fail to appreciate the catholic place of the Hermetic scriptures in the syncretistic esotericisms which developed in their wake. Until quite recently, analyses of the *Hermetica* (a more inclusive, if rather abstracted, generic noun for the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the *Asclepius*, the *Fragments of Stobaeus*, certain portions of the Nag Hammadi codices, various gnomologies, and the multifarious astrological and alchemical works attributed to Trismegistus) concentrated mostly upon the literary character of the works, with particular attention afforded to questions of genre.\(^{10}\) Of more profound significance for the present work is the figure of Trismegistus himself.

Central to the mystery of revelation at the core of the *Hermetica* is the dynamic of disclosure; the treatises are thus appropriately termed scriptures (ἐφορὸν λόγον), for they mediate the workings and mens of God to humanity. Significantly, the revelation does not reside solely in the text, but also in the person of Hermes Trismegistus himself, who, it is crucial to remember, was deemed responsible for the instantiation of writing

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\(^{10}\) It might be noted that genre analysis (when applied to antique sources) can occasionally appear somewhat anachronistic. So it is that the tendency developed to make an arbitrary division of the *Hermetica* into 'philosophical' and 'magical' texts: see Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 89ff; Frances A. Yates, *Ideas and Ideals in the North European Renaissance: Collected Essays, Volume III*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1984, 58. Such a demarcation is not supported by the texts themselves (which often contain elements germane to both), and seems mostly to have been predicated upon a desire to 'rescue' the philosophically-richer treatises from the taint of theurgy. One is reminded of an equally arbitrary distinction between 'white' and 'black' magic, though here one can at least trace the lineaments of the argument historically.
in the first place. It is certain that the Hermetic scriptures had as their intention the broadening of the aperture of spiritual perception such that aspirants might view unoccluded their own animating divine spark and then, through such superior gnosis, come to apprehend the extra-cosmic God and recognise their own divinity. Less obvious, though surely no less intended, is the inference that Hermes Trismegistus had himself achieved his place within the pantheon of the gods through the self-same process. In other words, Hermes Trismegistus, in a typically Hermesian circular artifice, enfleshes his own precepts.

The ambivalent ontology of the Hellenistic Hermes/Mercury and the Egyptian Thoth was both a structural necessity and a predicate for the syncretistic Hermes Trismegistus of the Corpus Hermeticum. The special gnosis of the treatises is underpinned by the belief that the nous, or divine intellect (or 'the soul of God'),

11 It is widely understood in the antique literature that Thoth/Hermes, particularly, was credited with granting the gift of writing to humanity. Less well recognised, perhaps, was the broader attribution to him of human communication, i.e. speech. In this sense, it is interesting to recognise that writing (the 'trace') is the remnant of meaning, and thus that here again Hermes can only be known through his absence or the residues of his activity. Yet the link between meaning and artefact remains a living one and, for esotericists, is able to facilitate further communication/communion with Hermes. In other words, for (Hermetic) esotericists, there is no absolute ontological separation between the signified and the signifier, thus words themselves retain the trace of their magical character and may become 'ladders' not just for meaning, but for human transmutation. Kabbalah, of course, is a case in point. For an interesting analysis of theurgic adjurations around the Mediterranean basin see Rebecca Lesses, 'Speaking with Angels: Jewish and Greco-Egyptian Revelatory Adjurations' in Harvard Theological Review, 89:1, 1996, 41-60. It is useful to keep Hermes in mind when reading Brian Vickers' work on occult linguistics and semiotics: Brian Vickers, 'Analogy versus identity: the rejection of occult symbolism, 1580-1680' in id., ed., Occult and scientific mentalities in the Renaissance, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984, 95-163; id., 'On the Function of Analogy in the Occult' in Merkel & Debus, eds., Hermeticism, 265-292. The parallels with Theosophy are obvious: though the Masters may not be physically contactable, they nevertheless 'remain' within Isis Unveiled, The Secret Doctrine, and, especially, the Mahatma letters. Robert Tilley has noted that 'Hermes merges into his invention, disappears into his trickery, that is, into writing' (Tilley, 'Derrida's Reading', 8). The Masters 'disappear' no less successfully.
mediates between the structural affinities of God and humanity.\textsuperscript{12} (Thus it is that the kinship shared between humans and the divine insinuates that God can never be utterly transcendent). Such a belief naturally presupposes a multiple-tiered cosmology and, crucially, a hierarchy of being. If, as seems sure, the gnosia of the \textit{Corpus Hermeticum} is an unrestrained theology of \textit{theosis}, then \textit{divinity is attained by degree}, and Hermes Trismegistus - as man-made-God - incarnates the process of divinisation. Thus the traditional ambivalence regarding the exact status of Hermes becomes an absolute virtue in the \textit{Hermetica}, for it is there that Hermes' ambivalence is rearticulated as Trismegistus' semiotic polyvalency. Crucially, it is this very polyvalency which undergirds the graduated elevation of the initiate Trismegistus into what Gilles Quispel has termed 'the Deifying Vision'\textsuperscript{13} and which thereafter allows the aspirant to view 'Father Hermes' as man \textit{and} god.

\textsuperscript{12} It is hardly insignificant that in Nag Hammadi Codex VI.6, \textit{The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth (or The Ogdoad reveals the Ennead)} Hermes Trismegistus himself becomes nous: mediator and mediation are finally united in the person of Trismegistus. See 'The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth (VI, 6)', trans. James Brashler, Peter A. Dirkske & Douglas M. Parrot in James M. Robinson, ed., \textit{The Nag Hammadi Library in English}, 3rd ed., HarperCollins, 1990, VI.6.58.1-29 (pp. 324-325). See also Fowcen, \textit{The Egyptian Hermes}, 104-115. One is reminded of Richard Valantasis' interpretation of this text (58.32-59.11):

\begin{quote}
The cosmic and philosophical god has been collapsed into the person of the guide. The nous connects the guide, through his empowerment, to the divinity and then, for the initiate, becomes the point for complete identification of the divinity with the guide by a sort of transference of natures and attributes (Richard Valantasis, \textit{Spiritual Guides of the Third Century: A Semiotic Study of the Guide-Disciple Relationship in Christianity, Neoplatonism, Hermetism, and Gnosticism}, Harvard Dissertations in Religion No.27, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1991, 97).
\end{quote}

One can only begin to imagine just how much joy the discovery of this particular codex would have given to Blavatsky, and what she would have made of its contents (let alone its iatromathematics). It is some sort of comment on the present dominance of the specialist scholar, rather than the sophisticated generalisers of Blavatsky's era, that with few exceptions (notably, \textit{The Gospel of Thomas}) the Nag Hammadi codices have sponsored no significant new literary esotericisms. Incidentally, the definitive \textit{The Nag Hammadi Library in English} includes an \textit{Afterword} by Richard Smith in which the author notes that it was 'Madame Blavatsky who first claimed the Gnostics as precursors for the occult movement' (p.537; not true, but indicative of her importance) and that 'H. P. Blavatsky and her Theosophical Society wrote the book on secret traditions. Most esoteric movements ever since have found it almost impossible to step outside of her (sometimes unconscious) influence' (p.558). Smith's metaphor, though itself perhaps unconscious, is particularly apposite. See Richard Smith, 'Afterword: The Modern Relevance of Gnosticism' in Robinson, ed., \textit{The Nag Hammadi Library in English}, 532-549.


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The articulation of the process of divinisation as undergone by Hermes Trismegistus (self-abnegation, ascesis, purification, initiation, and so on) is of less concern for the present research than the central ascensus/descensus motif which is retained at the centre of the scheme. Significantly, the fluid mobility of the Hellenistic Hermes/Mercury, either as psychopompos or the flighty Messenger of the Gods, has been tightened and regulated in the Alexandrian recension: as the proto-initiate, the human Hermes undergoes an existential palingenesis and, whether immediately or in stages - the sources disagree - he ascends into apperception of the divine. Having encountered the God within and without, the God-man Hermes Trismegistus descends to the sensible world in order to impart the secrets of true knowledge to humanity.

Hermes Trismegistus was by no means alone within the antique pantheon as the divinised man: Heracles, Dionysus, and Orpheus also possessed such a trait. Nevertheless, the morphic plasticity of Hermes, the venerable tradition of the Hermes/Mercury/Thoth syncretistic cultus, and the long association of Hermes with the plethora of magical technologies, ensured that Hermes Trismegistus assumed the rôle of esoteric paterfamilias. Significantly, as the Hermetic template espouses a via ascendendi, it has provision for any number of initiates to enter the family of adepts. So it was that very early in the esoteric aretalogies Hermes Trismegistus became the central spindle around whom were spun the various representatives of the philosophia perennis. Typical lists included Trismegistus in the company of Zoroaster, Orpheus, Abraham, Pythagoras, Plato, the (Matthean) Magi, inter alia. Such genealogies naturally took the Corpus Hermeticum at its word and assumed the veracity of Hermes

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14 The divergent notions of the nature of the ascensus typify the agglomerate character of the Corpus Hermeticum (and the Hermetica generally). The [Discourse] of Hermes Trismegistus: Poimandres (Corpus Hermeticum 1.24-26) suggests that apperception of the divine occurs only after death; A secret dialogue of Hermes Trismegistus on the mountain to his son Tat: On being born again, and on the promise to be silent (Corpus Hermeticum XIII.1) suggests antemortem revelation. Further, the former makes clear that the soul will ascend through the heavenly spheres (and be thus purified) on its journey to the divine, while the latter describes an initiation which 'purges Tat of his vices at a stroke' (Fowden, The Egyptian Hermes, 109).

15 For an analysis of the ascensus/descensus motif in the classical world see Culianu, Psychanodia I, 10-15, 48-54.

16 Typical genealogies are to be found in Faivre, The Eternal Hermes, 95-98.
Trismegistus’ historical existence. In so doing, they contributed significantly to the notion that Trismegistus was a contemporary of Moses and, ergo, that the *Corpus Hermeticum* held chronological priority over the Bible - a position which would not be undermined until 1614 by the publication of Isaac Casaubon’s *De rebus sacrís et ecclesiasticis exercitationes XVI.*

The Renaissance project to establish the identity of the *prisca theologia*, the one true dispensation veiled by the accretions of the ages, was predicated, naturally enough, on the grounds of temporal priority. The common assumption among enthusiasts that the *Corpus Hermeticum* antedated Biblical revelation allowed for (Platonic) philosophy and (Christian) theology to be rearticulated as wisdoms refracted through the *original* creed and revelation: Hermetic gnosis. Such was the stance adopted by one of Blavatsky’s most revered esoteric ‘hierophants’, the Egyptophile Giordano Bruno, for whom all religious and philosophical creeds could be traced to an Hermetic unitive core - a particularly Alexandrian *prisca theologia.* Such esoteric relativism, it seems, had thereby paved the way for genuinely pious Christian Hermeticism, and provided the philosophical underpinning for such brilliant appropriations as Christian Kabbalah. Less well acknowledged, though systematically akin, is the certainty that Blavatskian synthetic Theosophy, as both a textual hermeneutic and a latter-day syncretistic *philosophia perennis*, has a direct progenitor in the search for origins begun by the

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17 The Renaissance belief in the historical existence of Hermes Trismegistus was based on the imprimatur given to the notion by various early Christian authorities, notably Clement of Alexandria, Lactantius, and Augustine of Hippo. For some instances see infra 503n24.
18 For a concise analysis of the reaction to Casaubon’s findings (i.e., that the *Corpus Hermeticum* postdated Christianity by a century or more) see Hanegraaff, *New Age*, 390-391. For an interesting discussion of dating in Western scholarship, see the references to Casaubon in Anthony Grafton, *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1990, 76-98 *et passim*. It should be noted that Casaubon’s findings remained generally unknown for many years; further, those Hermetists or Hermeticists who were aware for the most part ignored his conclusions.
19 For Bruno’s belief in the Egyptian wellspring, and for his own sophisticated construction of an Hermetic *philosophia perennis* see Mendoza, *The Acentric Labyrinth*, ch. 13; Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, 1-61, 205-256. It is informative that Bruno considered the Kabbalah to issue from an Egyptian original, and that Moses (as a crucial link in the chain of the *philosophia perennis*) was instructed in its tenets: see Bruno, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, (third dialogue, second part), 239-241. The degree of Bruno’s idealisation of Egyptian religion can be ascertained from his belief that they had perfected the *ars ascendendi*:

The Egyptians ... used to ascend and (as their successes demonstrate) used to penetrate divinity (in ibid., 248-249).
Renaissance Hermeticists. If this all-too-brief sampling of themes from the *Corpus Hermeticum* indicates an obvious ascent/descent framework at the individual level, it is not surprising that the other theme beloved by Blavatsky, cosmic cyclicism, is no less evident. In the *Asclepius* (originally the Greek *Perfect Discourse*) Egypt is deemed to be ‘an image of heaven’ and ‘the temple of the whole world’. Yet the glory of Egypt will be sundered by a foreign invasion which will cause the gods to retreat to heaven:

A time will come when it will appear that the Egyptians paid respect to divinity with faithful mind and painstaking reverence - to no purpose. All their holy worship will be disappointed and perish without effect, for divinity will return from earth to heaven, and Egypt will be abandoned. The land that was the seat of reverence will be widowed by the powers and left destitute of their presence.

When foreigners occupy the land and territory, not only will reverence fall into neglect but, even harder, a prohibition under

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20 A part of the intention underpinning the present research is to encourage those involved in the academic study of esotericism to recognise that Theosophy can confidently be placed under the rubric of Hermetic esotericism. Perhaps, then, Faivre’s comments might be broadened:

This tracing of Hermes through history, trying to single out the cultural traits which he anonymously inspired, of the signifiers of certain constants of the imagination, comes down in practice to a summary history of esotericism itself - not that the pertinence of that is in question here. This is esotericism as understood from a perspective broad enough to include the Philosophy of Nature, in the Romantic sense, and the synthesizing eclecticism of Pico or Ficino, as well as *traditional theosophy* and alchemy. The enterprise is a perfectly legitimate one, in so far as esotericism, thus encompassed, is altogether under the sign of Hermes, and considering that this quicksilver god transcends its boundaries (Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes*, 49-50, emphasis added. It should be noted that Faivre is here discussing the historiography of Gilbert Durand).

21 One is reminded of the passage from the *Asclepius* (*Ascl. 30*):

On earth one tells time by the quality of the air and the change of hot seasons and cold, but in heaven time runs by the return of the coursing stars to the same places in chronological cycles. The world is time’s receptacle; the cycling and stirring of time invigorate it ... [but God] is his own steadfast stability, and no external impulse can move him from his place since everything is in him and he alone in everything - unless one ventures to say that his motion is in eternity (Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 85-86).

Further (*Ascl. 31*):

Eternity has no limitation within time. But time, granted that it can be limited by number or alteration or periodic return through recurrence, is eternal (Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 86).

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penalty prescribed by law (so-called) will be enacted against reverence, fidelity and divine worship. Then this most holy land, seat of shrines and temples, will be filled completely with tombs and corpses.23

Garth Fowden has illustrated that the *topos* of foreign invasion need not be an allusion to Christian persecution of native religion, nor indeed that the references to legal prohibitions are thereby fourth-century interpolations, as has been commonly adduced.24 Fowden, interpreting the text as a direct reference to the Ptolemies' hegemony and Romano-Hellenic ethno-cultural oppression of the indigenous population, employs a sometimes surprising range of comparables from the experiences of other colonised traditional societies such as the Australian Unambal aborigines, the Incas, the Aztecs, and the Mayas.25 It is significant for the present research that by dislocating the apocalypticism of the *Hermetica* from traditional historiographical suppositions, Fowden has brought to the fore the universalist applications of the passages: irreligion and disrespect for tradition breed contempt for the gods - and the gods will exact their revenge. Intriguingly, Blavatsky had employed a similar exegesis a hundred years before Fowden.

There is no doubt that Blavatsky was well acquainted with the *Asclepius*.26 Indeed, the quite apocalyptic passages quoted *supra* (*Ascl. 24-27*) were incorporated into her macrohistory as evidence of the growing marginalisation of the Ancient Wisdom in the face of the strident materialism now impinging upon Fourth Round humanity. Unsurprisingly, her vision is rather clever:

As was predicted by the great Hermes in his dialogue with Aesculapius, the time had indeed come when impious foreigners accused Egypt of adoring monsters ... Her sacred Scribes and Hierophants became wanderers upon the face of the earth. Those who had remained in Egypt found themselves obliged for fear of a profanation of the sacred Mysteries to seek refuge in deserts and mountains, to form and establish secret societies and brotherhoods - such as the Essenes; those who had crossed the oceans to India and even to the (now-called) New World, bound themselves by solemn oaths to keep silent, and to preserve secret their Sacred Knowledge and Science; thus these were buried deeper than ever out of human sight.

Much of the attention which the Asclepius apocalyptic passages have garnered has focussed on the socio-cultural impacts of new paradigms (whether Christian or Hellenic) on traditional Egyptian society. There can be no doubt that Blavatsky, upon studying the Asclepius, was singular in noting its applicability to the religio-epistemological conflicts of her own century. Indeed, the following passage reads very much like Blavatsky's own tirades against the materialism of her age:

A land once holy, most loving of divinity, by reason of her reverence the only land on earth where the gods settled, she who taught holiness and fidelity will be an example of utter [un]belief. In their weariness the people of that time will find nothing to wonder at or to worship. This all - a good thing that never had nor has nor will have its better - will be endangered. People will find it oppressive and scorn it. They will not cherish this entire world, a work of god beyond compare, a glorious construction, a bounty composed of images in multiform variety, a mechanism for god's will ungrudgingly supporting his work, making a unity of everything that can be honored, praised and finally loved by those who see it; a multiform accumulation taken as a single thing. They will prefer shadows to light, and they will find death more expedient than life.

Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. XIV, 294.
No one will look up to heaven. The reverent will be thought mad, the irreverent wise; the lunatic will be thought brave, and the scoundrel will be taken for a decent person. Soul and all teachings about soul (that soul began as immortal or else expects to attain immortality) as I revealed them to you will be considered not simply laughable but even illusory.

The gods, having retreated to their heavenly abode, will countenance only a certain amount of 'irreverence, disorder, disregard for anything good', and the 'god whose power is primary' will sweep away the unrighteousness with flood, fire, and plague. Thereafter a regeneration will take place:

Then he will restore the world to its beauty of old so that the world itself will again seem deserving of worship and wonder, and with constant benedictions and proclamations of praise the people of that time will honor the god who makes and restores so great a work. And this will be the geniture of the world: a reformation of all good things and a restitution, most holy and most reverent, of nature itself, reordered in the course of time [but through an act of will,] which is and was everlasting and without beginning.

The evident cyclicism of the Asclepian prophecies (from pristine purity to corruption, to annihilation, to rebirth) is the obvious contender for the provenance of such a foundational leitmotif of esotericism. The value of such figurations, of course, is their applicability for diverse purposes and programmes. Remarkably, in the vast Theosophical literature the seminal influence of the Hermetic template upon Blavatskian conceptual mapping is virtually unmentioned. Concentration on the Orientalism of the post-1878 Theosophical Society has ensured that antecedents for the vertical transit of the soul (the ascent/descent motif) and 'Ages' theory (the macrocyclicist historiography), both so crucial to Blavatskian mapping, have been sought far afield in Indic sources, rather than in the most predictable place of all - the Hermetica, crucible of esotericisms. For many and varied reasons it simply proved

25 Ascl. 25 in Copenhaver, Hermetica, 81-82.
27 Ibid.
29 Ascl. 26 in Copenhaver, Hermetica, 82-83.
convenient for religionist and scholar alike to situate Theosophy outside of the
thoroughfare of Western thought. That so many themes and motifs of gnostic
Hermetism could resurface in such manifestly ‘modern’ garb, with such alacrity,
and, above all else, to such tremendous popular acclaim, is a profoundly disquieting
notion for those enamoured of the idea that the march of scientific rationalism gained
inexorable momentum in the years following 1859.32

Even from the few isolated examples listed supra, it is surely obvious that the
Hermetic strains in modern Theosophy deserve singular analysis. Indeed, it is not
improbable that as a ‘history of ideas’ project, this should be the priority concern for
historians of Theosophy. Only thus will the locus of Blavatskian (and even, perhaps,
Leadbeaterian) conceptual mapping be properly determined, and Theosophy be
welcomed *sui generis* into the company of its Hermetic forebears and consequently
brought fully into the light of impartial scholarship. For the present research, though,
it suffices to observe that Blavatsky’s engagement with the *Hermetica* was profound,
and that she incorporated many of its mythemes into her own Theosophical synthesis.
If such is the case, then is it not also likely that she found in the figure of Hermes
Trismegistus himself the ideal prototypical Master?

The term ‘gnostic Hermetism’ might appear odd to those who believe that gnosticism (and even
historical Gnosticism) presupposes an absolute ontological dualism. Certainly, there are ‘pessimistic’
dualist elements in the *Hermetica*, but they are maintained in a healthy tension with the optimistic
creation-affirming elements (and Blavatskian Theosophy could not ever honestly be deemed dualistic,
nor readily incorporate any such philosophy). It appears that the recent trend in scholarship is to de­
emphasise the (if the term may be forgiven) singularity of dualism to gnosticism. Gilles Quispel has
even attempted to drive a wedge between those two previously inseparable words, ‘Manichaean
dualism’:

Manichaicism in its original and authentic form is gnostic and hellenistic and
owes very little to Iran. It is a myth of the Self, *dualitudo* rather than dualism
(Gilles Quispel, ‘Hermes Trismegistus and the Origins of Gnosticism’ in*

In this context see also Ioan P. Culianu, “The Angels of the Nations and the Origins of Gnostic
Dualism” in R. van den Broek & M. J. Vermaseren, eds., *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic
Religions: presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, E. J. Brill, Leiden,
1981, 78-91. For a concise overview of the differences between historical Gnosticism and Hermetism
see Roelof van den Broek, ‘Gnosticism and Hermetism in Antiquity: Two Roads to Salvation’ in van
den Broek & Hanegraaff, eds., *Gnosis and Hermeticism*, 1-20.

It is rare that a year is remembered primarily for the publication of a book: C. Darwin, *On the
Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the
Struggle for Life*. By Charles Darwin, M.A., Fellow of the Royal, Geological, Linnaean, etc.
Societies; author of ‘Journal of Researches During H. M. S. Beagle’s Voyage Round the World’, John
Fowden's compelling thesis - that the Hermetic texts were a consonance of native religionisms and the Hellenistic idiom - has interesting ideational parallels to the Theosophical corpus. Fowden has suggested that Græco-Roman paganism, encumbered by its legacy of cultic decentralisation and competing philosophical schools, found in the Oriental texts the revelatory solution to the problem of authority. In a cultural matrix which sponsored ever more baroque syncretisms, 'it was only a matter of time before somebody thought of combining the divine authority of the oracle with the systematic reasoning of the philosopher', and the Hermetica provided the ideal template. The unitive quality of the Hermetica ensured that pronunciamenti concerning ontology, eschatology, soteriology, and teleology could be bound together, and presented as having issued from a divine warrant. As unitive discourse and revealed doctrine the Hermetica are 'unique in the pagan sphere', and, although their influence may have been less pronounced at the time than that of Pythagoras, the Chaldean Oracles or the Orphic poems, their capacity to present a tertium quid to cultic praxis and philosophical theoria would ensure they were ideally placed to mediate during future periods of conflict between the (ontic?) sparring partners, Church and School. (A compelling irony is the certainty that the life of the Hermetica was almost extinguished in its infancy by another Oriental revelatory system, Christianity. However, the latent doctrinal authoritarianism and ecclesiastical exclusivism which soon became a defining feature of the new cultus, in attempting to suppress the Hermetic gnosis, characteristically ensured its posterity).

The capacious mediational potential of the Hermetica was intuited by Blavatsky and brought to bear upon the epistemological dilemmas of her own era in a curiously analogous way to that described by Fowden. The rhetoric of Church and Academy, as Blavatsky saw it, had adumbrated the spiritual vision of humanity. Christianity ('Churchianity') had been denuded of its transformative potentialities, its mythos denied. Certainly the Zeitgeist - if not the Holy Ghost - now appeared 'to bloweth'

almost exclusively extra-ecclesially, making any return to Biblical sureties a matter of


Ibid., 215.

Ibid.

Blavatsky often employed the derogatory term 'Churchianity': cf., eg., Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VIII, 296-297; vol. X, 164, 243; vol. XII, 28, 268-270.
an unattractive blend of *pathos* and *bathos*. Philosophical materialism and scientific rationalism proffered no more attractive option; the world, denuded of its spiritual sheath, offered no solace to counter the uncertainties of a coolly mechanistic universe. It seemed to Blavatsky that the gods had indeed departed from ‘the temple of the whole world’ and that the void created by their absence would likely be filled by a bastard scientism possessed of no transformative powers whatsoever. What was required was an inspirational figure who could open up the infinite by beckoning from beyond and inviting the aspirant over the threshold. Yet the problems which inhere within any exclusively immanentist or transcendent model of divinity weighed against all traditionalist exemplars and convinced Blavatsky that the answer she so desperately sought would be found, rather, at the interstices of both.

Blavatsky turned for inspiration to the referential corpus of Western esotericism, and there intuited that the man-god she needed had been invoked throughout the centuries in epistemologically-trying times under the *persona* of Hermes. A nineteenth-century Hermes, though, would require significant rearticulation to embrace the skepticism and cynicism of her era. He could no longer occupy an undifferentiated mesocosm inhabited equally by myth and fable: it was an age of facts, and *he would have to be one.* If Hermes' ontic 'otherness' could not be constructed by reference to the apparatus of myth, it could be maintained geographically and culturally (in hallowed fashion) by locating him in the absolute alterity of the East. Significantly, the East had never lost its function as the font of divine revelation, nor its reputation for authoritative syntheses of religion and philosophy - indeed, exactly the sorts of thing Blavatsky planned to inculcate in the Western imaginal.

9 The use of the term 'threshold' necessarily reminds the reader of the liminality of Hermes. The descriptive 'liminal' has not been employed within the body of the text as much recent scholarship has tended to employ the term primarily in metasemiotic terms; the present author finds such a use methodologically suspect. One is reminded of Beidelman's injunction: 'I also urge that we avoid global explanatory terms, such as Turner's communitas and liminality' (T. O. Beidelman, 'The Moral Imagination of the Kaguru: Some Thoughts on Tricksters, Translation and Comparative Analysis' in Hynes & Doty, eds., *Mythical Trickster Figures*, 191).

Blavatsky lamented the reductionism which was meted out upon mythology in her times: Legends, myths, allegories, symbols, if they but belong to the Hindu, Chaldean, or Egyptian tradition, are thrown into the same heap of fiction. Hardly are they honored ... Is this justice to either the past, the present, or the future? (Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. II, 431).
Blavatsky's Hermes became the Theosophical Master. It might be argued - by those who reject the Masters' ontology - that Blavatsky employed overt reductionism, indeed Euhemerism, in marginalising the mythic potentialities of Hermes by steadfastly maintaining the physical existence of her Masters at the cost of their metaphysical valencies. (There is some truth in such a claim, though a degree of mitigation is provided by the short odds of Blavatsky's success in an era characterised by an ever-deepening cynicism. She understood intuitively that her society would be more likely to accept a god-like man than a man-like God). Yet, upon closer inspection, it seems

40 One is reminded of Fowden's comment that 'in fact, if Hermes had not existed he would have had to be invented': Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 187. For Blavatsky's purposes, it might be said, he needed to be incarnated.
that Blavatsky’s project is more akin to a counter-Euhemerism.41 She recognised that heretofore divine processes had already been reduced to mechanistic procedures and deterministic outcomes by the new epistemologies brought in the wake of Enlightenment-consciousness.42 Her own riposte, Theosophy, was an attempt to reinvest the human animal with its Hermetic gnostic spark, and thereby re-enchant the

41 Intriguingly, a similar counter-Euhemerism is still employed to a large degree in the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt, a Church with which Blavatsky was well acquainted (for which see infra ch. 24). In a number of Coptic churches, among the small shrines around the nave (for the veneration of saints and relics) there is a shrine to ‘St. Asclepius’. St. Asclepius does not appear in the official Coptic Synaxarion, nor in the Difnar (a Coptic martyrology and contemplative text), but is nevertheless regarded by a number of Copts as the bringer of language (hieroglyphs and, interestingly, Coptic itself) and medicine. One priest well known to the present author, Abouna Tadros El-Bakhoumi, has noted that Thoth/Asclepius - the characters are merged - was responsible for bringing surgery to the ancient Egyptians. He considered that such techniques of surgery were far in advance of modern forms. The reference to Thoth/Asclepius as a ‘saint’ of surgery is not insignificant as Hermes is, in certain obvious ways, a god of healing, capable of ‘mending the fabric of life’; i.e., resolving conflict. (It is also not immaterial that a remarkably large percentage of prosperous Copts are doctors and pharmacists - thus St. Asclepius/Thoth is maintained as something of a ‘personal’ deity of the Copts, who consider themselves the real ‘sons of the pharaohs’ - in contrast, they believe, to the Arab invaders). In this context Meinardus’ comments are particularly apposite: In the VIIIth century B.C., popular devotion raised Imhotep to the status of a demigod, and finally, during the Hellenistic Era, he became deified under the name of Imouthes and identified with Aesculapius. He was invoked as a god and was believed to visit suffering people during their sleep and heal their diseases (Otto F. A. Meinardus, Christian Egypt Faith and Life. The American University of Cairo Press, Cairo, 1970, 220-221).

Another saint unknown to the Coptic Synaxarion is Abû Tarbû (or Abû Tarabû), whose special provenance is the curing of hydrophobia (rabies). The Service of Abû Tarbû involves seven loaves, seven dates, seven cheeses, and seven prepubescent boys. Seven prayers are recited by the priest, and the boys circle the diseased party seven times with arms joined. It is not improbable that Abû Tarbû, identified with St. Therapon, is a personification of healing (Qerapeiuw), which indicates the propensity within the Coptic Church for survivals of pagan antiquity to remain within popular piety. The present Patriarch, Pope Shenouda III, has suppressed the Service of Abû Tarbû and removed it from authorised translations of Coptic service books for the communities in diaspora. For the Service see Emile Galtier, ‘La Rage en Egypte - Vie de Saint Tarabo’ in Bulletin de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, vol. IV, 1905, 112-127; Werner Vycichl, ‘Magic’ in Aziz S. Atiya, ed., The Coptic Encyclopedia, vol. 5, Macmillan, New York, 1991, 1499-1509.

It is interesting to consider that the process of Christian counter-Euhemerism undertaken by the Copts has allowed for the rather seamless fusion of certain distinct Gnostico-Hermetic traits with a rigorous, even occasionally militant, Christian orthodoxy. Much of the responsibility for this characteristic can be traced to the extraordinary authority of monastics in Coptic life: Pachomian monks (such as Fr. Tadros El-Bakhoumi, supra) appear always to have insisted on the maintenance of native tradition and theology. That Thoth/Hermes should have prevailed - indeed, been newly venerated - under the guise of Christian hagiology is a tribute to the tenacity of both Hermes and the monks (though it perhaps would not please the latter to know it). Of course, it is highly likely an identical tenacity in the Pachomian community of the late fourth century is responsible for the survival of the Nag Hammadi library - itself a repository of crucial Hermetic materials.

42 It should be noted that Blavatsky did espouse an overt Euhemerism in her macrohistory: The chief gods and heroes of the Fourth and Fifth Races, as of later antiquity, are the deified images of these men of the Third (Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, vol. II, 172).

This usage in no way undermines the thesis that she employed a sort of counter-Euhemerism with regard to the Masters.
cosmos. Yet Blavatsky was fully enamoured of the critical apparatus of modernity - committed though she was to premodern epistemologies - and sought to reconstruct her occultistic gnosis not only as the *prisca theologia* but as the *theologia civilis*. In describing the latter, David Walsh's comments are curiously apposite to Blavatsky:

It [*theologia civilis*] would have to perform the same existential role as Christianity, and [yet] remain fully supportive of the Promethean humanist spirit of the age.63

That Blavatsky had decided upon the centrality of Hermetism to her endeavour was obvious from as early as the publication of *Isis Unveiled*:

This mystery of first creation, which was ever the despair of science, is unfathomable, unless we accept the doctrine of the Hermetists.44

She was fully familiar with the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Asclepius*, and kept abreast throughout her life of new texts and commentaries as they became available.45 (It is by no means insignificant that early members of the Theosophical Society were


44 Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. i, 429. It is worth noting that Blavatsky included a variant of this statement in *The Secret Doctrine*. The changes are illuminating:

On page 429 of *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I., we said that 'the mystery of first creation, which was ever the despair of Science, is unfathomable unless they (the Scientists) accept the doctrine of hermes. They will have to follow in the footsteps of the Hermetists'. Our prophecy begins to assert itself (id., *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I., 625, emphasis in original).

45 References to the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Asclepius* (spelled variously by Blavatsky) are legion throughout her œuvre. She made a point of procuring new versions, such as the 1884 edition of *The Divine Pymander* (George Redway, London), which employed John Everard’s 1650 translation from the Arabic with a new introduction by Hargrave Jennings. She also quoted from Anna Bonus Kingsford’s and Edward Maitland’s *The Hermetic Works: the Virgin of the World of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus. Now first rendered into English with essay, introduction and notes* (George Redway, London, 1885) in her *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, 281 et passim. There is no doubt that Blavatsky mined the *Hermetica* rather thoroughly.
among the first to translate and popularise the *Hermetica* for a modern readership). Yet no significant studies have noted that the gnosticism at the core of the *Hermetica* was perfectly suited to assist in Blavatsky’s objective of wresting Promethean fire from the materialists and transmuting it into the ‘divine spark within man’. Further, no scholar, it appears, has considered that the figure of Hermes Trismegistus was at least as influential upon Blavatskian imaging as the texts ascribed to him. Such an oversight is somewhat remarkable given the hints which she occasionally, if covertly, volunteered:

> Thot-Hermes is a generic name ... It is not the proper name of any one living man, but a generic title of many adepts

Blavatsky’s stratified Theosophical cosmos presupposes that all humans are situated along an optimistically-inclined evolutionary path - yet the pilgrimage back to primordial Spirit is likely to occupy many thousands of lifetimes. However, central to the Theosophical endeavour is the contention (*contra* Spiritualism) that individual ante-mortem spiritual advance is both possible and desirable. Consequently, the enlightened esotericist is able to shorten the trajectory of his or her personal development by stepping upon the path to Master-ship. The Masters, significantly, provide the template for conscious evolution - a quest personified in the figure of Trismegistus whose own divinity is self-generated through heavenly ascent. Following his *theosis*, the man-god Hermes undertook the necessary countervailing descent by returning to the sensible world in order to convey the secrets of his own

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divinisation. So, too, the Masters benevolently deign to assist those few aspirants possessed of sufficient insight and resourcefulness to initiate the journey to the ‘Deifying Vision’ within. The ascent/descent figuration of the *Hermetica* is thus exactly reproduced in Blavatskian Theosophy; there is no need to search for Oriental Bodhisattvas when Blavatsky’s Hermesian modelling is fully acknowledged.⁴⁹

The aretalogies of Hermes note that he is most often found when unsought, and seen most readily in twilight. Aside from the more obvious parallels with the mercurial Masters - whose own visitations to the faithful Theosophists were nothing if not frustratingly capricious⁵⁰ - it might be noted that Hermes’ appearance at half-light underscores his capacity to synthesize otherwise opposing dualities. He exists in order to illuminate the pathway to unexpected passages. This function is precisely that which Blavatsky arrogated unto her Masters, for their primary soteriological task is to provide a living example of a sophiology not dependent upon institutionalised religion or science; they, like Hermes, incarnate the necessity for a *tertium quid*. In this context, Faivre’s comments are apposite:

A Hermesian reading of the world is necessarily a plural reading.

The caduceus of Hermes is plural because it is constituted of a bipolarity whose symbolism reflects back to a ternary.⁵¹

The caduceus of the Masters is *Theosophy itself*. Encircled by what Blavatsky believed to be the narcissistic authoritarianism of Church and Academy, the Masters point to a synthesis of *pistis* and *sophia* beyond the visible horizon. Thus the dialecticism for which Hermes is so ably fitted was exploited to the full in the

⁴⁹ It should be remembered that the two most significant tasks ascribed to Hermes in innumerable accounts are that of escorting certain souls to Hades, and searching for others there and returning them to the land of the living (indeed, to life). See Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes*, 14.

⁵⁰ It is a rather intriguing exercise to note the number of occasions during which the Theosophical Masters appeared at dawn or dusk.

The Masters' Theosophy, in a classically Hermesian enterprise, is, for all of its staunchly nineteenth-century iconography, a rearticulation and recirculation of old ideas. Blavatsky mined the esotericisms of the past - as well as such novelties as comparative mythology - in order to construct an account of the travails of the *philosophia perennis* over the ages. Yet the resulting schema appears surprisingly, and deceptively, modern in its method and detail. The writings of the Masters (which, in effect, comprise the entirety of the Theosophical canon: *Isis Unveiled*, the Mahatma letters, *The Secret Doctrine*) are replete with the scientific idiom of the Victorian age, but are more structurally akin to the Gnostic-Hermetic religiosities of the ancient world. This play of appearances, of verisimilitude, highlights the Hermesian art-of-seeming which stands behind the sombre faces of Blavatsky's Masters. When the Masters made history into mythology, and mythology into history, they became none other than Harlequin - in a turban.

It is characteristic of Hermes that a part of his playfulness is devolved upon the dynamic of disclosure; he hints at treasure but inevitably withholds the prize. So, too, for the Theosophical Master, whose task is to some degree a propædeutical one - to whet the aspirant's appetite and to encourage ever deeper commitment. Part of the reason that the Theosophical Society gained and shed members so readily under Blavatsky was that the promise of real chelaship under a personal Master never eventuated (at least for the vast majority of members). This situation, for which Blavatsky herself cannot but be held accountable, ensured the inevitable ascendency

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[52] The presence of an Hegelian dialectic (influenced heavily, of course, by Boehme) in Blavatskian Theosophy links her with other historical generalists, notable Marx. A predicate for both systems is the conviction that collective progress can be intuited historically, and thus that forecasting is possible or even necessary. The common element is that of a progressivist eschatology: the process of history will result in ultimate collective transformation. David Walsh has noted the 'Hermetic background':

The theme of man as magus, as co-creator with God, as the shaper of his own being and the god of the material world, has reached its conclusion in Marx's evocation of the socialist secular messiah (Walsh, 'A Mythology of Reason', 163).


[53] As the mouthpiece for the Masters, Blavatsky directly and indirectly encouraged the desire in her associates to share in her good fortune: chelaship. Although she was not primarily responsible for the publication of Sinnett's *The Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism* (which popularised the Masters for the general readership), she certainly enjoyed the successes which followed.
of a man like Leadbeater whose avowed psychism obviated the necessity for physical contact with the Brotherhood. Yet Blavatsky’s Hermesian template for the Masters was much misunderstood - no doubt partly because of her own vanity (exhibited in crowd-pleasing phenomena) and hubris (the escalation, in the face of skeptical criticism, of her polemical assurances about the reality of her Masters). The real prize had less to do with finding a Master than with becoming one, and for the latter the physical existence of the Brotherhood, paradoxically, was not nearly as significant as the teachings ascribed to it. This last notion is of paramount importance and underscores Blavatsky’s profound reliance upon the dynamics of divine authority exhibited by the Hermetic treatises.

It has been noted supra that Hermes is to be found in the remains, or the effluvium of his activity. Blavatsky was well aware that all of the Theosophists ‘ripe for chelaship’ would seek for the Masters, searching as modern Parzivals in quest of the Grail of True Knowledge - indeed one, the young Dâmодar, would become the Galahad for the Society, having ‘passed over’ into Shamballah. Yet the Hermesian Masters were deceptive to the end and had, in fact, retreated into the remains of their activity (and Hermes’ first gift), language. Like Hermes, the Masters were not content for long to undergo scrutiny, and soon faded from view, choosing instead to vivify their written teachings with their own semi-divine presence, thus making scriptures of the Theosophical canon. The most intriguing observation about this process was that it was by no means the first time that Hermes had purposefully effaced himself with his own progeny, discourse: in The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth, it can be shown that he did much the same thing. Tellingly, this particular second-century C.E. Hermetic tractate was not discovered until 1945 among the Nag Hammadi library, and thus certainly was unavailable to Blavatsky.

The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth (or The Ogdoad Reveals the Ennead) is the record of an Hermetic initiation during which the initiand, having undergone

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54 For Dâmódar’s (probable) demise, cf. infra Appendix B. Interestingly, the influence of the Hermetica on the Grail legend may be direct, especially upon Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Parzival of 1210. See Henry Kahane & Renée Kahane, The Krater and the Grail: Hermetic Sources of the Parzival, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1965.

55 The phrase is Tilley’s: see Tilley, ‘Derrida’s reading’, 17.
instruction and prayer, experiences the ‘Deifying Vision’ at the hands of a mystagogue, Hermes Trismegistus. Following the initiation (into the eight and ninth spheres), Hermes instructs his student to ‘write this book for the temple at Diospolis in hieroglyphic characters, entitling it “The Eighth Reveals the Ninth”’. Hermes further informs his charge to inscribe the hieroglyphics on turquoise steles to be placed in the sanctuary, and gives him elaborate details about their construction, installation, and keeping. Finally, an oath is to be included in the book:

And write an oath in the book, lest those who read the book bring the language into abuse and not (use it) to oppose the acts of fate. Rather, they should submit to the law of God, without having transgressed at all, but in purity asking God for wisdom and knowledge. And he who will not be begotten at the start by God comes to be by the general and guiding discourses. He will not be able to read the things written in this book, although his conscience is pure within him, since he does not do anything shameful, nor does he consent to it. Rather, by stages he advances and enters into the way of immortality. And thus he enters into the understanding of the eighth that reveals the ninth. 

For the present purposes, the most crucial phrase regarding the book and steles is that which concerns language:

My son, it is proper to write this book on steles of turquoise, in hieroglyphic characters. For Mind himself has become overseer of these.

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6 For details of The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth see supra 499n12.
8 Ibid., VI.6.61.25 - 62.21 (p. 326).
9 Ibid., VI.6.62.23 - 63.15 (p. 326).
10 Ibid., VI.6.61.25 - 62.1 (p. 326).
That 'Mind' is commonly synonymous with Hermes in this tractate is signified by several earlier uses in the same document. It is apparent that Hermes, the inventor and interpreter of words, has transmuted himself into his progeny, and reinforced the now-inherent sanctity of the language by having it placed in the naos of his own temple.

Richard Reitzenstein has posited the notion of the 'literary mystery' for various of the philosophical Hermetica. Accordingly, the divinity is immanent in the initiatory texts themselves, and, through reading, the latent divinity is released to activate the numinous and otherwise ineffable experience of initiation in the actual initiand, the reader. Such a process does not dismiss the possibility that the account is the record of a previous initiation in the Hermetic community (just as finding the Master in the text of the Theosophical canon in no way disproves Blavatsky's claims about physical Masters instructing certain privileged Theosophists), but expands its initiatory potential

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61 *Contrá* Valantasis who maintains that '[t]he supervisor of the account (both of the initiation and of the production of the text) is the Mind: it is significantly not the divinity (Hermes, or Trismegistus), nor is it the newly divinized initiate': Valantasis, *Spiritual Guides*, 101. Yet Valantasis had earlier noted (in reference to an explicit identification of Hermes with Mind in the text) that '[t]he mind may be within the guide as well as continuing to move other souls': in ibid., 95. Fowden is convinced of the identification: Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 105, 110. Mahé has stated: 'the disciple starts praying to Hermes who, from then onward, has become identical with the Self-Begotten Intellect' (Jean-Pierre Mahé, 'A Reading of the Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead (Nag Hammadi Codex VI.6)' in van den Broek & Hanegraaff, eds., *Gnosis and Hermeticism*, 80) - but cf. Dan Merkur, 'Stages of Ascension in Hermetic Rebirth', <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/Merkur.html>, downloaded 8 May 2000, 88.

62 The belief in the location of a god, particularly Hermes, within a statue (as opposed to the Asclepian theurgic sense of the god being called down upon a statue) was not uncommon in the classical world: Hermes was the patron of crafts: the 'hermoglyphic techne' was the art of a sculptor, the phrase 'Hermes in the stone', a reference to the potential shape that the artist might discover within the raw materials (William J. Hynes, 'Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Tricksters: A Heuristic Guide' in Hynes & Doty, eds., *Mythical Trickster Figures*, 64).

Interestingly, Blavatsky was well aware of the tradition and wrote an extended article on the subject, entitled, tellingly, 'Animated Statues': H. P. Blavatsky, 'Animates Statues' in *The Theosophist*, VIII:86, November, 1886, 65-73.


64 Fowden has taken exception to Reitzenstein's 'reading mysteries', characterising the idea as 'desk-bound religion': Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 149. Certainly, Reitzenstein is rather declarative in assuming that the texts are to be read primarily, or even solely, in this way. In fact, there appears to be insufficient historiographical record to assume anything about their primary purpose as literature, which is not to say that Fowden is thus not overly dismissive of Reitzenstein's hypothesis.
beyond the personal narrative and into an atemporalised readership. Even here, Hermes will have his tricks. Having become language, and performing his mystagogical function via the text itself, he disingenuously speaks of its ineffectiveness in communicating noetic experience - yet it is precisely to engender such experience that he had ‘textualised’ in the first place:

[Hermes:] I have said, my son, that I am Mind. I have seen! Language is not able to reveal this. For the entire eighth, my son, and the souls that are in it, and the angels, sing a hymn in silence. And I, Mind, understand.

[Tat:] What is the way to sing a hymn through it (silence)?

[Hermes:] Have you become such that you cannot be spoken to?

[Tat:] I am silent, my father. I want to sing a hymn to you while I am silent.

[Hermes:] Then sing it, for I am Mind.

[Tat:] I understand Mind, Hermes, who cannot be interpreted, because he keeps within himself.

The dissembling does not end there. It should be noted, even when Hermes has metamorphosed into language, he has yet another veil of seeming: the language of the steles is hieratic, not demotic, and is thus an encoded text. The initiation is unavailable, then, for those who are uninitiated into language itself - who cannot

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65 Lack of historical and sociological documenta has meant that no firm conclusions can be made regarding the existence and forms of the Hermetic community. Valantasis has maintained that:

The texts strategically create particular guides to promulgate their understanding of formation within specific cultural and religious traditions. The guides and the relationships result from textual strategies, not from a description of historical reality (Valantasis, Spiritual Guides, 150-151).

Fowden, in his 1993 preface to The Egyptian Hermes, specifically mentions Valantasis’ thesis, which he rejects categorically: ‘I persist in thinking there is more to life than literature’ (Fowden, The Egyptian Hermes, xix). Yet one suspects that Valantasis is not reducing the texts to literature as much as elevating them to scripture - exactly the sort of scripture which Fowden’s posited ‘Hermetic community’ would likely have recorded and employed. There is no reason to suspect that both interpretations are not viable: indeed, were Hermes himself to oversee the debate, one presumes he would plead for as broad a hermeneutic as manageable. (For another model of the ‘Hermetic community’, this time emphasising Jewish patterning, see Birger A. Pearson, Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1990, 136-147).

66 Although the name of the initiand is absent from the tractate, it is likely from similar Corpus Hermeticum treatises that the name would be ‘Tat’ (a contraction of ‘Thoth’). See Valantasis, Spiritual Guides, 86; also Fowden, The Egyptian Hermes, 110. The name had been employed here primarily for convenience and comparative purposes.

interpret the hieroglyphs. The (priestly) language is in the (priests’) sanctuary; itself holy, it demands holiness in all aspirants: it will announce itself only to the esoteric elite.

Blavatsky knew very well the interrelationships between Hermes and sacred language:

The story about Enoch, told by Josephus, namely, that he had concealed under the pillars of Mercury or Seth his precious rolls or books, is the same as that told of Hermes, ‘the father of wisdom’, who concealed his books of Wisdom under a pillar, and then, finding the two pillars of stone, found the science written thereon.68

Blavatsky’s ‘books of Wisdom’ were a career spent in fostering an alternative paradigm of human origins and destiny. Her Theosophy was a reasoned and systematic response to what she saw as the curse of materialism: dislocation of persons from themselves, one another, and the cosmos. Yet as a realist she was well aware that she required an authority for her dictates which only a higher power could provide. The ontological ambivalence of Hermes, who was empowered (through his own divinisation) to impart the secrets of heavenly ascent to others and was thus the ideal oracle, was rearticulated as the Master - a man whose own efforts had achieved for him both a meta-empirical ontology and an unassailable authority. As a thoroughly nineteenth-century Hermes, however, he had to parry somewhat with science, and one of the requirements for this task was that he be seen to be more a ‘man of science’ even than his detractors; hence, the Master should be no mere god, but a real man.69

Typically for Hermesian entities, Blavatsky’s Masters were themselves ever-mobile, and soon ceased to appear in the flesh - much to the chagrin of the many thousands of aspiring chelas. Where were Theosophists to go for the longed-for words of wisdom and comfort? They need not have worried, for the Masters had provided massive Theosophical scriptures into which their nous had descended. In an avowedly Hermesian artifice, the mystical distant Shamballah of the Masters was thus made available to the esoteric elite (Theosophists) in the many thousands of pages of Masters’ letters and teachings - the irony, of course, is that is where it had always been.

69 Blavatsky’s occultistic gnosticism (see supra ch. 14) can be understood in the same way.
When Theosophists read their scriptures, they employ a hermeneutic that is informed by the existence of the Masters. They may never meet one, but this is now of little ultimate concern - for the Theosophical texts which bear the Masters’ imprint and imprimatur now perform the same function. They are the psychopompoi who lead souls on their journey through each incarnation. The Masters are now effaced by their own progeny, Theosophy. The question of the historicity of the Masters is thus entirely circumscribed by the value of the texts as ‘reading mysteries’. A more interesting question, surely, is who exactly did Hermes inhabit: the Master or the Madame?

Leadbeater and the Animation of Statues

If Blavatsky’s œuvre is characterised by extraordinary erudition, particularly with regard to the literature of esotericism, the same cannot be claimed for Leadbeater. For such a massive body of work, the first and most startling observation to be made is its very lack of reference to anterior esotericisms. Yet the poverty of sources is more comprehensible when it is remembered that Leadbeater’s primary tool (one which, unlike much of Blavatsky’s methodology, was unfalsifiable) was clairvoyance. He maintained consonance with Blavatsky by remaining for the most part within the idiomatic structures of her Theosophy but there is no indication he was ever more than superficially informed about her sources.

There are scant references to the Hermetica in Leadbeater’s publications. Where mentioned, the ‘Books of Hermes’ are simply noted as an antique example of the Ancient Wisdom, with little or no accompanying explanation. The most substantial reference to Hermes is as part of the chain of authorities who bore the torch of the philosophia perennis. In his 1913 clairvoyant Genesis, Man: Whence, How and Whither, Leadbeater considered Hermes to have been the Mahāguru:

It was to [the Egyptians] that the Mahāguru came as Tehuti or Thoth, called later by the Greeks Hermes ... And to the people He gave as

\[\text{430}\]
motto: 'Thou art the Light. Let that Light shine'. And He set that
motto round the pylon in a great Temple, running up one pillar, and
across the bar, and down the other pillar. And this was inscribed
over the doors of houses, and little models were made of the pylon
on which He had inscribed it, models in precious metals, and also in
baked clay, so that the poorest could buy little blue clay models,
with brown veins running through them, and glazed. 71

By 1926, and at the height of the expectation of the Coming, the vision was
rearticulated to encapsulate overt references to Co-Masonry and, significantly, the
office of the Bodhisattva (or World-Teacher):

It was to [the Egyptians] about 40,000 B.C. that the World-Teacher
came forth from the White Lodge, bearing the name Tehuti or Thoth,
called later by the Greeks Hermes: He founded the outer cult of the
Egyptian Gods and restored the Mysteries to the splendour of
byegone days. 72

Leadbeater's nomination of Hermes as the World-Teacher places the latter in a
distinctly Theosophical ambit; indeed, as the World-Teacher is articulated as something
of an Arch-Master, 73 the imputation is clear that Hermes is a prototype of what was to
be expected of Krishnamurti (a latter-day World-Teacher).

It has been noted supra that Leadbeater's promotion of Krishnamurti as the Vehicle for
the Coming should not be interpreted as Theosophical messianic expectation, but rather

71 Leadbeater, Man: Whence, How and Whither, 284-286. The motif of the 'pillars of Hermes' was
common mythological coin for the Mediterranean basin, and need not have been mediated to Leadbeater
by any close reading of the aretalogies or the Hermetica. Indeed, as the present author has discovered,
such clay models as Leadbeater described are still widely available to tourists in Egypt (in fact, it is
not impossible that Leadbeater is describing such pieces as he himself might have seen in his 1884
visit to Alexandria in the train of Blavatsky).

72 Leadbeater, Glimpses of Masonic History, 28.

73 The easiest analogy is that of ecclesial office. In Leadbeaterian Theosophy, a Master is presented as
a parish priest - he has a particular orbit of influence and is under obedience to a superior, yet enjoys
much autonomy. The World-Teacher (or Bodhisattva), the Manu, and the Mahachohan (on the next
level of initiation, the eighth) enjoy much greater power and can be considered in episcopal terms as
Archbishops or Metropolitans. They oversee those Masters directly beneath them and are accorded
much greater authority. Thus, when the Bodhisattva descends - or incarnates - he has semi-global
authority and purview. Leadbeater himself noted that '[t]he great World-Teacher might be described as
as an occultistic experiment in 'Master-making'. The theurgic connotations of this process are interestingly reminiscent of the famous 'god-making' passages of the Hermetic Asclepius (Asc. 23-23, 37-39). Trismegistus informs Asclepius of the Egyptian priests' power to animate statues:

Just as the master and father - or god, to use his most august name - is maker of the heavenly gods, so it is mankind who fashions the temple gods who are content to be near humans. Not only is mankind glorified; he glorifies as well. He not only advances toward god; he also makes the gods strong. Are you surprised, Asclepius?

Asclepius was not the only one surprised. Even the most sophisticated hermeneutical exegesis of the Renaissance Hermetists could not overcome the glaring contradiction between this passage and the Exodus injunction against the production of graven images. Indeed, Hermes had been nothing if not declarative:

I mean statues ensouled and conscious, filled with spirit and doing great deeds; statues that foreknow the future and predict it by lots, by prophecy, by dreams and by many other means; statues that make people ill and cure them, bringing them pain and pleasure as each

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74 It could be argued that the entire project of presenting a young child as the 'Vehicle' for the great sage World-Teacher, the Bodhisattva-Maitreya, was but another characteristically Hermesian reference. The traditional paradoxicality of Hermes is often reflected in similar iconographic contrasts. In the Mediterranean context there exists, e.g., the classical juxtapositioning of two different personae of Hermes: the sphēnōpōgōn (an elderly man with a wedge-shaped beard) and the achnous (a beardless baby or youth). For examples see Hynes, 'Mapping the Characteristics', 48ff. Further, the ambivalent ontology of Hermes might be detected in Leadbeater's claim that his Masters could simultaneously project themselves onto the various planes of existence, no less than in the fact that the great cosmic Bodhisattva might concurrently oversee much of the cosmos as well as teach through the mouth of a young itinerant Theosophist. Indeed, it might be said that the vagarious explanations for the descent of the Lord Maitreya occasionally have greater Hermesian echoes than Christological ones.

76 Copenhaver, Hermetica, 80-81, 89-91.

77 Recent studies have shown that the theurgic and 'purely' contemplative strands in the Hermetica can happily live coevally. It is rarely acknowledged that in the Asclepius, Trismegistus vouchsafes both by means of his divine sanction: see Fowden, The Egyptian Hermes, 142-153. The work of the Coptic Magical Texts Project of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity on 'Coptic Texts of Ritual Power' has observed that the religion vs. theurgy division is a modern anachronism: see, particularly, Marvin Meyer & Richard Smith, eds., Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power, HarperSanFrancisco, [San Francisco], 1994. As an aside, it might be noted that the ability for an esotericism to absorb both the theologian and the contemplative is nowhere better displayed than in Theosophy's hallowing of Blavatsky and Leadbeater.
deserves.78

It could certainly be argued that, at least on an allegorical level, Leadbeater was attempting to do the self-same thing to such ossified ‘statues’ as the Christian Church and the Masonic Lodge. The Liberal Catholic Church and Co-Masonry were ‘animated’ by calling down into them the power and presence of the Masters (the Lord Maitreya and the Master the Count, respectively), thus reconsecrating exoteric bodies, devoid of ‘a god’, into esoteric ones, ensouled by a god/Master.79

Leadbeater’s ‘Master-making’, first of Krishnamurti and then of the initiates of the Egyptian Rite, is, however, a step removed from the Asclepius-like ‘ensouling’ of the Liberal Catholic Church and Co-Masonry. By the time of the inauguration of the Egyptian Rite - following what is considered to be Krishnamurti’s apostasy but was, rather, his reluctance to allow Leadbeater’s Theosophical theurgy to operate on him - Leadbeater had arrogated unto himself all of the powers inhering in the Brotherhood. Having ‘become’ a Master himself (that is, being divinised, Theosophically), and having usurped the Masters’ traditional privilege of being the sole agents of ingress to the Brotherhood, Leadbeater had no need to call upon exterior agency to ensoul organisations or persons. His power was no longer contingent, it was essential,

79 There is no intention here to suggest that Leadbeater was making direct or indirect reference to the Asclepius in his activities. In fact there seems little reason to believe he was familiar with the text - even allowing for its wide currency in esoteric circles. Rather, the intention is to suggest something of a typological dynamic of Hermeticism which might have carried down into Leadbeater’s conceptions via his reliance on Blavatsky (and through her, other streams of esotericism), or which may be in some way symptomatic of theurgical thinking as a whole. This last possibility lies well beyond the scope of the present research.

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actual, and generative. He could now do the god-making himself.80

80 There are not insignificant parallels between Leadbeater's 'creation' of Masters (via the Egyptian Rite, *inter alia*) and the creation of souls as formulated by various Renaissance Hermetic magi, notably Lodovico Lazzarelli. Hanegraaff's expostulation of Lazzarelli's belief (based in part on the latter's experience of Giovanni 'Mercurio' da Correggio (?1451-?), the self-identified 'Hermetic Christ') in the supremacy of Christian Hermeticism over pagan Hermetism is of crucial significance for an appreciation of the development of a truly pious Christian theurgy in the Renaissance. Now reconciled with the Father, through the atonement sponsored by the cross, the Christian magus could undergo a *theosis* which (he believed) was unavailable to the pagan Hermetists who had had the misfortune to live *ante gracia*: see Hanegraaff, 'Sympathy', passim; cf. also Vickers, 'Analogy versus Identity', 118-119; Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993. As Hanegraaff noted:

All things considered, there is nothing too surprising about the fact that Lazzarelli's teaching culminates in the making of souls ... Indeed, a God who cannot make things can hardly be called a God. What else could a process of spiritual 'divinization' be expected to culminate in, if not in the most difficult of all accomplishments: the creation of souls? (Hanegraaff, 'Sympathy', 31).

The sympathy between Lazzarelli's pious theurgy (as presented by Hanegraaff) and Leadbeater's is striking, which makes one wonder about the notion of dispensation and its relationship to theurgic *theoria* and *praxis*. Leadbeater certainly believed that he had been granted a spiritual and scientific insight far greater than his theurgical forebears, an insight which allowed him much greater 'magical power' than they. Interestingly, one suspects he would have claimed that by being 'caught' in one religion (i.e. Christianity) and living before the scientific age, Lazzarelli could not possibly have experienced the level of divinisation that he, Leadbeater, had achieved. Such a view would be predicated on the almost Positivistic assumption that the Age of Scientific Magic would far exceed the achievements of the Age of Religious Magic. Significantly, both views (i.e. those of Leadbeater *and* Lazzarelli) introduce a temporalised modalism into the technology of magic; that is, they both presuppose that the (religious and/or scientific) epistemologies of their own day allow for a unique and superior gnosis and *theosis* - and thus a more empowered theurgy. This in some fashion suggests that successive dominant paradigms sponsor successive dominant theurgies - which underscores one of the central theses of the present research; i.e., the occultistic movements of the nineteenth century, of which Theosophy is arguably the most significant, were not 'flights from (Enlightenment) reason', but were closely and necessarily engaged with their times, for it is from the dominant paradigm that they gained their vocabulary, their rhetoric and, crucially, their magic.
CHAPTER 24

THE MONASTIC MASTER

It is known that at the height of her tension regarding the Coulomb charges, with much of her life’s work and reputation in a precipitous state, Blavatsky visited a Russian Orthodox church in Paris. Although it is impossible at this distance to determine her state of mind, it is nevertheless intriguing that in a time of crisis she felt impelled to undertake something of a pilgrimage to her past:

I stood there with my mouth wide open, as if standing before my own dear mother ... I do not believe in any dogmas, I dislike every ritual, but my feelings towards our own church service are quite different. I am driven to think that my brains lack their seventh stopper. Probably it is in my blood ... I will certainly always say: a thousand times rather Buddhism, a pure moral teaching, in perfect harmony with the teachings of Christ, than modern Catholicism or Protestantism. But with the faith of the Russian church I will not even compare Buddhism. I can’t help it. Such is my silly, inconsistent nature.

Scholars have consistently erred in assessing Blavatsky’s response to Christianity. Her anti-papal diatribes, overt anticlericalism, and consistent disavowal of Reformation humanism have meant that scholars have painted their histories with too broad a brush and have overlooked the nuanced demarcation she regularly made between ‘Christianity’ and ‘Churchianity’. Although it could never be argued that the pre-

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1 Such a caveat does not seem to have prevented Meade employing an overtly psychological reading of the event: see Meade, Madame Blavatsky, 293-294.

So sudden it all was that I felt stupified [sic] with astonishment. Is it really I who during eight years, since the death of father, never thought of crossing myself, and then suddenly giving way to such sentimentality? It is a real calamity (quoted in Neff, Personal Memoirs, 287).

Vsevolod Solovyoff recalled that Blavatsky once stated to him:

I would gladly return, I would gladly be Russian, Christian, Orthodox. I yearn for it. But there is no returning; I am in chains; I am not my own (quoted in Webb, The Occult Establishment, 161).

(It should be remembered that Vs. Solovyoff’s comments cannot now be authenticated).
Revolution Russian Orthodox Church of the late nineteenth century was not, if idiosyncratically, an authoritarian episcopal oligarchy, it was nevertheless Blavatsky’s ‘own dear mother’, and would be exempted from the most obdurate of her attacks on Christianity.³

It would be unwise to dismiss Blavatsky’s early encounters with Byzantine Orthodoxy as less than formative. It is known that her family maintained strong links with various powerful Russian prelates, notably Metropolitan Isidore, Exarch of Georgia.⁴

Blavatsky’s sister, Vera Zhelikhovskaia, recorded an occasion when the two young women visited the Metropolitan:

[H]ardly had we taken our seats in the drawing-room of the Holy Metropolitan than a terrible hubbub, noises, and loud raps in every conceivable direction burst suddenly upon us with a force to which even we were hardly accustomed; every bit of furniture in the big audience room cracked and thumped ... Useless to say how confused and embarrassed we looked - though truth compels me to

³ It is not insignificant that the last three biographies of Blavatsky (Meade’s Madame Blavatsky; Cranston’s H. P. B.; Overton Fuller’s Blavatsky and her teachers) - which cover the spectrum from reductionism to religious apology (though with not much between) - have no index reference to ‘Russian Orthodoxy’ or ‘Orthodoxy’.

⁴ Count Witte, Blavatsky’s cousin, noted that:

[T]he exarch of Georgia was Isidor, a fine old man, later metropolitan of Petersburg. He had the reputation of being a wise prelate, an outstanding administrator, and a true monk in his way of life. He often dined at our house (Witte, The Memoirs, 25).

Interestingly, it appears that it was Isidore who refused Nikifor Blavatskii’s appeal for an annulment from Helena: see Cooper, ‘The Letters’, vol. I, 1. It might be noted that, following the absorption of the Georgian Kingdom into the tsarist Russian Empire in 1811, the Georgian Orthodox Church - previously granted autocephaly in the eighth century - was incorporated into the Church of Russia. It did not regain its status as an independent Catholicosate until the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Thus it is that the Georgian Orthodox Church ceased to have any real autonomy for the entirety of Blavatsky’s life. For a short history, see Michael Prokurat, Alexander Golitzin & Michael D. Peterson. Historical Dictionary of the Orthodox Church, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Maryland, 1996, 136-137. For Isidore and the pre-Revolutionary Church - although with a strong bias in favour of the Moscow Patriarchate and against the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile (also known as the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad or, most recently, as the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia), see also Alexander Preobrazhensky, ed., The Russian Orthodox Church: 10th to 20th Centuries, trans. Sergei Syrovatkin, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1988, 147ff. Incidentally, it might be noted that in the wake of the Communist ascendancy in Russia expatriate Russians were bitterly divided between the Rossiiskoe Teosoficheskoe Obschestvo (the Russian Theosophical Society) and Anna Kameskaia’s Rossiiskoe Teosoficheskoe Obschestvo vne Rossii (the Russian Theosophical Society Outside Russia). Such a parallelism between Orthodoxy and Theosophy is not unexpected - both were equally unwelcome in Bolshevik and Stalinist Russia: for details of the competing Societies see Carlson, ‘No Religion Higher Than Truth’, 180-187.
say that my irreverent sister’s embarrassment was tempered with a
greater expression of fun than I would have wished for. The
Metropolitan Isidore saw at a glance our confusion, and understood,
with his habitual sagacity, the true cause of it. He had read a good
deal about the so-called ‘spiritual’ manifestations, and on seeing a
huge armchair gliding toward him, laughed, and felt a good deal
interested in the phenomenon.¹

The Metropolitan, apparently unflustered by the Spiritualistic phenomena, then asked
Blavatsky’s ‘invisible’ a question, and, fascinated by the result, questioned ‘it’ - and
her - for several hours. Vera records that the Metropolitan addressed advice to the
young Blavatsky:

As for you, let not your heart be troubled by the gift you are
possessed of, nor let it become a source of misery to you hereafter,
for it was surely given to you for some purpose, and you could not
be held responsible for it. Quite the reverse! For if you use it with
discrimination, you will be enabled to do much good to your fellow-
creatures.²

With a certain allowance for hyperbole and exaggerated reminiscence, Vera’s story
indicates that even by 1860 (nine years after her first meeting with ‘M’orya, and well
into her Theosophical odyssey), Blavatsky was still well-disposed to her native faith.
Such an attitude would resurface intermittently throughout her subsequent career, not
infrequently coupled with overt patriotism:

Thus it would seem that it was Latinism which broke off from the
Greek Oriental Church and not the latter from Rome. *Ergo*, it is the
Roman Church which has to be regarded not only as guilty of a
schism but *of rank heresy* in the eyes of every *impartial* Christian
acquainted with history. Hence, also, it is the Greek Oriental
Church which is the ‘Mother and Mistress’ of all other Christian

¹ Quoted in Sinnett, *Incidents*, 106-107. Hutch has suggested that ‘the holy man’s rosary itself all
began to shiver and vibrate’: Hutch, ‘Helena Blavatsky Unveiled’, 339. There is no indication in
Zhelikhovskia’s account of such an event - and its inclusion in Hutch’s analysis of Blavatsky’s
Orthodox background gives one pause to consider his grasp of Orthodoxy, for the Eastern churches
have no rosaries (though certain prayer beads are occasionally used - rarely, however, by senior clerics).

² Sinnett, *Incidents*, 108. It is interesting that this story was suppressed by the Russian censor when
it was first considered for publication in *Rebus* in 1883. For details see Cranston, *H. P. B.*, 73;

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Churches - if any can claim the title.\footnote{Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. IX, 340. It is significant that Blavatsky evidently believed 'the highly cultivated Gnostics and their leaders - such men as Saturninus, an uncompromising ascetic, as Marcion, Valentinus, Basilides, Menander and Cerinthus' were considered less a threat to the Eastern Patriarchates, than to the Western. She quoted Kenneth MacKenzie: They [the Gnostics] were stigmatized by the later Roman Church because they came into conflict with the purer Church of Christianity - the possession of which was usurped by the Bishops of Rome, but which original continues in its docility towards the founder, in the Primitive Orthodox Greek Church (id., Collected Writings, vol. XIV, 70; cf. Kenneth MacKenzie, The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia, Kessinger Publishing, Kila, MT, n.d., 256).}.

The degree to which Blavatsky believed the Christianity of Russia to be the closest extant echo of its founder's ideals is proved by her response to a review of The Key to Theosophy by the philosopher and sophiologist Vladimir Solovyoff [Solov'ev]:

[I]f our critic had studied the Theosophical teachings half as well as he has studied Papism and Judaism, he would easily have succeeded in the difficult task of writing about the meaning of our teachings. Then he would probably have abstained from writing about the Key to Theosophy, since he would have understood that this book was not written for Russia - the only country where the pure ideal of Christ is still preserved ... it was written for pseudo-
Christian countries like England and America.\textsuperscript{8}

Hitherto the only analysis of Blavatsky's debt to Russian Orthodoxy has been an article published by Richard A. Hutch, entitled 'Helena Blavatsky Unveiled'.\textsuperscript{9} Hutch has suggested that Blavatsky modelled herself on two religio-ascetic paradigms of her homeland: the volkhvy and the staretsi.\textsuperscript{10} The volkhvy (sing. volkh) are 'like shamans, to whom are always available such divinatory and healing techniques as prophecy, clairvoyance, visions, trances, ecstatic dancing, telekinesis, and legerdemain'.\textsuperscript{11} The staretsi (sing. starets), on the other hand, are Christian ascetics who avail themselves as spiritual elders for the edification of worldly lay persons and

\textsuperscript{8} Blavatsky, \textit{Collected Writings}, vol. XII, 348-349. For Vl. Solovyoff's relationship with Theosophy see Carlson, \textit{No Religion Higher Than Truth}, 46-48. Solovyoff later characterised Blavatsky and Theosophy in the following terms:  
In the 'Theosophy' of Mme Blavatsky and Company we see the attempt of a charlatan to adapt actual Asiatic Buddhism to the mystical and metaphysical needs of a half-educated European society that is dissatisfied, for one reason or another, with its own religious institutions and doctrines (quoted in ibid., 47).  
Carlson further documents the degree to which Solovyoff's sophiology has been adopted and adapted by Russian (and other) Theosophists - a process which continues (see ibid.). It is certainly interesting that Solovyoff's criticisms of Theosophy and Blavatsky have now been forgotten by Theosophists and his works sell at many of their book stores, alongside other related thinkers such as Nikolai Berdiaev (1874-1948), who attempted to reconcile Orthodoxy with the conceptions of Boehme, and Sergei Bulgakof (1871-1944). Indeed, the renewed popularity of the Russian Orthodox sophiologists is due in no small part to the republication of their works by New Age and Esoteric publishers, such as the Lindisfarne Press. One suspects Bulgakof would not have been pleased with the description of his book \textit{The Wisdom of God: A Brief Summary of Sophiology} which graces the back of Lindisfarne Press' 1993 revised edition:

There is a great hunger to recover the feminine aspect of divinity. But much searching has left Christians disappointed and seeking for the 'Goddess' elsewhere. In this brave theological work, Bulgakof shows how the divine Sophia, in whom all things are created, is present in the Holy Trinity itself and how, as the 'creaturely Sophia' she works together with her divine counterpart in the work of the Holy Spirit for the redemption of the world (flynotes to Sergei Bulgakof, \textit{Sophia: The Wisdom of God. An Outline of Sophiology}, trans. Patrick Thompson, O. Fielding Clarke & Xenia Braikevite, Lindisfarne Press, Hudson, New York, 1993).  
In this context it is germane to observe that the Liberal Catholic Church Institute of Studies has recently changed its curriculum: the course on 'Theosophy' has now become 'Theo Sophia'.  
\textsuperscript{9} Hutch, 'Helena Blavatsky Unveiled', 320-341.  
\textsuperscript{10} Hutch has claimed that:  
[T]he seeming arch-heretic of Christianity always was unconsciously moved by the feeling that she was a true member of the spiritual elite of the Russian Orthodox Church, the staretsi, even to the last (in ibid., 340).  
Unfortunately for Hutch, there appears little evidence to support the assertion that Blavatsky saw herself as a latter-day Russian Orthodox starets. It is, after all, impossible to gauge what Blavatsky's 'unconscious' feelings were.  
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 326. For an examination of the volkhvy (and related occupations such as the koldun, the ved' ma, the veshchitsa, the znakhar', and the vorozhei) see the comprehensive treatment in W. F. Ryan, \textit{The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia}, The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 1999, ch. 3 et passim.

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Unfortunately, Hutch’s conclusions are marred to a significant degree by his lack of attention to the facts of Theosophical history, and by his earnest desire to make Theosophy conform to certain preordained patterns and behaviours. It is not correct to suggest that Theosophy began with a trinitarian aspect: ‘Colonel Henry Steele Olcott (the father); Gerry Brown (the son), and Blavatsky (the spirit).’ Nor is it anywhere close to the mark to state that ‘this messenger was Koot Hoomi, Blavatsky’s spirit Master, whom later Theosophists associate with Gulab-Lal-Singh, a genuine nineteenth-century leader of Indian Hinduism’. Further, it strains credulity to suggest that ‘Blavatsky carried on her body the archetypal five wounds of the Christ figure’. Indeed, the Theosophical historian and bibliographer, Michael Gomes,

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13 Hutch, ‘Helena Blavatsky Unveiled’, 337.

14 Ibid., 338. Several other historiographical assumptions are made which the evidence does not warrant. At this distance, e.g., it is not possible (contra Meade) to conclude that ‘Youry’ (Yuri) was born ’to her [Blavatsky] and her lover, Metrortvitch’: in ibid., 333.

15 Ibid., 337. Certainly, Blavatsky claimed to have been wounded at the battle of Mentana in October, 1867, fighting on behalf of the Garibaldian forces - ’to help shooting the Papists and got shot myself’ (Neff, *Personal Memoirs*, 154). Mary Neff quotes Olcott as having seen her wounds - including a stiletto stab, broken arm and two musket-bullets embedded in her right shoulder and leg (in ibid.). Nevertheless, there is no indication that Blavatsky or any of her contemporaries noted parallels with Jesus.
dismissed Hutch’s conclusions on the basis of his historiographical errors:

Pages upon pages are spent on patterns of belief in 19th century Russian religion as a confirmation of this influence, but if his interpretation of data or events in her life is any indication of the reliability of his analysis, he is woefully off. 16

Yet, if Hutch’s methodology and suppositions are found wanting, he must at least be congratulated for having brought Blavatsky’s native religion to the attention of scholars. Certainly, his desire to establish Blavatsky as a latter-day shamanic volkh with staretsi pretensions ensured that his argument foundered upon the shoals of evidential scholarship, but the same cannot be said with regard to the Masters who much more closely approximate the Russian models. 17 In fact, the parallels between Blavatsky’s presentation of her Masters and the volkhvy of native tradition and staretsi of Orthodox veneration are sufficient to warrant some attention.

Vera Zhelikhovskaia recounted Blavatsky’s childhood fascination with Russian folk tales (’Helen never either forgot the stories or consented to recognise them as fictions’)18 and with the shamanic powers attributed to certain Russian elders:

People could change into animals and take any form they liked, if they only knew how; men could fly, if they only wished so firmly.

Such wise men had existed in all ages, and existed even in our own days, she assured us.19

Just such an elder lived near the children’s villa, in a forest known as Baranig Bouyrak:

The old man was a real magician, in the popular estimation; a sorcerer of a good, benevolent kind, who cured willingly all the patients who applied to him, but who also knew how to punish with disease those who sinned. He was greatly versed in the knowledge

16 Gomes, Theosophy, 264.
17 It is one of the defects of Hutch’s argument that his references to the Masters are negligible, and that nowhere does he note the obvious similarities between their presentation and that of the Russian paradigms. It is not improbable that this lacuna is deliberate, as the identification between the Masters and the volkhvy and staretsi undermines, to a marked degree, a similar identification which he attempts between the Russian models and Blavatsky herself.
18 Quoted in Sinnett, Incidents, 29.
19 Ibid.
of the occult properties of plants and flowers, and could read the
future, it was said.20

Vera noted that the place had an ‘irresistible attraction’ for the young Blavatsky, who
would engage the centenarian in long dialogues and who learned from him ‘the
language of bees, birds and animals’.21 The man, in turn, noted the young woman’s
occult potential: ‘This little lady is quite different from all of you. There are great
events lying in wait for her in the future’.22

The degree to which such episodes are the revisionist exaggerations of Zhelikhovskaia
is impossible to determine. Regardless, Blavatsky showed herself well aware of
indigenous Russian folk traditions throughout her writings. Note, as just one
example, her description of shamanistic healers:

This is the literal translation of the popular and mystic term
‘Zagovarivat’, in Russia. For the good men and women in towns
and villages who play at local medicine-men (and the people will
have no others) literally ‘talk away’, by means of some strange
words which no one understands but themselves, and by breathing
on the water, all kinds of diseases and ailments most effectively.23

It is not at all improbable that the volkh centenarian of Blavatsky’s youth (as much as
the old ‘under-nurse’ of the Fadeyev household, who regaled her with tales in which

20 Ibid., 30. It is intriguing that this man was, by trade, a beekeeper and herbalist. This particular
motif (of the aged herbalist as ‘initiator’ of a young person who later founds a religious movement) is
repeated throughout the modern history of esotericism, from Rudolf Steiner (whose teacher was the
‘herb-gatherer’ Felix Koguzki [1833-1909]) to Carlos Castaneda (who was instructed by the more
everusive Don Juan). For Koguzki see Johannes Hemleben, Rudolf Steiner: A Documentary Biography,
trans. Leo Twyman, Henry Goulden, Old Woking, Surrey, 1975, 24-26. For Don Juan see Carlos
Castaneda, The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge, Penguin, Harmondsworth,
Controversies, Ross-Eriksson Publishers, Santa Barbara, 1981). Castaneda’s works have spawned
something of an industry: cf., eg., Nevill Drury, Don Juan, Mescalito and Modern Magic: The

21 Sinnett, Incidents, 30.

22 Ibid.

23 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. XI, 210. For an account of a ‘Wandering Jew’-like character,
whom Blavatsky claimed to have encountered physically, see id., Isis Unveiled, 42n.
'every idea [was] connected with superstition') contributed to her conception of the Theosophical Masters as magically-endowed elders. Yet the paranormal powers of the Masters are but one half of their attributes; the other, that of charismatic spiritual guidance and religious authority, is reminiscent, not so much of the shamanistic volkhvy, as of the pious ascetical staretsi. Hutch marginalised the influence of the starets phenomenon on Blavatsky (as opposed to the volkh, which he exaggerated), likely because he was unable to find direct reference in her works to one or other staretsi. But the route to Blavatsky's sources is rarely an obvious one and in this case, as with Rosicrucianism, her chief model appears to have been a literary one.

It is highly significant that Blavatsky proffered upon Feodor Mikhailovich Dostoevskii (1821-1881) the distinction of being a 'theosophical' writer. Certainly no greater endorsement was possible:

If asked what is it then that will help, we answer boldly:- Theosophical literature; hastening to add that under this term, neither books concerning adepts and phenomena, nor the Theosophical Society publications are meant ... What the European world now needs is a dozen writers such as Dostoyevsky, the Russian author ... It is writers of this kind that are needed in our day of re-awakening; not authors writing for wealth or fame, but fearless apostles of the living Word of Truth, moral healers of the pustulous

**Sinnett, Incidents, 29.** Zhelikhovskaia's description of the old nurse is highly evocative: During the long summer twilights on the green grassy lawn under the fruit trees of the garden, or during the still longer winter evenings, crowding around the flaming fire of our nursery-room, we used to cling to the old woman, and felt supremely happy whenever she could be prevailed upon to tell us some of those popular fairy tales, for which our northern country is so famous. The adventures of 'Ivan Zarewitch', of 'Kashtey the Immortal', of the 'Gray-Wolf', the wicked magician travelling in the air in a self-moving sieve; or those of Melettena, the Fair Princess, shut up in a dungeon until the Zarevitch unlocks its prison door with a gold key, and liberates her - delighted us all ... [Blavatsky] thoroughly took to heart all the troubles of the heroes, and maintained that all their most wonderful adventures were quite natural (in ibid.).

Blavatsky remembered such stories, and elaborated upon them, throughout her life. For one example, see her translation of Tolstoi's *How a Devil’s Imp Redeemed his Loaf: or, the First Distiller* in Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XII, 9-13.

**Hutch stated that 'Staretsi are less important to Blavatsky than the tradition of the volkhvy': Hutch, 'Helena Blavatsky Unveiled', 326.**

**For the influence of the Rosicrucian novel (particularly Bulwer-Lytton's *Zanoni*) on Blavatsky's conception of Rosicrucianism - and Theosophy - see infra ch. 29.**
sores of our century ... To write novels with a moral sense in them deep enough to stir Society, requires a literary talent and a born theosophist as was Dostoyevsky.27

Blavatsky was so impressed by Dostoevskii’s *The Brothers Karamazov* that she translated sections of Book V, chapter five (‘The Grand Inquisitor’), for publication in *The Theosophist*.28 Of profound significance for the present study is her introduction to the translation:

Dedicated by the Translator to sceptics who clamour so loudly both in print and private letters: ‘Show us the wonder-working ‘Brothers’, let them come out publicly and - we will believe in Them!’:29

‘The Grand Inquisitor’ is one of only two portions of *The Brothers Karamazov* which do not appear in the authorial voice, but are ‘penned’ by characters.30 It is an exposition by Ivan Karamazov - who is presented, according to Blavatsky, as ‘a rank materialist and an atheist of the new school’31 - on the fictitious return of Christ to

27 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XII, 6-8.
28 The translation appeared in the November and December issues of 1881. *The Brothers Karamazov* initially appeared as a serial in *Russkii vestnik* (The Russian Herald )between January 1879 and November 1880 - the last instalment issued just two months prior to the author’s death on 28 January, 1881. It is significant that Blavatsky’s translation was an order from the Master Koot Hoomi:

The suggestion to translate the *Grand Inquisitor* is mine; for its author, on whom the hand of Death was already pressing when writing it, gave the most forcible and true description of the Society of Jesus than was ever given before.

There is a mighty lesson contained in it for many and even you may profit by it (The *Mahatma Letters*, 1993 ed., (Letter No. 21: Autumn, 1881) 78).

Given that Constance Garnett’s full translation of the novel did not appear until 1912, it is not improbable that Blavatsky’s translation of ‘The Grand Inquisitor’ (Bk. V: ch. 5) was the first in the English language.

30 That the two non-narratorial passages, ‘The Grand Inquisitor’ and the ‘Life of Father Zossima’ are nevertheless demonstrably the author’s homiletic, and thus the dual pivots of his purpose, is indicated by their structural affinities as well as by their ‘stand alone’ character. Indeed, they are regularly published independently: cf., eg., F. R. Dostojewskij, *Die Geschichte des Starez Sossima*, Banas & Dette, Hanover, 1922. *Contra Curle*, however, the present author does not believe that ‘The Grand Inquisitor ... if omitted from the novel, would not affect it in the slightest’ (Richard Curle, *Characters of Dostoevsky: Studies from Four Novels*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1950, 177).


sixteenth-century Seville, at the peak of the Inquisition. The Grand Inquisitor has Christ imprisoned, and berates him for offering freedom to humanity: ‘Instead of taking possession of men’s freedom, Thou didst increase it, and burdened the spiritual kingdom of mankind with its sufferings for ever’.32 ‘The Grand Inquisitor’ has been customarily interpreted, on the one hand, as an attack upon the ecclesiastical authoritarianism of Roman Catholicism, and, on the other, as an implied reference to the delusions of Ivan’s socialism. Both systems are denounced by the author for having foolishly propagated the belief that political structures can create sobornost; instead, they have fed humanity’s modern nemesis: existential uncertainty. It is clear that Blavatsky would have relished Dostoevskii’s sophisticated attack on both coercive religion (Catholicism) and atheistical idealism (socialism),33 but the reader of her translation is left wondering exactly why she prefaced it with reference to ‘the wonder-working “Brothers”’.

An answer is to be found by turning to Dostoevskii’s carefully engineered contrapuntal passage, ‘The Life of Father Zossima’ (Book VI), which he intended to offer as ‘something diametrically opposed to the world view expressed earlier’.34 The vita of the monk, Father Zossima,35 (‘penned’ by Ivan’s brother - and Zossima’s disciple - Alyosha Karamazov)36 is carefully crafted by Dostoevskii to conform to the genre of mimetic hagiography,37 and is designed to witness to an affirmative - and Russian - alternative to the spiritual vacuum of Catholicism and socialism. In order, then, to

33 Dostoevskii’s barbed references to the Jesuits, and the (somewhat deceiving) structural inference that the Russian Orthodox Church is the antithesis of the Roman Catholic Church, would also have caught Blavatsky’s attention: it certainly had done with Koot Hoomi (see supra p. 534n28).
34 It is not impossible that Dostoevskii himself was influenced by certain esotericists, notably Swedenborg: see Czeslaw Milosz, ‘Dostoevsky and Swedenborg’ in R. Larsen, S. Larsen, Lawrence & Woofenden, eds., Emanuel Swedenborg, 159-168 (pp. 166-167 for Father Zossima).
36 In some translations, ‘Zossima’ is rendered as ‘Zosima’.
37 For the master-disciple topos in The Brothers Karamazov, particularly viz. Zossima and Alyosha, see Thompson, The Brothers Karamazov’, 13ff. It is significant (and would surely have been noticed by Blavatsky) that Alyosha’s writing of Zossima’s vita would presuppose - as a structural characteristic of the genre - that he had himself subsequently become the master upon his master’s demise; examples of such abound: cf., eg., Athanasius’ Life of Antony, Theodore’s Life of Pachomius, Paphnutius’ Life of Onophrius. This dynamic was replicated several times in Theosophical discourse.
38 Dostoevskii is evidently employing the genre of the specifically Russian hagiography, the zhitiye.
establish Zossima’s credentials as the spiritual ‘culminating point’\(^{38}\) of the novel, Dostoevskii turned to the paradigm of the \textit{staretsi} for inspiration. Blavatsky could hardly have failed to notice that her quest and Dostoevskii’s were sympathetically aligned, and that his descriptions of the \textit{staretsi} mirrored her conception of the Masters:

\begin{quote}
Among us there is sin, injustice, and temptation, but yet, somewhere on earth there is some one holy and exalted. He has the truth; he knows the truth; so it is not dead upon the earth; so it will come one day to us, too, and rule over all the earth according to the promise.\(^{39}\)
\end{quote}

John Dunlop has convincingly argued that Dostoevskii’s primary model for Father Zossima was Starets Amvrosi (Ambrose) Grenkov (1812-1891), a monk of the famed Optina Pustyn’ monastery for over fifty years.\(^{40}\) According to Maria Carlson, the hesychastic elders of Optina provided a ‘spiritual Mecca for many mystically inclined Russians’, including Ivan Kireevskii (1806-1856), Nikolai Gogol’ (1809-1852), and Lev Tolstoi (1828-1910).\(^{41}\) Starets Amvrosi, one of the most celebrated of the monks, was visited in the monastery by Dostoevskii in 1878 following the death of the

\(^{38}\) Quoted in Leatherbarrow, \textit{Fyodor Dostoevsky}, 61, 73.

\(^{39}\) Dostoevskii, \textit{The Brothers Karamazov}, 27.

\(^{40}\) See Dunlop, \textit{Staretz Amvrosy}, esp. 58-60. That Starets Amvrosi was Dostoevsky’s template is evident from close similarities in Zossima’s statements and Amvrosi’s letters, as well as in the less subtle modellings: both \textit{staretsi} had a cell servant named Fr. Iosif, and both were the third acknowledged starets in their monasteries (Amvrosi followed Starets Leonid/Lev Nagolkin [1768-1841] and Starets Macarius [1788-1860]; for short biographies of the three \textit{staretsi} see Peter France, \textit{Hermits: The Insights of Solitude}, Pimlico, London, 1996, 57-85). Nadejda Gorodetzky has claimed that the model for Zossima was St. Tikhon Zadonsky (1724-1783): see Nedejda Gorodetzky, \textit{Saint Tikhon Zadonsky: Inspirer of Dostoevsky}, S. P. C. K., London, 1951. It is entirely likely that St. Tikhon furnished some of the saintly qualities of Zossima, but it is inherently less likely that he was the major model for Dostoevskii’s fictional \textit{starets}. Gorodetzky herself notes that Amvrosi is a probable candidate: ‘There is some justification for this claim’ (p. 180). Nonetheless, it might be noted that in the summer of 1860, Blavatsky visited Zadonsk, in the Province of Vopronezh, in order to venerate Tikhon’s relics: see Cooper, ‘The Letters’, vol. I, 3.

\(^{41}\) Carlson, ‘No Religion Higher Than Truth’, 220n22.
author’s young son, Alyosha. The spiritual sustenance with which the staret was able to comfort Dostoevskii encouraged him to employ the staret as the model for his much-sought pristine religious icon: a ‘saint’ capable of successfully vanquishing - in metaphysical terms - the Grand Inquisitor. Crucially for Blavatsky, Dostoevskii presented his staret as possessed of ancient pristine teachings which had remained untramelled by ecclesial dogmatism or modern nihilism. Thus it is that the staretsi were recommended by Dostoevskii as a resolutely non-Western tertium quid (exactly, as it happened, the sort of figure Blavatsky was promoting in her occult orbit):

[W]hen the time comes [the monks] will show it to the tottering creeds of the world. That is a great thought. That star will rise out of the East. That is my view of the monk, and is it false? is it too proud? Look at the worldly and all who set themselves up above the people of God, has not God’s image and His truth been distorted in them? They have science; but in science there is nothing but what is the object of sense. The spiritual world, the higher part of man’s being is rejected altogether, dismissed with a sort of triumph, even with hatred ... The monastic way is very different ... Of old, leaders of the people came from among us, and why should they not again? The same meek and humble ascetics will rise up and go out to work for the great cause."

The counterpoint of Amvrosi-Alyosha and Zossima-Alyosha is self evident, and adds a further idiosyncratic dimension to The Brothers Karamazov: for details see the reminiscences of Dostoevskii’s wife, Anna Grigorievna, in Dunlop, Staretz Amvrosy, 59-60. It should be a somewhat amusing observation for Theosophists that Vladimir Solovyoff accompanied Dostoevskii on his pilgrimage to Optina, and has been interpreted as having provided the model for the materialist and skeptic Ivan Karamazov: see Leatherbarrow, Fyodor Dostoevsky, 19. Solovyoff’s ‘skepticism’ regarding Thososophy would surface some time later (for which see supra p. 527ff). Leatherbarrow (Fyodor Dostoevsky, 19) has suggested that a better model for Ivan might have been Ivan S. Turgenev (1818-1883), who, incidentally, Blavatsky believed to have been the inspiration, albeit probably an inadvertent one, for ‘the ranting spectre of Nihilist delirium, the red-handed socialist’ (Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. II, 361).

It is an intriguing observation that Zossima had himself been visited as a layman by ‘The Mysterious Visitor’ who remains unnamed throughout the narrative: Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, 333-347. It is this figure who leads Zossima to conversion and monasticism. Such unheralded visitations by mysterious sages would later become a staple of Theosophical discourse.

It is interesting that in the introduction to her translation of ‘The Grand Inquisitor’, Blavatsky describes Alyosha as ‘a young Christian mystic brought up by a “saint” in a monastery’: Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. III, 325. Although it is not easy to discern her reason for placing the term ‘saint’ in inverted commas, it is not improbable that she is inferring, if elliptically, to Zossima as a sort of Master figure.

Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, 347-349.

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More than one commentator has concluded that Dostoevskii’s Father Zossima is described ‘in terms similar to an Indian guru’.45 (Indeed, Hutch noted that ‘the staretz is to the West what the guru is to the East’, but, remarkably, ignored the salient argument that the Masters are thereby indicated, not Blavatsky herself).46 That Blavatsky may have come to the same conclusion is supported by the attitude of her followers.47 Nikolai Berdiaev astutely observed in his autobiography the implied Theosophical identification of staretsi and Masters:

[N]ot only the neo-Christians revered the elders, but also the

Theosophists and Anthroposophists, who really had little in

common with the church. They saw the elders as ‘initiates’.48

It is surely no coincidence that the Russian equivalent of the Adyar estate was ‘Podborki’, a Theosophical centre near Kaluga: Podborki was twelve miles from Optina Pustyn’, which, perhaps unsurprising for a home of ‘initiates’, had already become a regular site of Theosophical pilgrimage.49 Indeed, the idea of a Theosophical monastery - which Blavatsky considered ‘a dream cherished by many a theosophist’50 - was for a time very popular with the membership.51 Franz Hartmann’s 1887 novel, An Adventure Among the Rosicrucians, is entirely devoted to the narrator’s encounter with a number of ‘Masters’ who escort him through the workings of a ‘Theosophical Monastery’.52 One Master, ‘Imperator’, indicates the correlation between spiritual sanctity and Theosophical perfectionism; for him, Masters and monks are identical:

43 Moynahan, Rasputin, 28.
44 Hutch, ‘Helena Blavatsky Unveiled’, 325.
45 Maria Carlson’s meticulously researched study of Russian Theosophy includes the salient point that ‘Russian Theosophists looked as much to Tolstoi, Dostoevskii, and Vladimir Solov’ev for inspiration as to the Bhagavad Gita or the Upanishads’: Carlson, ‘No Religion Higher Than Truth’, 152. If such was the case, there seems no reason to believe that Blavatsky herself - a confirmed slavophile - was not similarly drawn.
47 Ibid., 63.
48 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VIII, 134.
49 Of course, the Theosophical communes of later years can be seen in this light. See infra Appendix E.
50 ‘A Student of Occultism’ [Franz Hartmann], An Adventure Among the Rosicrucians, Occult Publishing Co., Boston, 1887. The term ‘Master’ is used explicitly by Hartmann, and references to ‘Theosophy’ abound. One wonders whether the name of the other Master, ‘Theodorus’, was chosen because of its Orthodox pedigree (or whether the author was less subtle and simply intended the Master to prove a ‘gift of God’).
Verily the theosophical monastery of which I dream is even superior to ours. It is located far away from this earth, and yet it can be reached without trouble and without expense. Its monks and nuns have risen above the sphere of self. They have a temple of infinite dimensions, pervaded by the spirit of sanctity [sic], being the common possession of all. There, the differentiation of the Universal Soul ceases, and Unification takes place ... [each monastic] growing in strength and expanding in size, until he embraces the All and is one with it.

It could be argued, of course, that Dostoevskii’s presentation of the monastic Starets Zossima as the ideal personification of the religious path between the twin shoals of materialism and absolutism arrived too late to influence Blavatsky, who was, by that time, already in India. Yet upon closer examination it becomes clear that ‘The Grand Inquisitor’ and ‘The Life of Father Zossima’ were published (in serial form) in the months immediately prior to the receipt of the first Mahatma letter (17 October, 1880), and that no fewer than thirty reviews of the novel-in-progress had already appeared in the St. Petersburg press by the end of 1879." Blavatsky, who subscribed to a number of such journals - and contributed to more than a few - would have had ample opportunity to assimilate Dostoevsky’s literary starets into her own conceptualising should she have so chosen.

It should also be noted that the medium of the Mahatma letter itself is also prefigured by the pædeutical techniques of the Optina elders; as Joseph Allen has astutely observed, spiritual eldership was often ‘requested and given through letters’. Though a tradition of epistolary guidance had long existed throughout the Christian world - as is evident in the extant writings of Sts. John Chrysostom, Basil, and Augustine - the staretsi of Optina Pustyn' developed the form into a distinct genre.

34 It can only be considered typical for the mercurial Blavatsky that she published a translation of ‘The Grand Inquisitor’ with a cryptic introduction more appropriate to ‘The Life of Father Zossima’ - thereby giving not so much a hint of her interest in the staretsi as providing something of a treasure map for 'Masters-hunters'.

St. Macarius of Optina (1788-1860), a famed exponent of this method and Starets Amvrosi’s immediate predecessor, maintained an ‘immense correspondence’ and encouraged his interlocutors to highlight specific questions for him to address individually - a technique continued by Amvrosi and, later, much favoured by the Theosophical Masters. 57

The phenomenon of the starets was by no means limited to Russia. Indeed, the slavic notion of starchestvo, an integral part of the eighteenth century hesychast monastic reforms, 58 was a deliberate replication of the paradigm of spiritual eldership fostered in Egypt and Syria during the first centuries of the Common Era. 59 The Egyptian traditions, particularly, became the prototypes for later models of anchoritic and cenobitic monasticism, and furnished perhaps the most abundant and influential literature of spiritual eldership in the West, the most celebrated collection of which is known as the Apothegmata Patrum - the ‘Sayings of the Desert Fathers [and Mothers]. 60

Blavatsky was well aware of the continuing Coptic ascetical tradition from her travels in Egypt, yet her interest in Coptic desert monasticism has never garnered a mention in


58 Hesychasm (Gr. ‘silence, quiet, leisure’) is a monastic paradigm particular to the Byzantine Orthodox (although not unknown to the Oriental Orthodox). Its most renowned features are a reliance on monological prayer and starchestvo - spiritual eldership - and its most famed apologist was Gregory Palamas (1296-1359). During the eighteenth century, hesychasm underwent a renaissance in the Byzantine communion, led in Russia by Paissii Velichkovskii, who, in 1793, translated the hesychast manual, The Philokalia, into Slavonic (as Dobrotolubiye). For Velichkovskii see supra p. 536n40; cf. also The Philokalia, 3 vols., comp. St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain & St. Makarios of Corinth, trans. & ed. G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard & Kallistos Ware, Faber & Faber, London, 1979-1984.

59 One suspects that Dostoevskii alluded to the desert origins of the staretsi by the choice of the name ‘Zossima’. In Coptic hagiography, Anba Zosima (Zosimus) was the desert father who met the famed recluse, St. Mary the Egyptian, and later recorded her very influential vita.

any study within the massive Theosophical corpus. Her observations are worth repeating at length:

Of forty-seven tombs of the kings, near Gomorone, recorded by the Egyptian priests on their sacred registers, only seventeen were known to the public, according to Diodorus Siculus, who visited the place about sixty years B.C. Notwithstanding this historical evidence, we assert that the whole number exist to this day, and the royal tomb discovered by Belzoni among the sandstone mountains of Biban-el-Melook (Melech?) is but a feeble specimen of the rest. We will add, furthermore, that the Arab-Christians, the monks, scattered around in their poor, desolate convents on the borderland of the great Lybian Desert, know of the existence of such unbetrayed relics. But they are Copts, sole remnants of the true Egyptian race, and the Copt predominating over the Christian monk in their natures, they keep silent; for what reason it is not for us to tell. There are some who believe that their monkish attire is but a blind, and that they have chosen these desolate homes among arid deserts and surrounded by Mahometan tribes, for some ulterior purposes of their own. Be it as it may, they are held in great esteem by the Greek monks of Palestine; and there is a rumor current among the Christian pilgrims of Jerusalem, who throng the Holy Sepulchre at every Easter, that the holy fire from heaven will never descend so miraculously as when these monks of the desert are present to draw it down by their prayers.

61 The reason for this oversight is likely that her most detailed comments on Coptic monasticism - in Isis Unveiled - were never referenced in the index - under 'Coptic', 'Monks', or 'Monasticism'. This error - somewhat remarkable considering the book is ostensibly devoted to the continuance of the 'Egyptian Mysteries' - is to some degree mitigated by the paucity of English notice given to the Copts at the time of publication, i.e., 1877. (This situation changed markedly following the British occupation of 1882: see Theodore Hall Partick, Traditional Egyptian Christianity: A History of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Fisher Park Press, Greensboro, NC, 1996, 118ff). Blavatsky's references in The Secret Doctrine tend to be less about Copts qua proto-Masters and more about novel interpretations of Coptic language (Demotic) and Coptic texts such as the Pistis Sophia. Such a change of attitude is hardly surprising given that The Secret Doctrine is predicated not on the existence of the Brotherhood of Luxor (cf. Isis Unveiled), but on the 'trans-Himalayan Brotherhood'.

Blavatsky’s description of Coptic desert monasticism is part of an elaborate historiography which traces the origin of the movement to the Egyptian Hermetists via the Essenes. The latter, no doubt due to their oppositional behaviour (and the paucity of records!) were ideal models for an infra-ecclesial *philosophia perennis*, and have since been incorporated into most esoteric historiographies. The Essenes, then, provide a key link in the chain from the Atlantean mysteries (inspired and orchestrated by the Masters) to the desert monks for whom the ‘monkish attire’ is but a ‘blind’ to conceal the true lineaments of their Masters-derived philosophy. Interpreted thus, the Coptic desert monastics are nothing other than an extant occult Brotherhood.

Blavatsky admitted to having studied under a Coptic magician, Paolos Metamon, during the early 1850s and again in 1871. Theosophists have long assumed that her knowledge of Egyptian arcana derived from this source, and was enhanced by her membership of the rather mysterious Brotherhood of Luxor. Indeed, her reference to having spent ‘weeks and months ... with the Masters, in Egypt [and] in Tibet’ would seem to support this. Yet it is by no means unlikely that Blavatsky’s subsequent depiction of the Masters was influenced by a personal knowledge of Coptic monasticism, and particularly of the popular legends associated with the reclusive

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64 In the Blavatskian view, Jesus was trained ‘in the high school of the Essenes’: see Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. I, 106. Cf. also id., *Isis Unveiled*, vol. II, 323-324 *et passim*.

65 It should be noted that the vast majority of the theorists examined for the present work posited an Essene origin for Christianity: cf., eg., Blavatsky, Mead, Besant, Leadbeater, Steiner, Schuré, Bailey, Dowling, Heindel, Lewis, Cayce, Fortune, *inter alia*. See supra p. 340n65.

66 For Metamon see supra ch. 4. Metamon is an abiding mystery of Theosophical history, and cannot be easily dismissed as fictive because he was also mentioned (disparagingly) by Albert Rawson. The fact of the Hellenic name means little as such variations were - and remain - popular, especially in Lower Egypt, where it is not uncommon to meet, e.g., three brothers: Paolos/Paula, Pavlos/Boulos.

67 One must separate - as far as the sources allow - Blavatsky’s ‘Brotherhood of Luxor’ from the occult Order, the ‘Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor’, so ably studied by Godwin, Chanel, and Devaney. Blavatsky’s antipathy to the latter was certainly founded in her fierce dislike of competing esotericisms. For a discussion of the two see Godwin, Chanel & Devaney, *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor*; T. Allen Greenfield, *The Story of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light*, Looking Glass Press, Stockholm, 1997; see also supra ch. 5, 6.

anchorites. It is hardly insignificant that Blavatsky suggested the latter to be among the few survivors of the 'mysterious brotherhood':

Solitary Copts, earnest students scattered hither and thither throughout the sandy solitudes of Egypt, Arabia, Petra, Palestine, and the impenetrable forests of Abyssinia, though rarely met with, may sometimes be seen.  

Modern Copts ascribe wondrous feats to contemporary 'hermit fathers'. Apart from the normative expectation of healing and intercessory powers, it is common in the Egyptian imagination for such anchorites to assume almost docetic traits: Fr. Samaan El Souriany has noted that '[a]t times they may even become absent from the physical world, and be lifted up in spirit toward heaven'. Interestingly, such ascetics are not deemed to live primarily as solitaries, but in loose brotherhoods; they are popularly believed to be able to bilocate, to teleport, to levitate, to transport (through locked doors), to practice invisibility, and to enjoy great longevity. A recent definition of 'Hermits' noted the following:

This type of monk has reached a very high level of spirituality where his spirit is heavier than his body, because he is fervent in spirit, and

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69 An intriguing, if somewhat idiosyncratic, account of the austerities undertaken by the desert monastics, as well as a comprehensive survey of the paranormal powers and mystical visions claimed in their behalf, is to be found in Violet MacDermot, The Cult of the Seer in the Ancient Middle East: A Contribution to Current Research on Hallucinations drawn from Coptic and other Texts, 2 vols., Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, London, 1971. MacDermot's conclusions about modern drug-taking and psychotropics (contra William James and Aldous Huxley) are somewhat strained, though interesting nonetheless.


72 The present author has undertaken extensive research into contemporary Coptic monasticism, particularly during a residence in the sixth-century monastery of Dayr Al-Suryan ('Monastery of the Syrians') in the Wadi Al-Natrun in 1997. Interviews were conducted with a number of monks, including the present Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria, Pope Shenouda III. Space does not permit a fuller rendition of the feats ascribed to the hermit fathers (contemporary female monastics live in enclosed urban convents and are thus ipso facto no longer considered 'desert' ascetics), but their charismatic authority and presumed paranormal powers are fully reminiscent of Blavatsky's Masters. (It might be noted that those hermits met by the present author - one of whom had not returned to his monastery for 20 years - showed no overt paranormal abilities, nor, indeed, any interest in such). A hint of Blavatsky's awareness of traditions of longevity among Orthodox monastics is offered in a little-known response by Blavatsky to an article in The Theosophist (vol. IV:9, June, 1883, 219) which dealt with the length of men's hair:

In Europe, the Greek and Russian clergy alone [actually, Coptic monks as well, although under a cowl], along with their monks, have preserved the wise habit [of growing their hair], and the longevity of some of the last named is proverbial (Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. IV, 503).
he rarely eats. They live in groups and can easily move from one place to another in a very short time, without anyone seeing them."

It is perhaps not inappropriate to suggest that in the Coptic imagination (as Blavatsky appears to have been well aware), the characteristics of the Russian volkhvy and staretsi are fused in the figure of the hermit father. The following description of the anchorite, excerpted from no less an authority than *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, is immediately suggestive of the Theosophical Masters:

The word *sa’ih* (pl. *suwwah*), meaning ‘wanderer’, is the Arabic term for an anchorite. To be among the *suwwah* is to have reached the highest spiritual rank for a monk. The popular belief is that a *sa’ih* feels no bodily pain, hunger, thirst, or lust. He is also believed to be invisible except to those to whom he reveals himself. But some humans may hear him or see the incense he or a group of *suwwah* have burned during a mass. There is much controversy as to their number, which is believed in some instances to be four hundred, and in others twelve only, while some hold that it is unlimited. Those who believe their number is limited emphasize the fact that it never varies. It is also held that if one of the *suwwah* dies, the other *suwwah* choose someone to replace the deceased among the monks and summon him to join them. At the *suwwah* level, there is no distinction made between men and women, and *suwwah* are held to be nearer in their bodily and spiritual qualities to heavenly beings than are other human beings.\(^7\)

Naturally, it is not possible at this distance to ascertain the depth of Blavatsky’s engagement with Coptic monasticism, or to estimate the influence which wondrous tales of the feats of spiritually-advanced monastics exerted upon her. Yet her


\(^8\) Malek Wassef, ‘ANCHORITE: Folklore’ in Atiya, ed., *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, 130. It is interesting to consider that Coptic anchorites are deemed to have passed through several stages of monasticism prior to their departure from human company; they live first in community, then as hermits within the monastery, then in hermitages within the monastery precincts, and only then entirely extramurally. ‘Perfection’ is thus attained in degree. Such a model underpins Blavatskian conceptualising.
presumption that Coptic monks owe their first allegiance to the maintenance of the ancient Egyptian (thus *Atlantean*) mysteries, and that neither they nor she can speak of their 'ulterior purposes', indicates that her Egyptian pilgrimages of the 1850s and 1870s may well have entailed exposure to, and close observation of, the prototypical Christian ascetical brotherhood: Coptic eremitical monasticism. Indeed, it is a somewhat curious possibility that Blavatsky's presentation of the fabled occult 'Brotherhood of Luxor' may well have been at least partially modelled upon a personal redaction of the otherwise normative Pachomian Rule.

*A short theological excursus*

Blavatskian polemics against Christianity have been interpreted as one rather idiosyncratic stream of the great flood of anti-ecclesial rhetoric of the nineteenth century. To date, however, no scholar has sufficiently well isolated exactly what Blavatsky understood to be 'Churchianity'. As noted *supra*, her impressions of Western Christianity may well have been coloured by her own Orthodox heritage, and made more antagonistic as a consequence. Is it not likely, then, that the theological sympathies which indubitably inform Blavatskian Theosophy have their locus in Eastern Orthodox, rather than Western Catholic or Protestant models?

It can hardly be doubted that a central, perhaps prime, mythologem of esotericism is the Biblical Fall. The concomitant themes of reconciliation and revitalisation can confidently be described as the teleo-eschatology of much of the esoteric, and particularly theosophical, enterprise. Although, as has been noted *supra*, the systematics of Blavatskian Theosophy do not rely on a *single* Fall, but employ a progressivist, ever-inclining series of *krita yugakali yuga* cycles, Blavatsky nevertheless went to great trouble to incorporate Biblical lapsarianism into her macrohistory, thus indicating her awareness of its centrality to the Western imagination.

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A study of the motif of the Biblical Fall as it is represented by the great theorists of esotericism is yet to be written, but provisional work is being completed by numerous authors. In this context it is worth noting Antoine Faivre's analysis of the theme in the work of the Munich theosopher, Franz von Baader (1765-1841): Faivre, *Access*, 221-232 *et passim*. By 'Biblical Fall' is meant the Fall of humanity and, as a consequence, that of Nature - not the Fall of the angels.
The Orthodox exegesis of *Genesis* 1-3 differs from its Western Augustinian counterpart in certain pertinent ways. In the first place, Orthodox theologians tend to stress the notion that prelapsarian humanity existed in a state of 'general spiritual childlikeness'; *ergo*, Adam's fall did not involve the utter sundering of human perfectibility so much as its tragic truncation. Thus it is that, in accord with the Eastern Churches' devotion to a theology of *imago dei*, Adam's spiritual sonship - his iconic ontology - was not eradicated following his fall from grace, but rendered imperfect, or, quite literally, wanting. The image of God borne by humanity was not destroyed by Adam's sin; rather, it was distorted such that only the incarnate Logos could restore to the descendants of the primeval parents the divine potential for which they were created. The Patristic heritage of Orthodoxy thus espouses a synergistic, anti-predestinarian *telos* in which the volitional divinisation of humanity is the ultimate soteriological goal. As Vladimir Lossky noted:

> Adam did not fulfil his vocation. He was unable to attain to union with God, and the deification of the created order ... Deification, union with God by grace, had become impossible. But the plan of God was not destroyed by the sin of man; the vocation of the first Adam was fulfilled by Christ, the second Adam. God became man in order that man might become god, to use the words of Ireneus and Athanasius, echoed by the Fathers and theologians of every age ... What man ought to have attained by raising himself up to God, God achieved by descending to man.

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This cursive summary of Orthodox doctrine is significant for a discussion of Blavatskian Theosophy in so far as it is recognised that Adam fell from a state of spiritual immaturity, not as in most Augustinian, Lutheran or Calvinist confessions - from a position of spiritual adulthood. Adam and Eve did not lose the maturational supernatural gift of God's grace, so much as they impeded the workings of interiorised grace through naïve self-reliance; in other words, through their actions Adam and Eve denied themselves guaranteed access to perfecting grace, with the result that their intended growth into spiritual adulthood (theosis) was stunted. Such an exegesis is far closer to Blavatskian precepts than is the rigorous anti-Pelagianism of Augustine, for, in the Blavatskian redaction, the Adamic state is synonymous with impeded evolution. So it is that her allegorical exegesis of the Genesis passage suggests that the choice to partake of the forbidden fruit was simply a necessary step in human self-determination and evolution:

The terrible crime was merely the natural result of the law of evolution: that is the races - hardly solidified at first - of our androgynous and semi-ethereal prototypes, materializing themselves little by little, taking on a physical body, then separating into distinct males and females, finally procreated carnally after they had formerly created their likenesses by entirely different methods ... It was a philosophic doctrine imbedded in the esoteric meaning of the Promethean legend. The sacred fire which he stole from the Gods is the flame of conscious intellect ... That supposed 'revolt', that 'theft' of the creative fire, is a result of Evolution (of which the Darwinian theory is by the rough exterior husk on the physical or material plane).

According to this optimistic evolutionist hermeneutic, the Fall, then, was not the removal of proto-humanity from a state of perfection to that of degeneracy, but, rather, a positive step on the path from a state of inexperience, immaturity, and undifferentiation, to that of individual perfection:

Once endowed with the creative fire, completely evolved mankind had no further need for the help of the Powers or creative Gods,

Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. VIII, 386-387.
such as the *Elohim* of chapter ii of *Genesis*. Men became creative *Gods*, in their turn, able to give life to beings like themselves ...

[S]ince men had discovered, thanks to Prometheus, the *secret of the various methods of creation*, and were creating in their turn, what was the use of god-creators?80

The Blavatskian model would have it that Adam, as the template for the evolutionary *anthropos*, is assisted in his process towards individuation by the serpent/Lucifer, who becomes again the 'light-bearer'.81 In a very real sense the serpent of Genesis thereby assumes somewhat messianic attributes in Blavatskian discourse; it is the agent of the cosmic evolutionary impetus, having *descended* in order that humanity might *ascend*. Interestingly, then, it could be argued that Blavatsky has adopted much of the Orthodox exegesis of the Fall, but has cleverly spliced into it an idiosyncratic variant of the *theosis* doctrine.82 In fact, she has condensed the entire Orthodox dual-

Testamental *kerygma* into one chapter, for the *first and the second Adams exist coevally*. Sin and guilt (which, as Western doctrinal conceptions of the lapsarian condition, figure in no perceptible way in Blavatskian discourse) play no part in the Theosophical cosmo-drama; the only theodicy to be learned from the Biblical Fall is that evil, understood ontologically, is nothing but a resistible devolutionary pressure. The comments of the Orthodox scholar, Christoforos Stavropoulos, might just as easily have described Theosophical teleology:

80 Ibid., 387.

81 Blavatsky was very fond of the motif of 'Lucifer', in all of its variants. She chose the title for her own Theosophical magazine exactly because of its appositeness for her evolutionary dynamics (and also, no doubt, because she enjoyed the consternation such a choice caused in some quarters):

If one analyzes his [Lucifer's] rebellion, however, it will be found of no worse nature that an assertion of free-will and independent thought, as if Lucifer had been born in the XIXth century. This epithet of 'rebellious', is a theological calumny, on par with that other slander of God by the Predestinarians, one that makes of deity an 'Almighty' fiend worse than the 'rebellious' Spirit himself (H. P. Blavatsky, 'What's in a Name?: Why the Magazine is called "Lucifer"' in id., *Collected Writings*, vol. VIII, 5-13; p. 6 for quote).

82 One obvious point of departure from the Orthodox notion of divinisation is that, in the Blavatskian synthesis, there is an absolute ultimate identification between the individual and 'God'. Thus it is that, when Spirit has finally been totally unshackled of matter, there is a full integration of the human into the Absolute. In Orthodoxy, of course, the individual soul participates in divinity only through the beneficence of God, who alone retains divinity in essence.
Theosis ... means the elevation of the human being to the divine sphere, to the atmosphere of God ... Thus, human nature ought to be moving toward spiritualization, and in the process, its heavy materialism is to be broken down and dissolved. The human soul is to be polished so that it may be transformed from its present dullness to a shining spirituality.83

Just as there is no single Fall in Theosophy, but a multitude of evolutionary epochal moments, so, too, there is no single incarnation needed as the soteriological pivot of history. Requiring no doctrine of redemption, Blavatskian Theosophy dispensed with the notion of a messianic saviour, and chose instead a process of 'auto-soteriology' whereby every individual was deemed personally responsible for his or her 'return to Spirit'. Nevertheless, incarnate models of accelerated salvation were a logistical necessity in a system which presupposed a cosmic progressivism operating in eternity. Such models - the Masters - inevitably fulfilled much of the popular expectation of messianism, and appeared to offer a crucial antidote to the philosophic and scientific materialists' propagation of death as annihilation.

In this context it is worthwhile to remember that the Orthodox (and, indeed, the Patristic consensus) identify the prime inheritance of the Fall to be mortality and decay.84 The Augustinian notion of inherited guilt, which became so crucial to the development of Western Christianities, is fundamentally alien to Eastern Orthodox anthropology which stresses the volitional aspect of sin. Only the consequences of Adam's sin are shared by his descendants, not the sin itself. Thus Adam's wilfulness retains a cosmic significance but only to the extent that death and corruption became the common lot of humanity. It is mortality, physical and spiritual, which makes humans subject to sinfulness.

There can be little doubt that Blavatsky's portrayal of the Masters was intended to provide a perfect palliative for death. Not only do the Masters espouse a creed which promises the human Monad a multitude of lives and an ultimate eternity in the individual eschaton, but they themselves embody the overthrow of the Adamic

84 The literature on this point is vast. Cf., eg., Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 143-146 (for Patristic analysis); Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, 145-166.
inheritance. The Masters never seem to get sick and certainly live well beyond the expected human span and, although they must themselves die (in order to continue up the karmic scale), they are never presented as doing so. In fact, Blavatsky’s and Leadbeater’s Masters appear præternaturally robust.

That Blavatsky was well aware of Orthodox theology is evident from her repeated references to Oriental Patristic literature. It would certainly appear that Blavatsky believed neither in inherited guilt nor in the Augustinian definition of original sin, both mainstays of Western theological discourse. What she seems to have strongly favoured is the idea that a successful quasi-messianic figure - the Master - must be able to alleviate spiritual and physical corruption and to provide a means to vitiate the common human inheritance, death. In this, her depiction of the Master accords closely with Byzantine Christological theology. Further, her perception of the Adamic state as one of physical and spiritual immaturity is fully in accord with traditional Orthodox exegesis, which itself favoured a more progressivist anthropology than its Western counterparts (at least in Blavatsky’s day). Finally, the Orthodox doctrine of theosis, pivotal to any understanding of Eastern Christianity, was reconstrued by Blavatsky is essentialist terms, and made the foundation of her cosmo-teleology.

The evidence supporting Blavatsky’s debt to the native traditions of her homeland is sufficient to warrant special analysis. Attracted to the pre-Christian and folk survivals of her country, the volkhvy, no less than to the sagacious ascetical staretsi, Blavatsky appears to have woven such paradigms into her own synthesis and thereby enriched her depiction of the Masters accordingly. Later in her life she found an ideal template for the fusion of paideia and meta-empirical powers in the figure of the Coptic anchorite, whose brotherhoods were popularly described in terms she later employed in regard to the Theosophical Brotherhood. Further, her exposure to Byzantine - and,

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85 The term ‘original sin’ has always provided a dilemma for the Orthodox in that it has undoubted theological valency, but is unhappily associated with the Augustinian definition of ‘original guilt’. Some Orthodox theologians (e.g., John Karmiria) have begun to employ the term ‘ancestral sin’ (τὸ προκαταρθικὸν αμαρτημα) in preference: see Seraphim Rose’s comments in Pomazansky, Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, 164-166.
likely, Oriental - Orthodox theology availed her of an eminently replicable progressivist exegesis of the Biblical Fall, from which she could extrapolate an optimistic evolutionary dynamic at work in the cosmos. Coupled with the doctrine of theosis, itself suggestive of an ascensus framework, the Orthodox exegesis enabled Blavatsky to situate ‘Adam’ along her evolutionary spectrum, and to discern from Eastern Christian historiography the lesson that all life marches inexorably along an upward gradient toward reintegration in the Absolute. She was not the first to intuit Orthodoxy’s peculiar applicability to the neo-gnostic enterprise, nor the last, but certainly one of the more subtle.87

86 ‘Oriental Orthodoxy’ is the self-designated appellation of the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox. Chosen during a 1965 conference in Addis Ababa at the initiative of the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, the collective term is employed to designate the non-Byzantine Churches of the East which reject the Council of Chalcedon of 451. The title was chosen primarily in order to replace the derogatory (and, for the most part, untrue) designation of ‘Monophysite’. The communion includes the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and the ‘Jacobite’ Orthodox of India (together with newly autocephalous groupings, such as the Eritrean Orthodox, etc).

CHAPTER 25

THE PÆDAGOGICAL MASTER

One of the prime reasons for the lack of scholarly attention afforded to Theosophy is that it has fallen through the gaps of discrete academic disciplines. Its self-designation as an ‘occult philosophy’ (as well as its deceptively Oriental vocabulary and iconography) has meant that it has not really been assimilated into the ever-arbitrary category of ‘New Religious Movements’. Yet neither has Theosophy been wholeheartedly embraced by those whose sociological axiom would have it that occultism is a species of social alienation or anomie. After all, such an argument is much better served by contemporary counter- or anti-establishment religious phenomena than by the primly Victorian Theosophy of Blavatsky.

One result of the want of attention Theosophy has received from the academy has been that certain fields of enquiry remain entirely unchartered territory. One such domain is Theosophical pædeutics. Where the teacher-disciple (or guru-chela) dynamic has become a staple, not to say fixation, of the discourse of the scholarly study of New Religions, it has never been addressed with regard to Theosophy. Yet the relationship between the Master and his chela lies at the core of Theosophical epistemology and expectation.

1 Theosophy is also 125 years old. Some have found that nineteenth century eruptions such as Theosophy and Spiritualism are considered too distant to be included under the rubric of New Religious Movements. Indeed, one cannot help feeling that part of the subtext of the entire academic discourse devoted to New Religious Movements is the idea that such groups came out of the countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and are thus very new indeed. (The present author tends more to the view that the 1960s were an explosive footnote to the 1880s and the 1920s). In fact, one could argue that the predicate ‘New’ immediately limits both the data under scrutiny and the methodological apparatus.

2 It should be noted that Leadbeater, who spent much of his career developing programmes for Theosophical youth and advising parents on the correct means to raise children, was concerned primarily with the moral life of pubescents and post-pubescents. (Some might suggest that there is a certain unattractive irony here). Leadbeater studiously avoided reference to the dynamics of the Master-student (parent-child?) relationship - particularly with regard to the medium of the Mahatma letter. Indeed, Leadbeater’s clairvoyance allowed him to present himself as (more or less) the sole conduit to the Masters; the Mahatma letter was thus not a useful medium for him. Interestingly, the only time in the latter part of his Theosophical career that he employed the device of the Mahatma letter was in response to the threat of an alternative clairvoyant conduit, Arundale; see supra ch. 21.
The first observation to be made about Theosophical *paideia* is that, for all of its espousal of the necessity for individual instruction from a Master, the closest most Theosophists would ever get to one is *through* a text. The Master, then, is the semiotic referent; the text, as the signifier, is the vehicle for introducing the signified: the Master within. Without labouring the semiotic potentialities of the Master figure, it is fair to note that the means by which Blavatsky encoded her texts tells much about the purposes of the Masters.

Richard Valantasis has examined the relationship of spiritual guide to disciple in a variety of third-century texts. Of these, his analysis of the *Thanksgiving Speech* of Gregory Thaumaturgos (c.213-c.270) has particular resonances for Blavatsky’s presentation of the Masters. Gregory’s text has customarily been considered valuable as a resource for biographical materials on his teacher, Origen (c.185-c.254), thus ensuring that the work has been regarded primarily in terms of historicity. Valantasis has suggested that the semiotic valencies of the text have been overlooked in favour of the more predictable discussions of its historical transparency. (Of course, much the same could be said of the Theosophical Masters-literature).

Valantasis has argued that Gregory’s construction of the signified Origen is predicated upon the notion of ‘the divine man’:

> The student [Gregory] defines how the teacher is divine by describing the teacher in terms of an esoteric myth which he characterizes as a ‘transfer’ by practice into the divine.

Valantasis quotes Gregory to illustrate the spiritual guide’s ascendency:

> I intend to say something about the man on the one hand who is an apparent and seeming human being, and on the other hand (for those who have the greater capacity to see) who is already transferred by a greater practice of migration toward God ... What are his most godlike [attributes] and whatever in him happens to be related to

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1 Valantasis examined four texts: Gregory Thaumaturgos’ *Thanksgiving Speech*, Porphyry’s *On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books*, the Nag Hammadi Hermetic tractate *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* (for which see supra ch. 23), and the Nag Hammadi Gnostic tractate *Allogenes*. Each has been examined in reference to the present work, but Gregory’s text is considered adequate as a comparative piece.

4 Ibid., 19
God, both being enclosed in this visible and mortal person, and pressing hard with as much labor as possible to become like God.

This practice of transference is undergirded by five individual elements. **First**, there is the presentation of the relationship as 'esoteric', which in this context infers that only 'those who have the greater capacity to see' are able to intuit the ontological transfer undergone by the spiritual guide. Thus there is a larger spectrum of experience to be gained by those who are able to see beyond the 'seeming'. **Second**, the teacher has passed beyond 'apparent' reality and thus partakes of a certain ambivalent ontology. Crucially, he retains his status as a 'being enclosed in this visible and mortal person', yet has nevertheless achieved a certain paranormalcy. (Valantasis has perceptively noted the spiritual guide's docetic qualities). **Third**, the spiritual guide has undergone a process of 'migration toward God', inferring a gradual transference from one state to another, yet with the maintenance of certain qualities of both states. **Fourth**, the teacher has achieved his transference 'by a greater practice', which is to say his elevated status has been won through personal effort ('pressing hard with as much labor as possible'), and has not been bestowed upon him by external agency. Valantasis has suggested that '[τ]απαρωσκευὴ has the sense of preparation, practice, arrangement, provision, training. It seems to be synonymous with askesis, but without the connotation of physical, athletic practice'. **Fifth**, the efforts of the spiritual guide have achieved for him a 'godlike' status. He may not be God, but his divine likeness possesses a similar attractiveness for the student: 'we [the students] were drawn to him by some greater necessity in his words'. Further, 'he [the teacher] set us up by his speeches, I don’t know how, with a sort of divine power'.

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6 Ibid., 20. In an accompanying footnote Valantasis has noted: '[t]he possible alignment of the teacher with a "docetic" figure is highly suggestive of discussions of the 2d and 3d centuries about the divinity of Jesus and his mortality' (in ibid., 20n16). One wishes Valantasis had examined this similarity further, particularly in the context of the Alexandrian allegorical exegetical tradition - sponsored, as it was, by Origen himself.
7 Valantasis buttresses his argument in this circumstance by close attention to the syntactical structures of the Greek: in Ibid., 20-21.
8 Ibid., 21.
Valantasis has convincingly argued that Gregory’s construction of Origen as ‘the divine man’ is based on the use of spatial migration as a metaphor for the inward journey to divinisation. The spatial imagery employs an ascent/descent figuration involving two connotative systems:

The first system revolves about a myth of the ascent and descent of a revealer figure. The second connotative system, derivative from the first, explores the benefits derived from that myth of ascent and thus further expands the range of significances.\(^{11}\)

Of great significance for these schemata is the recognition that ascent and descent are both necessary for the process of divinisation to continue unhindered. The spiritual guide ascends via a graduated migration to the sphere of divinity and earns for himself a godlike ontology through his labours. The benefits of his efforts must, however, be circulated. His subsequent descent to the earthly realm allows further penetration of the divine into the human stratum by procuring benefits for the spiritual guide’s disciples. Thus the logistical patterning of the educative system is predicated upon a cyclical spatial modelling.\(^{12}\)

Valantasis has isolated three benefits for the disciple which accrue upon the teacher’s descent. \textit{First}, the spiritual guide has achieved the distinction of becoming the advocate for God on the human plane. Given his advanced status, the teacher is empowered to speak on God’s behalf. Gregory noted:

For the leader of all men, who gives promptings to the prophets who are friends of God and who suggests every prophesy and secret and divine word, honoring him thus as a friend established him as a mouthpiece.\(^{13}\)

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 19.
\(^{12}\) One wishes Valantasis had explored the cyclicism in more detail. It is crucial to recognise that the ascent/descent figuration is given atemporality by its cyclicism. In other words, Gregory has invested his text with an extra-temporalised universalism by suggesting that, just as Origen achieved godlike status, so his students could achieve like results by emulating his labours. (Surely, such must be the pious motivation for the production of the text in the first place).
\(^{13}\) Gregory Thaumaturgos, \textit{Thanksgiving Speech}, XV.176, in ibid., 23. That Valantasis has noted that the Greek term employed by Gregory for ‘advocate’ is better translated in this context as ‘mouthpiece’ in interesting in so far as this was the term employed regularly by the Masters for Blavatsky.
Second, the teacher is considered to be a hearer of God: ‘He was a skilled and sagacious hearer of God’. The spiritual guide is not only able to be God’s ‘mouthpiece’, but his teachings come directly from his own inner communion with the divine. Thus the intimacy of the student with the divine is reinforced (through the mediation of the teacher), and the validity of the teacher’s utterances emphasised. Third, the spiritual guide becomes an interpreter of divine oracles. The primacy of this gift was clear in Gregory’s mind:

This is the greatest gift which he received from God and he was able to distribute every beautiful things from heaven: to be an interpreter of the oracles of God for humanity, to understand the things of God as spoken by God, and to expound for humanity as they are listening.

The teacher is thus granted the faculty to provide the authorised hermeneutic. By dint of his friendship with God and his official status as God’s representative, he is empowered to uncover the hidden meaning of scripture and to furnish the systematics whereby apparent contradictions are reconciled and confusions are assuaged.

The benefits for the student which attend upon the teacher’s descensus create a class of significations which mirror those between the teacher and the divine. So it is that just as the spiritual guide looks heavenward for his inspiration, so too the internal dynamics of the relationship suggest that the student looks to the teacher in a proximate way. Further, as the teacher strives to ascend to the divine, the student attempts to attain - to ‘ascend’ to - the status of a teacher. (The mediational function of the teacher in this structural dynamic is crucial to any understanding of its semiosis). It might justifiably be said that the ascent/descent topos, employed by Gregory to establish the workings of God among humans, is recreated at the personal level between the teacher and the disciple. The relationship between teacher and disciple is, thus, a miniature of that between God and teacher (or even God and the material world). A distant God is brought close in the person of the spiritual guide.

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*Gregory Thaumaturgos, Thanksgiving Speech, XV.181, in ibid., 24.
*Gregory noted that the spiritual guide ‘interpreted and clarified whatever was obscure and riddling’: Gregory Thaumaturgos, Thanksgiving Speech, XV.174, in ibid., 25.
*Valantasis has called this process ‘educational ascent’: ibid., 30.
Valantasis’ analysis of Gregory’s *Thanksgiving Speech* presents Origen not as an historical entity, but as a literary trope, with functions revealed semiotically by the text. Certainly, he does not argue that Origen was *invented* by Gregory, but *recreated textually* as a device for specifically pious purposes. Thus it is entirely possible for the spiritual guide *qua* human to exist physically (the historical Origen), but also to operate *qua* textual strategy (Gregory’s literary construct). This last observation is significant for an examination of Theosophical *paideia*, for Blavatsky’s employment of the Master as a literary apparatus does not demonstrate that the Masters were fictive, merely that Blavatsky was well aware of their semiotic value.

The similarities between Blavatsky’s depiction of the spiritual guide (the Master) and Gregory’s (Origen) are sufficiently clear that to detail the points of concordance between Blavatsky’s figurations and Gregory’s five elements of transference and three benefits of the teacher’s *descensus* would be to labour the obvious. Suffice to note that the Theosophical Master is presented as (1) only understood as such by those with eyes to see, (2) has an ambivalent ontology, both human and meta-human (encouraging a somewhat docetic discourse), (3) has migrated in steps toward the divine, (4) has achieved his elevation through personal endeavour, not by adoption or grace, and (5) has achieved a godlike status as a divinised man, and thus shares in the divine attractiveness. Further, the Master’s self-abnegation (at least in so far as he is required, for the purposes of further spiritual and physical evolution, to ‘descend’ to the human plane and teach) advantages the student in identical ways to that described by Gregory: (1) the Master is the friend of God (that is, fully in sympathy with the universal processes) and thus the mouthpiece of the cosmos, (2) he is a ‘hearer of God’ in that his teachings accurately reflect occult cosmology and anthropology, and are thus accorded the status of revelation, and (3) he is the ultimate occult hermeneut, empowered to advocate a universal metaphysic which quite literally incorporates all

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Blavatsky was always careful not to undermine the dynamics of her system by isolating the trope of the Masters from their physical ontology. Nevertheless she was not above witty allusions to her semiotic strategy:

To say that she has invented the Masters ... they are also giving her the credit of being far cleverer than the hundreds of men (many very clever and not a few scientific men), who believe in what she says - inasmuch as she must have fooled them all! If they speak the truth, then she must be several Mahâtmâs rolled into one, like a nest of Chinese boxes (Blavatsky, *The Key*, 190).

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other creeds and philosophies, while simultaneously transcending them - thus it is that he is simultaneously the transmitter of, and interpreter of, divine oracles.

It is significant to note that Gregory's *Thanksgiving Speech* has a deceptive orality. Throughout the discourse the reader gains the impression that the text is but the record of an oral testimony of Gregory's relationship with Origen. Whether or not this is true, the text is seen to be but the humble trace of the original oral account. What mattered, it seems, was not the *Thanksgiving Speech* itself, but the original teacher-disciple relationship which it documented. This literary subversion of the text (whereby the presumed historical relationship - as much a creature of the text as its creator - is consciously accentuated to the detriment of its 'historical' textual record) is an identical device to that used by Blavatsky.

Theosophical students of *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* believe the works to be propædeutical in so far as they educate the aspirant sufficiently in Theosophical tenets such that he or she will grow into readiness for personal instruction from a Master or Masters. As they read the texts they recognise that these teachings are the record of Blavatsky's own chelaship; that is, all of the wonders of the Theosophical cosmos which fill the pages of the Theosophical canon were first taught to Blavatsky by her personal Masters prior to being recorded and distributed. Thus it is that the aspirant/reader recognises the meta-narrative which stands above the complexities of the Theosophical teachings: the sophistication and magnitude of the textual record of Blavatsky's chelaship serves to enshrine a belief in the historicity of the prime teacher-disciple relationship. The presence of the Masters 'in' the text (as metaphorical referential tropes) cleverly reinforces a belief in their physical ontology.

19 Valantasis has noted that it is 'virtually impossible to decide whether the original genre of the work was written or oral': in Valantasis, *Spiritual Guides*, 148. The artifice of orality is, of course, further exaggerated by the idea that the text is a record of a dinner speech made by Gregory. The strategy to construct a (likely false) historicity is obvious from the title given to the piece (*Thanksgiving Speech*) which itself gives immediate attention to the priority given to speech over text.

20 It is interesting that Blavatsky's closest pupils believed that her system must have come from some sort of Master - if not the trans-Himalayan Brotherhood, then from the 'Master' Blavatsky: Half-measures, I repeat, are no longer possible. Either I have stated the truth as I know it about the Masters and teach what I have been taught by them, or I have invented both Them and the Esoteric Philosophy. There are those among the Esotericists of the inner group who say that if I have done the latter, then I must myself be a 'Master'. However it may be, there is no alternative to this dilemma (Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XII, 166).
It is Valantasis' assertion that each of the four texts he studied has as its objective the spiritual formation of the reader, and that the historical narrative of teacher-disciple instruction (as presented in the texts themselves) is a literary artifice designed to achieve this end. *Ergo*, the historical validity of the accounts, while a likely necessary presumption on the part of the reader, is of little ultimate intrinsic value:

Although attempting at once to disguise their artifice and to claim a historical referent, these texts actually provide the spiritual formation *through reading* ... The texts function more analogously, then, like a transforming theurgic ritual with the literary spiritual guides as hierophants.²¹

Valantasis' theurgic analogy is particularly appropriate for a discussion of Blavatsky’s methods of esoteric instruction. Although she herself spurned theurgic activities,²² there is more than a hint of magic (both as transformative agent and as *legerdemain*) in the multi-layered semiotics with which she infused her writings. As has been noted *supra*, Blavatsky’s mercurial Masters ultimately effaced themselves by ‘disappearing’ into their gift: language (or text).²³ This vivification of the word with a divine spirit - a notion of great pedigree in the esoteric sphere²⁴ - was a process of which Blavatsky was acutely well aware. Her analogy of truth as a goddess dwelling in the bottom of a well (borrowed from Democritus) could just as easily be interpreted as the Master - surely another personification of truth - residing in the text:

*Outside a certain highly spiritual and elevated state of mind,*
*during which Man is at one with the UNIVERSAL MIND - he can get nought on earth but relative truth, or truths, from*

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¹ Valantasis, *Spiritual Guides*, 149, emphasis added.
² But cf. *supra* ch. 5.
³ See *supra* ch. 23. The danger of artificially divorcing Theosophical texts from the ‘Master’ within is that the ‘ensouled’ text (i.e. Theosophical *scripture*) simply reverts to a human construct, bereft of authority, and ‘dies’ as a ‘reading mystery’ (for which see *supra* ch. 23). One is reminded of Yeats’ account of his first encounter with Blavatsky, which, when read metaphorically, is richly rewarding:

I strayed through folding doors into the next room and stood in sheer idleness of mind, looking at a cuckoo clock. It was certainly stopped, for the weights were off and lying upon the ground, and yet, as I stood there, the cuckoo came out and cuckooed at me. I interrupted Madame Blavatsky to say, ‘Your clock has hooted me’. ‘It often hoots at a stranger’, she replied. ‘Is there a spirit in it?’ I said. ‘I do not know’, she said; ‘I should have to be alone to know what is in it’. I went back to the clock and began examining it and heard her say, ‘Do not break my clock’ (*Yeats, Autobiographies*, 174).

²⁴ See *infra* ch. 28.
whatever philosophy or religion. Were even the goddess who
dwells at the bottom of the well to issue from her place of
confinement, she could give no man more than he can assimilate.
Meanwhile, every one can sit near that well - the name of which is
KNOWLEDGE - and gaze into its depths in the hope of seeing
Truth's fair image reflected, at least, on the dark waters.\textsuperscript{35}

Throughout Blavatsky's writings there is a deliberate textual subversion which causes
the reader to believe that his or her spiritual formation can be achieved only through
individual chelaship under a Master. In order to achieve this end, the reader must read
more in order to be prepared for the anticipated physical visitation from the
Brotherhood. Consequently, the bias against text paradoxically urges the aspirant
chela to learn more and more from authoritative published sources. In the end, of
course, the process produced many highly Theosophically-literate esotericists - a large
percentage of whom felt nevertheless unfulfilled, having failed (as they saw it) to
attract the attentions of a Master. Yet the dissatisfaction felt by such otherwise ardent
Theosophists must be seen in the light of the transformations which the texts
themselves worked upon the readers; after all, a belief in the Masters - fostered and
fertilised by the Theosophical canon - had wrought exactly the changes which
Blavatsky sought in her disciples: a rejection of ossified cultus and of the dreaded
materialism, and an informed acceptance of the veracity of the Ancient Wisdom.\textsuperscript{26}

Toward the end of her life Blavatsky was abandoned by many of her hitherto zealous
students, for the most part because the Masters - having failed to provide sufficient
empirical proofs of their own existence - came to be viewed as a massive fraud
perpetrated upon a credulous membership. Significantly, many of these (who received
\textsuperscript{31} Blavatsky, \textit{Collected Writings}, vol. IX, 40-41.

\textsuperscript{30} One is reminded of the description of Blavatsky's teaching techniques by her acquaintance Princess
Helene von Racowitza:

\begin{quote}
She undertook, by her fiery descriptions, so full of temperament, to illustrate to
us the pure ethics and doctrines of evolution; to awaken our souls to the highest
development; to urge us toward the discovery of the Godhead within ourselves; to
foster it, and thus to mature to the highest spiritual development (Princess
Helene von Racowitza, \textit{An Autobiography}, trans. Cecil Marr, Constable and
\end{quote}

It is a singular fact that this description could comfortably describe the methods of Blavatsky, her
works, or the Masters.

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their occult apprenticeships at the hands of Blavatsky) subsequently issued forth their own brands of mystical pedagogy; indeed, the pervasive influence of Blavatskian Theosophy upon the progenitors of the myriad religionisms and esotericisms of the twentieth century has hardly begun to be properly assessed. (Even without the benefit of oracles, it is a fair judgment that her influence is yet to peak). That Theosophy should have proved to be the crucible for so many alternative esoteric visions is only surprising if its true value as a school of instruction is gainsaid. For very elaborate instruction was received by aspirants to occult wisdom, but not in the fashion which they imagined - and craftily were led to believe - would be the case. The Masters were not an ignis fatuus after all, rather, they were an Exodic Pillar of Fire.
In a recent work devoted to 'Western Teachers in Eastern Traditions', Andrew Rawlinson has made plain his explanation for Theosophy's success:

At this point (say 1881 or 1882), Theosophy can be said to be complete. The Adepts/Brothers/Masters/Mahatmas have been located in the Himalayas; the Theosophical Society itself is based in India; and Blavatsky is functioning as a spiritual teacher (in her capacity as mouthpiece for the Masters). And it is the Easternization of Theosophy that has brought about this completion.¹

Rawlinson's can be considered the consensus opinion among contemporary Theosophists, scholars, and even-minded critics. That Blavatsky and Olcott (whose own contributions are sometimes overshadowed by his mentor's) introduced much of the Oriental religious idiom to the West is undeniable - though the degree of their fidelity to sources remains a great deal more dubious. A rather more interesting question, perhaps, devolves upon Rawlinson's choice of language: 'Easternize' is a transitive construction, implying an object which is 'Easternized'. This might well seem to be a trivial grammatical point, but on closer inspection it becomes significant because it implies active engagement and transformation; that is, Theosophy ceased to be what it was, and became something new, something which could be characterised as 'Eastern'.

Virtually all the published histories of Theosophy include illustrations of eminent Western members arrayed in Indian garb. Although such attempts at acculturation are quite laudable (and proved very popular with indigenous Indians), it is rare to find an image in which the subject appears entirely comfortable; there is often a sense that the Theosophist is not wearing clothing, so much as a costume. In a strictly limited sense, this idea of 'costume' can be used as a metaphor for the Theosophical experience in India. If, regardless of commendable intent, the Theosophical enterprise

¹ Rawlinson, The Book of Enlightened Masters, 195.
remained for the most a Western affair, then Rawlinson's 'Easternization' should probably be replaced with the more consciously ambiguous term 'Orientalism', for which there is ample precedent and an abundant literature.

In his justly-famed Orientalism of 1978, Edward Said has examined the ideological agendas of the West's Eastern gaze:

In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand.²

Said's thesis is primarily determined by his perception of the power relationships between the Orient and the Occident, as determined historically (particularly by colonial imperialism).³ He suggests that no true representation of anything is possible as the very act of re-presenting refracts the object through such lenses as cultural praxis, historical relationships, and political ideology.⁴ By tracing the phenomenology of such often undisclosed agendas, Said posits for Orientalism a 'discursive consistency';⁵ namely, that the 'East' operates as an amorphous 'Other', whose primary significance is to provide a reflected gaze of the West to the West in order to foster self-identity, cultural superiority, and the presumption of the right to rule.

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³ It should be noted that Said was concerned with the Arab Islamic world and not the 'Far East', although several authors have extrapolated that his conclusions can refer to India and China: cf., eg., Bernard Faure, Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993, 5-6 et passim; but cf. Javed Majeed, Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's 'The History of British India' and Orientalism, Clarendon, Oxford, 1992, 196-200. Any (Theosophical) analysis of Said's book might note Bryan Turner's remark: 'Said was a significant critic of French orientalism, but he was particularly weak in terms of German and British orientalism' (Bryan S. Turner, Orientalism, postmodernism and globalism, Routledge, London, 1994, 5).
⁴ Said, Orientalism, 272-274.
⁵ Ibid., 273.
Said's conclusions, while bleak and sometimes perilously fatalistic, are a crucial interpretive mechanism for exposing the hidden strategies behind the Western discourse of 'the East'. He notes that due to ineradicable historical factors, any knowledge about, or ideas of, the Orient can be construed as colonising power, thus reinforcing the alienation of the two 'spheres' rather than breaching the divide. Further, all attempts at articulating a 'vision' of the Orient, as Blavatsky certainly did, are inherently reductive as they rely on empirically-dubious preconstructed categories such as 'the Orient', 'the Muslim mind', and so on. In sum, however, Said's dynamic typology of Orientalism fails in one crucial respect: it undervalues the regularity with which Oriental motifs have been imported into Western discourse not only for self-reinforcement or political advantage, but also as a counter-cultural critique and as a corrective for presumed errors of Western development. As J. J. Clarke noted:

>The perceived otherness of the Orient is not exclusively one of mutual antipathy, nor just a means of affirming Europe's triumphant superiority, but also provides a conceptual framework that allows much fertile cross-referencing, the discovery of similarities, analogies, and models; in other words, the underpinning of a productive hermeneutical relationship.

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A literal reading of Said would indeed lead to a necessary sense of futility on the part of scholars. If all presentations of the East by Western authorities are distortions, and necessarily either cultural appropriations or aids to colonial power (or both), then every such attempt is foiled. Logically, such a view can only promote a sense of cultural regionalism, a sort of self-arresting myopia, which presumably would have its own dire consequences for global vision. Such is the extremist limit (and, perhaps, natural corollary) of Foucault's power/knowledge structure. Several scholars have recently reappraised Said's work in a more liberal vein: for a concise overview see J. J. Clarke, Oriental Enlightenment: The encounter between Asian and Western thought, Routledge, London, 1997, 22-28 et passim. See also Ziauddin Sardar, Orientalism, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1999, 65-76. Clarke, Oriental Enlightenment, 27. A similar sentiment informs Julie F. Dodell & Dianne Sachko Macleod, eds., Orientalism Transposed: The Impact of the Colonies on British Culture, Ashgate, Aldershot, Hants., 1998, 2-3 et passim. One should also not forget that the notion of 'Orientalism' as a counter-cultural critique can work from West to East; thus it is that a religious formulation such as Cao Dai developed in Vietnam. Cao Dai is a syncretistic phenomenon which has imported several Western forms into local tradition, thus creating a certain hypostatisation of religiousities and positing, interestingly, a universalism as a consequence. Cao Dai has especial resonances for the reception of Western esotericism in the East as it employs a variant of Spiritualist automatic writing in its revelatory practises: see Anson, Bishops at Large, 539. A comparative study of Theosophy and Cao Dai (with an emphasis on the likely influence of the former on the latter) would be highly interesting.
Blavatsky's Orientalism was by no means exempted from the redactional pressures outlined by Said; her primary perspective was always that of the Western esotericist, and her depiction of an Indic survival of the *prisca theologia* was arbitrarily constructed on thoroughly Western ideological principles. Care should be taken as well in considering her a scholarly 'Orientalist', even by the standards of her era. Yet Blavatsky's Orientalism - although presented as an accurate account of Indic and Tibetan *religion* - was at its core an esotericist's critique of Western *irreligion*. Thus, although Blavatsky appropriated much Oriental iconography and vocabulary, and claimed to do so authoritatively, her methodological stance was, ironically, significantly more transparently and unashamedly biassed than that of many of her scholarly contemporaries who seemed often to believe their work was exempt from any taint of Western prejudice.

In Theosophy, of course, the 'hermeneutical relationship' between East and West is fostered by Hermes' latter-day *personae*, the Masters. It is they who mediated the Ancient Wisdom tradition (in its Orientalist recension) to the unenlightened West, and it is from them that Blavatsky claimed the authority to bring religious reformation to an Occident characterised by an ever-increasing reliance on materialist science. Yet it would be a mistake to suggest that the notions of Orientalised *prisci theologi* and _ex oriente lux_ began with Blavatsky; as with all of her formulations, the motifs, paradigms, and mythologies which populate her macrohistorical vision were collected raven-like from every available source and restructured to fit into a decidedly idiosyncratic pattern. It is not surprising, then, to discover that the Masters were but the most recent in a long line of Oriental sages who had captured the Western

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9 F. Max Müller, a sometime nemesis of Blavatsky (for whose scholarship she nonetheless evinced a reluctant admiration), expressed his view thus:

'[W]hen we come to examine what these depositaries of primaeval wisdom, the Mahâtmas of Tibet and of the sacred Ganges, are supposed to have taught her we find no mysteries, nothing very new, nothing very old, but simply a medley of well-known though generally misunderstood Brahmanic or Buddhist doctrines. There is nothing that cannot be traced back to generally accessible Brahmanic or Buddhistic sources, only everything is muddled or misunderstood (Müller, *Last Essays, Second Series*, 110-111).

10 For a discussion of Blavatsky's incorrect employment of various Oriental motifs see in ibid., esp., 111-133.

11 Cf., eg., Kathryn S. Freeman, “‘Beyond the stretch of labouring thought sublime’: Romanticism, post-colonial theory and the transmission of Sanskrit texts' in Dodell & Macleod, eds., *Orientalism Transposed*, 140-157.
imagination.

The idea of the 'Mystic East' was well established by the time of the classical period. That Oriental wisdom was deemed exotic, desirable, and authoritative is indicated by the common belief that philosophers such as Pythagoras travelled in the East, and by the excitement aroused by such visitors as the 'Chaldean' and the 'magi' who journeyed westward to the Academy in order to meet Plato. One significant factor in the attraction of Oriental thought and religiosity for the West might well be its reputation for the possession of a revealed wisdom, a divinely-sanctioned philosophy. As noted supra, Graeco-Roman paganism tended to divide between oracular and cultic praxis, on the one hand, and the institutionalised philosophical Schools, on the other - with little creative interchange between the two. Fowden has characterised the situation thus:

The traditional religion was an amorphous agglomeration of cults that had no discernible beginning in time and which, in the absence of any authoritative statement or source of doctrine, had to make do with the utterances of poets ... With the philosophers themselves the enquiring mind would fare little better, since no two of them could agree on anything, as was well known.

As the popularity of the figure of Hermes Trismegistus amply illustrates, the desire to possess intellectually satisfying holistic philosophies sanctioned by divine warrant is not a modern phenomenon. It could be argued that the introduction of the Oriental sage as a response to this aspiration was a strategy of Orientalism designed to fill a perceived gap in Western religious experience - what might be termed the void of authority. Such a view is not at all inconsistent with Said's perception that the dynamics of Orientalism are geared to produce self-referential outcomes; that is, a perceived lack of authoritative divine sanction for philosophical and cosmological

15 There are, of course, several other allied constructs of the Oriental sage. One - of great longevity - is the ascription to Eastern 'Magi' of great supernatural powers. Such a mythologem is founded upon many principles, not the least being a racist fear of Eastern colonial discontent - surely the source of the idea of the 'Yellow Peril'.
pronunciamenti in the West caused a locus for exactly such revelatory sources to be situated (at least in the Western imagining) far to the East - in the ever-malleable mystical ‘alterity’. The topos of the Oriental sage, as a strategic exercise of Orientalism, should thus be viewed primarily as a corrective or restorative force in Western religio-philosophical discourse. The sage ‘exists’ to reinvigorate and challenge; it is not really significant whether his teachings are demonstrably Oriental in substance, a Westernised amalgam, or even an entirely Western construct, because the source of the materials is ultimately of less importance than their perceived authoritativeness.

This is not the place to limn the multitude of constructs of the Oriental sage, but a few examples will illuminate the regular historical recurrence of this prime Occidental mythologem, particularly as it is construed in the esoteric sphere. Perhaps the most influential esoteric formulation of this type is that of Christian Rosenkreutz, whose travels in the East led him to various centres of esoteric lore. He studied with such teachers as the ‘Sages of Damcar [Damascus]’ and, having learned their secrets, returned to Europe to institute a pansophic renovatio. That Rosenkreutz’s activities occurred against a background of the fading promise of the Reformation, and the desire on the part of the Tübingen intellectuals to institute a rejuvenated Lutheranism by suffusing it with neo-Joachimist and esoteric philosophies, is only indicative of the

17 Naturally, the restorative power of the Oriental sage topos (for Western discourse) does not mean that such representations are balanced appraisals of Eastern religiosity. As Richard King has opined: It is interesting to note in this context that the association of religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism with mysticism and the stereotype of the navel-gazing, antisocial and otherworldly mystic has come to function as one of the most prevailing cultural representations of Indian religion and culture in the last few centuries (King, Orientalism and Religion, 33).
19 For Rosicrucianism see infra ch. 29.
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broad semiotical applicabilities of the 'Eastern sages' topos in reformist speculation.21

Latter-day recensions of Rosicrucian Orientalism are not difficult to find. One of the more celebrated is that of Hargrave Jennings (1817?-1890), whose Rosicrucianism is so far removed in substance from the manifestoes that it is barely recognisable beyond one salient similarity: the implied inspiration of Oriental sages. Jennings' first book, The Indian Religions of 1858, was produced in response to Müller's essay on Buddhism published in the London Times in April of the previous year.22 Jennings, self-described as 'an Indian missionary', objected to Müller's characterisation of Buddhism as atheistical and, in a typically convoluted response, argued instead that Buddhism was the Ur-religion of humanity, and that the 'mystic Buddhists' have survived to modern times in the form of the Rosicrucian Fraternity.23 Jennings' dilettantish endeavours - although not without their interest as uncommon examples of positive reviews for Buddhism in the mid-nineteenth century24 - evidently fit snugly within the tradition of esoteric metamythicising which reached its culmination in Blavatsky. Indeed, Jennings' ideological position shares great sympathy with Blavatsky's, though its exposition is more laboured:

Opposed to [denseness and materialism] is the whole object of our book. For we seem to recognise that it is in the gulf of materialism that the loss of religion, in the modern days, is threatened. Men's thoughts, business, inquest, treasures, conquests, life, are all too much of the world.25

Jennings' later works, notably his The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries (1870) and Phallicism, Celestial and Terrestrial, Heathen and Christian (1884),

22 For details of the disagreement between Jennings and Müller see Godwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment, 262ff.
23 Hargrave Jennings, The Indian Religions or Results of the Mysterious Buddhism: Concerning that also which is to be understood in the Divinity of Fire, 2nd ed., George Redway, London, 1890, 99. All quotations are from the significantly enlarged second edition of 1890.
25 Jennings, The Indian Religions, 99.
depict Rosicrucianism (into which the author implies he was initiated)\(^26\) as the preeminent survival of an antique solar/phallic *cultus*.\(^{27}\) This mythistorical speculation, influenced by such allegorisers as Knight,\(^{28}\) differed in one crucial respect from the plethora of competing mythographies of its era: it claimed specific authority on the basis of Eastern (Rosicrucian) initiation. The situating of such authority in the Orient - Jennings actually knew next to nothing about Buddhism, and accessed no primary texts\(^{29}\) - is a specific strategy on the author's part to fill the lacuna of religious authority which he believed 'materialism' had caused. He sought, as had earlier generations of Rosicrucians and Hermeticists, a specifically *Oriental* solution to the problem of revelatory authority.

Two other individuals require brief mention in respect of esoteric, particularly Rosicrucian, Orientalism. The first, Paschal Beverly Randolph, whose influences on Blavatsky have only begun to be understood,\(^{30}\) produced perhaps the most

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\(^26\) Jennings often alluded cryptically to his intimate knowledge of the Rosicrucian fraternity:

> To the guardians of the more recondite and secret philosophical knowledge, of whom, in the societies - abroad and at home - there are a greater number, even in these days, than the uninitiate might suppose, it will be sufficient to observe that in no part of our Book ... is there approach, by us, to disclosures which, in any mind, might be considered too little guarded (Jennings, *The Indian Religions*, 220-221; cf., also, Jennings, *The Rosicrucians*, ix-xi).

\(^27\) Jennings often signed his name with the traditional 'F. R. C.' Godwin suggested that Jennings' Rosicrucian membership may have been mediated through Pascal Beverly Randolph: Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 268-269.


\(^29\) For Knight *inter alia* see supra ch. 20.

\(^30\) As Godwin astutely observed, the first edition of *The Indian Religions* has as its bibliographic basis mostly standard English editions of popular works by the esotericists Agrippa, Paracelsus, van Helmont, and Swedenborg. The source of Jennings' knowledge of the East appears to be the * Asiatic Journal* and *Asiatic Researches*.

sophisticated cosmological Rosicrucianism of his day. Randolph, it might be said, had ‘trumped’ Jennings by espousing an extraordinarily elongated prehistory for the Rosicrucians (whom he believed to be derived from a pre-Adamite Melchizedek), and by suggesting that the mysteries of the Rosicrucians were not so much phallic survivals as actively sexological in nature. Randolph stated that ‘the Rosicrucian system is, and never was other else than a door to the ineffable Grand Temple of Eulis’, the latter personifying his own rather genteel and well-articulated theories of human sexuality. Interestingly, unlike many another Rosicrucian manqué, Randolph travelled extensively in the Near East, spending the better part of a year there from 1861 to 1862. In semi-fictionalised accounts of his travels, he claimed to have encountered a mysterious Persian, Pul Ali Beg, who headed the ‘Oriental Rosicrucians’—having taken over from Thothmor/Thothmes (an overt Hermesian figure).

Randolph presents the Rosicrucian fraternity as an interlocking network of international directorates, yet, significantly, the ‘Oriental Rosicrucians’ remain the heart of the enterprise. Randolph, believing sexual magic to be the stuff of Rosicrucianism, followed the same strategy outlined supra, and situated the locus of his sexual ‘Rosicrucianism’ in the Mystic East among the Syrian Nusa’iri (or Ansaireh), a much persecuted non-normative Muslim denomination with roots in

31 Indeed, it might be too limiting to refer to his corpus as ‘Rosicrucianism’ at all, in so far as its breadth of vision and purpose can rarely be shown to have a genesis in the manifestes. Randolph’s articulation of a progressivist celestial hierarchy, endowed with an optimistic teleology, has no English-language comparabilities in its century aside from Blavatsky. Incidentally, both posited an esoteric ethnography, but Randolph’s is the more surprising (if not quite so fully articulated) for its engagedly idiosyncratic—and occasionally quite transgressive—view of black-skinned peoples. Randolph himself was of partial Afro-American heritage, and was at one time Principal of the ‘Lloyd Garrison Grammar School—Colored’ in New Orleans. See Godwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment, 257.

32 Randolph considered Melchizedek something of a paterfamilias of Rosicrucianism, and stated that he antedated the Abrahamic priest-king of Genesis: in Deveney, Paschal Beverly Randolph, 152-153, 454n122. For Melchizedek see also infra ch. 28.

33 Quoted in Godwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment, 260.

34 Thotmore appears in Dealings with the Dead: The Human Soul, Its Migrations And Its Transformations (1862); Pul Ali Beg in The Rosicrucian’s Story (1863). Unravelling the various strands of personality, identity, and character in Randolph’s novels, Spiritualistic tracts, and mature cosmologies is a difficult business. The best analysis is Deveney, Paschal Beverly Randolph, ch. 6.
Fatamid Isma'ilism, Valentinian Gnosticism, and Manichaeism. That the Nusa'iri had developed a reputation for antinomianism and sexual licentiousness by the late eighteenth century was much due to the efforts of such metamythographers as Constantin Francois de Volney - who thus furnished later Orientalising esotericists like Randolph with a prime locus for a proto-'Rosicrucian' Eastern enclave of sex magicians. Needless to say, Randolph's *The Ansairetic Mystery, A New Revelation Concerning Sex! A 'Private Letter, Printed, But Not Published; It Being Sacred and Confidential* of 1873 is self-evidently his own creation, with nothing peculiar to Nusa'iri belief or practice. Reference to the Nusa'iri simply provided the context of revelatory authority which allowed Randolph to propagate his sexual esotericism as a corrective to (as he perceived it) a harmful Western sexual psychopathology.

It might be observed that the vast majority of self-styled Rosicrucians followed the manifestoes in situating the source of Rosenkreutz's teachings and authority in the Near East. Yet Deveney has noted that, in accord with the Germanic notion of *Randvölkeridealizierung* (the 'idealisation of peripheral peoples'), there is a pronounced tendency for esotericists qua Orientalists to shift their locus geographically so as to maintain remoteness:

As it becomes inescapably clear to the individual seeker that he or she does not possess the truth or the key to obtain it, the source of the wisdom is made to recede spatially. As the bounds of the known world widened, the search of necessity led ever further afield.

An excellent concise summary of the Nusa'iri, and of Western constructs of their religious outlook, is to be found in ibid., 211-217. Deveney noted that the Nusa'iri are to be found primarily in Syria, but also 'in pockets in Palestine, Kurdistan, Egypt, and Iran' (p. 211). Interestingly, just as Randolph employed the Nusa'iri as a locus for authority, the continuators of Gurdjieff (such as J. G. Bennett) have referred to various Sufi orders (e.g., 'the Khwajagan') in a similar vein: see Ernest Scott, *The People of the Secret*, The Octagon Press, London, 1983, chaps. 8-11, appendix B.

For Volney see supra ch. 20.

*The Ansairetic Mystery, A New Revelation Concerning Sex! A 'Private Letter, Printed, But Not Published; It Being Sacred and Confidential* was produced (anonymously) for private circulation to Randolph's students, and was printed by the Liberal Publishing House in Toledo. Though undated, Deveney argues for a date circa 1873: Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 360-62.

Ibid., xxiii. One is reminded of Friedrich Max Müller's comments about the Masters: As no Buddhist teachers could be found in Bombay or Calcutta, some imaginary beings had to be created by Madame Blavatsky and located safely in Tibet, as yet the most inaccessible country in the world (Müller, *Last Essays, Second Series*, 109).
For Blavatsky, of course, the Near East (and particularly Egypt) had provided early inspiration, but was soon overlooked in favour of India and Tibet. The Near East, as the crucible of monotheisms, was too religiously dogmatic for Blavatsky’s taste, and too well documented to provide the pristine domain for her macrohistorical vision. Indeed, the Near East had become simply too near. In this, Blavatsky was echoing the methodology of one of her most significant sources, Louis Jacolliot (1837-1890).

Jacolliot lived in India for several years, serving in the consular division of the French Civil Service, and rose to be the magistrate for Chandernagor. In the 1870s his literary talents asserted themselves and, by the time of his death in Saint-Thibaut-les-Vignes in 1890, he had published in excess of twenty books. Jacolliot’s eccentric works are yet more of the quasi-esoteric metamythographies so popular during his century, and cover much of the same ground. He was especially enamoured of discovering the genesis of the Aryans, which he placed in India (as the first Brahmins). In fact, Jacolliot found in India the origin of most things sacred to the West, including Christianity and Kabbalah, both of which he viewed as perversions of

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9 For a biographical summary see Maclellan, The Lost World, ch. 3 (the work itself should be read with care). See also Godwin, Arktos, 81-83.

10 It might be noted that Müller rejected Jacolliot’s claims utterly, noting that ‘[e]ven Professor Whitney in America calls M. Jacolliot “a bungler and a humbug”’: Müller, Last Essays, Second Series, 95.

11 Jacolliot, like Blavatsky to some degree, became an influence on Völkisch nationalists during the Nazi era. It is interesting that his work was mediated to General Erich Ludendorff - a certain influence on Hitler - by Ludendorff’s second wife, Mathilde von Kemnitz, author of Triumph des Unsterblichkeitswillens (1921). Von Kemnitz was the daughter of the theologian and Orientalist, Prof. Bernhard Spiess, whom she claimed to have proved the veracity of Jacolliot’s work. The Ludendorffs’ lifelong tirade against esoteric practices was only matched by their assertion that, as Christianity was an Oriental (Indian) import, it was squalid and inappropriate for the German people. For details see Webb, The Occult Establishment, 304-307; Brendan French, ‘Odin in the Antipodes: Alexander Rud Mills, National Socialism, and the Anglecyn Church of Odin’ (Seminar Paper; School of Studies in Religion, University of Sydney, 11 May, 1995), Sydney, 1995.

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their Oriental ancestors. They averred, was an 'occult science' maintained by those Brahmins who had attained the exalted 'third degree', and who were led by an awesome ruler, the 'Brahmatma', popularly believed to be immortal:

In the third degree the Brahmins had no direct relations with the populace, the study of all the physical and supernatural forces of the universe being their only occupation. They never appeared outside except through awe-inspiring phenomena.

The theurgical basis of Jacolliot's vision is clear:

Everything that exists is in the power of the gods.
The gods are in the power of magical conjurations.
Magical conjurations are in the power of the Brahmins.
Therefore, the gods are in the power of the Brahmins.

There can be little doubt that Jacolliot's presentation of India as the crucible of 'Aryan' civilisation and religion (no less than his rabid anticlericalism and loathing for the Jesuits) influenced Blavatsky. It is known she possessed his books, and that she quoted liberally - often without acknowledgment - from his Indophile fancyings. Of

42 Cf., eg., his La Bible dans l'Inde, Paris, 1869: translated as id., The Bible in India: Hindoo Origin of Hebrew and Christian Revelation, trans. Louis Jacolliot, Carleton, New York, 1870. Jacolliot relied heavily upon such staples as phonetical etymology; thus Zeus=Jezeus=Isis=Jesus, Adam=Adam: in ibid., part II, ch. II. See also Clarke, Oriental Enlightenment, 81. The notion of Jesus (from the Near East) studying in India (the Far East) is yet another example of two strategies of Orientalism: the situating of revelatory authority in the East, and the shift of the geographical 'East' ever farther eastward. There is an entire literature of Jesus in India (and elsewhere in the 'Orient'): cf., eg., Nicholas Notovitch, The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ, trans. J. H. Connelly & L. Landsberg, R. F. Fenno & Co., New York, 1890 (actually 1895); A. Faber-Kaiser, Jesus Died in Kashmir: Jesus, Moses and the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, Gordon & Cremonesi, London, 1977; Elizabeth Clare Prophet, The Lost Years of Jesus, Summit University Press, Livingstone, Montana, 1984. A useful discussion of this literature is to be found in Douglas Groothuis, Revealing the New Age Jesus: Challenges to Orthodox Views of Christ, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1990. One extreme example of what might be termed ultra-Orientalism is Gerhard R. Steinhäuser, Jesus Christ: Heir to the Astronauts, trans. Susanne Flatauer, Coronet, London, 1976. This last work is an entirely predictable development, and one which is currently enjoying great popularity; after all, there is no greater alterity than outer space.


44 Ibid., 23.


46 Olcott noted that Jacolliot's 'twenty-seven volumes' were among those works of which Blavatsky 'made great use' while writing Isis Unveiled: Olcott, Old Diary Leaves, 207. Webb noted that 'Jacolliot's works furnished H. P. Blavatsky with no less than fifty-nine plagiarized passages': Webb, The Occult Establishment, 306; cf. also Mead, Madame Blavatsky, 170-171.
particular interest to Blavatsky was Jacolliot’s notion of the Brotherhood of the Pitris. The Brotherhood of the Pitris (or ‘spirits’), of which the Brahmanical ‘third degree’ forms a terrestrial entrée, is a celestial hierarchy reaching from the divine down to the earthly adept:

Those Pitris which have not passed the degree immediately above that of man, are the only spirits which are in communication with the latter. They are regarded as the ancestors of the human race and its natural directors from whom it derives its inspiration. They are themselves inspired by the spirits of the next degree above them, and so on, from one degree to another, until the divine word or, in other terms, until revelation is imparted to man.47

The similarity of this rather emanationist schema to Blavatsky’s later pronouncements is clear. Unsurprisingly, she co-opted Jacolliot’s Brotherhood into her occult macro drama:

Another of such sub-brotherhoods is the sect of the Pitris, in India. Known by name, now that Jacolliot has brought it into public notice, it yet is more arcane, perhaps, than the brotherhood that Mr. Mackenzie names the ‘Hermetic Brothers’.48

By the time Blavatsky came to formulate her Theosophy, the strategy of esoteric Orientalism was well established and well honed. Whatever the esotericist perceived as the corrective required for Western religiosity (whether a reinvigoration of Reformist zeal, an attack on materialism, or even the introduction of a sexual

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47 Jacolliot, *Occult Science in India*, 128. The Brotherhood is also discussed in his *Le Fils de Dieu*, Lacroix, Paris, 1873.
48 Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. II, 308. Elsewhere in the same volume she states of Jacolliot exactly the same criticism she herself received regularly:

His [Jacolliot’s] twenty or more volumes on Oriental subjects are indeed a curious conglomeration of truth and fiction. They contain a vast deal of fact about Indian traditions, philosophy and chronology, with most just views courageously expressed. But it seems as if the philosopher were constantly being overlaid by the romanticist. It is as though two men were united in their authorship - one careful, serious, erudite, scholarly, the other a sensational and sensual French romancer, who judges of fact not as they are but as he imagines them. (In ibid., 584n).
theurgy), the tactic was the same: to establish a locus for a revelatory authority capable of providing the necessary corrective - far in the Mystic East. In Blavatsky’s case the authorities were the Masters, and their revelation issued from the fastness of Tibet which, as Müller astutely observed, was ‘as yet the most inaccessible country in the world’.

The geographical remoteness of Blavatsky’s trans-Himalayan Brotherhood immediately places the Masters in a dialectical exchange between nineteenth century notions of civilisation and primalism. It is surely not coincidental that the sinophilism and chinoiserie preoccupations of the late eighteenth century (which had initially aroused tremendous enthusiasm among such philosophes as Diderot and Helvetius) had given way to a distinct Indophilia by Blavatsky time. As China’s promise of pristine and unaffected humanity waned, the focus turned to India where it was piously believed by many that the genuinely human might still exist - untrammelled by ‘civilising’ influence. It is clear, of course, that such a preoccupation had absorbed much of the post-Romantic construction of the undefiled primitive, the Rousseauean ‘Noble Savage’.

Blavatsky’s own attitude to Romanticism has never been articulated. Suffice to say that the idea of ‘the primitive as a space in which the ills of industrialisation and modernity might be cured’ must have exerted a strong appeal. Rousseau’s contention that (Western post-Enlightenment) civilisation was actually a corrupting influence had led him and his continuators to engage in a two-fold quest: to search out the ‘uncontaminated’ Noble Savage, and to remove the accretions of civilisation from Western society to expose ‘the natural’ beneath. The former objective, which later

49 Interestingly, several para-Masonic organisations have espoused a Masters-based revelation which combines an assault on materialism with a concentration on sexual magic. Perhaps the most significant of these is the Ordo Templi Orientis in which the topos of the Oriental sage figures prominently. For details of the O. T. O. see supra ch. 19.
50 Müller, Last Essays, Second Series, 109.
51 For details of the shift of interest from China to India (and the disenchantment of the philosophes with the former) see Clarke, Oriental Enlightenment, 52-53.
52 Rousseau himself was, according to Clarke, the ‘most powerful anti-Chinese voice’: in ibid., 52. In his Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse (1769), Rousseau had contrasted the decadence of China with the naturalness of the savage: ‘there is no sin to which they [the Chinese] are not prone, no crime which is not common among them’ (in ibid., 52-53).
provided the ideological underpinning for much exploration and anthropology, was an overt and thoroughly quixotic Orientalism, but one which meshed magnificently with esoteric notions of the *prisca theologia*. The latter aim encouraged the Romantics to attempt to recover the uncorrupted West by reference to myth structures which, they believed, concealed 'the natural' beneath a patina of 'the civilised'.

Such decontextualised mythography was not seen simply as a form of literary archaeology, but as the active means to remythicise Western discourse.

Interpreted from the standpoint of Romantic 'primitivism', then, Blavatsky's portrayal of the Theosophical Masters becomes more accessible as an idiosyncratically idealist Orientalism. The ideal of the Eastern Master, whose person, life, and teachings are

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It seems that the idea of the Rousseauean Noble Savage is nowhere better maintained than in certain contemporary New Age circles. The present author once viewed an Australian aborigine seated in a transparent perspex box (cage?) at a 'Mind, Body, Spirit' festival in Sydney during the early 1990s, representing - presumably - instinctual, uncontaminated naturalness. One is reminded of a 1991 book by the American author, Marlo Morgan (*Mutant Message Down Under: A Woman's Journey into Dreamtime Australia*, Thorsons, London, 1995), which details her involvement with an Aboriginal 'Outback nation referred to as the Wild People or the Ancient Ones' (p. xiv). The hugely popular book (the present author witnessed the opening of a large display of the books, sold as 'true accounts', in Glastonbury, England) was reviewed positively by several popularly-acclaimed authors of the New Age: Wayne Dyer, Marianne Williamson, and Elisabeth Kübler-Ross ("The story of a courageous woman who walked with the Aboriginals and learned the wonderful secrets and wisdom of an old, old tribe": review to rear of the 1995 Thorsons edition). In a note 'From the Author to the Reader' in the 1995 edition, Morgan included the following:

This was written after the fact and inspired by actual experience. As you will see, there wasn't a notebook handy. It is sold as a novel to protect the small tribe of Aborigines from legal involvement. I have deleted details to honor friends who do not wish to be identified and to secure the secret location of our sacred site. I have saved you a trip to the public library by including important historical information. I can also save you a trip to Australia. The modern-day Aboriginal condition can be seen in any European city, black people living in separate districts of town, well over half on the dole. The employed ones work in menial jobs; their culture appears lost, like the Native American, forced onto designated soil and forbidden for generations to practice all sacred ways (in ibid., xiii).

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One suspects, rather than protecting the 'small tribe of Aborigines from legal involvement', Morgan is attempting to protect herself. Aside from a trip in 1994, there appears no substantive proof that Morgan ever came to Australia, and the presentation of the 1991 edition as 'fact' aroused (sadly, too little) consternation. Interestingly, the 1995 edition contains a recommendation from Burnum Burnum, 'a Wurundjeri elder', who noted that:

It is the first book in my life's experience that I have read nonstop from cover to cover. I did so with great excitement and respect. It is a classic and does not violate any trust given to its author by us Real People. Rather it portrays our value systems and esoteric insights in such a way as to make me feel extremely proud of my heritage (p. 189).

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Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, 33. Purkiss sees something of a tradition of Romantic mythography tracing from Rousseau *inter alia* to 'writers like Robert Briffault, Erich Neumann, J. J. Bachofen, Jane Harrison, Arthur Evans and, above all, the widely influential J. G. Frazer, [who all held that] it was not story but the secret truth which lay behind myth which was important': in ibid.
uncorrupted by Western materialism and rationalism - the inheritances of the Enlightenment - is *eo ipso* contrasted with the spiritually-impoverished Westerner, whose civilisation has only served to denude him of his mythic sheaths. The Master is thus presented as Adamic man, as the real and abiding truth of human ontology - access to whom has been lost in the West as a result of the new 'Falls': Enlightenment, industrialisation, modernity, and atheism. He represents the past and future conditions of human life: the state prior to the ascendency of matter/materialism, and the life to come when humanity again wears the 'uncorrupted flesh' of Spirit.

Viewed through the prism of Romantic mythogenesis, the Masters are Blavatsky's contribution to the reclamation of the spiritual dimension in Western discourse. The Masters function as a circumscribed space of authentic purity and authoritative revelation, unfettered by the agglomeration of materialistic tendencies which Blavatsky believed were the curse of the *Aufklärung*. To this extent, the Master embodies a cultural criticism wholly in keeping with the strategic purpose of Orientalism: to create a space from which to view *and correct* the West.
CHAPTER 27

THE PERFECTED MASTER

Progress

'No other notion so expresses the self-image and the hopes of the modern age as does the concept of progress.' Although extrapolations from history must always remain humble and heuristic, such a statement is buttressed from without and within, both by scholarly consensus and intuitive self-reflection. Care must be taken, however, not to apply a meta-historical scheme to the idea of progress, and thus presume a single narrative which is unwarranted by the data of history; there is no empirically-discernible 'idea' or 'concept' of progress to which all others defer. There are, rather, many notions which combine in attesting to the veracity of progressivism, but which comprehensively differ from one another with regard to the means of its fulfilment and the object of its purpose. After all, progress is ultimately a value judgement and is not discernible as an objective phenomenon.

Until recently it would have been considered absurd to include Theosophy among nineteenth century narratives of progress. Most of those few scholars who incorporated Theosophy within their ambit reduced it to a reactionary movement, a romantic mediævalism, self-consciously devoted to a prescientific world-view, and espousing a premodern acausality. Such reductionism is untenable on closer inspection, for Blavatskian Theosophy was fully engaged with the epistemological challenges of its time even if its vocabulary and grammar sometimes appear a trifle

baroque.³

Progressivism is best defined in broad terms: Bury, in a celebrated 1920 study, noted simply that the 'idea means that civilisation has moved, is moving, and will move in a desired direction'.⁴ Such an inclusive definition allows scope to study the progressivist philosophies and ideologies of premodernity, and to appreciate the durability of the notion. Yet it is not without cause that the Enlightenment is singled out as the *fons et origo* of the modern progressivist ethos: as Nisbet suggested, 'from being one of the important ideas in the West it became the dominant idea'.⁵

The contribution and, indeed, the legacy of Aufklärung progressivism has been the development of a secularised eschatology. By reformulating traditionalist (Christian) historiography as the ongoing triumph of progress rather than providence, the coin of the enlightenment - reason - could be introduced as the measure of human perfectibilism.⁶ Such historiography maintained the idea of a linear development toward perfection, but espoused secular humanism as its soteriological ideology.⁷

Enlightenment progressivism was a confluence of many factors, notable among them the ascendancy of empirical science, the industrial production of commodities, and the redistribution of power and wealth in the wake of the various political revolutions.⁸ Crucial to appreciating the Enlightenment endeavour is the recognition that developmentalism was deemed to possess myriad linked facets. Certainly, progress

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³ Even though Blavatsky noted 'how unfathomable are thy mysteries, O sphinx of progress, called modern civilisation!', she spent her career attempting to fathom those self-same mysteries: Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XII, 279).
⁷ Naturally, the Christian underpinnings of many Enlightenment historiographies must be considered - not least that of Comte's Positivism (employing a quite Joachite stratification of developmentalist history).
could be asserted for science and technology (considered as a triumph of applied reason), but many of the philosophes interpreted such positive results as but one link in the great chain of Progress which would ultimately return a just social outcome, and inculcate an improved moral temper in society generally. At its core, then, eighteenth century progressivism was an optimistic creed which marched toward mundane transformation with two banners in hand: secularism and reason.10

The foundational aspiration of Aufklärung progressivism was human perfectibilism. Through the application of reason (and the principles derived therefrom), human ontology could ultimately be refashioned such that perfection would be attainable - and expected - on earth. In what is regarded as a seminal progressivist historiography, the Marquis de Condorcet’s posthumous Esquisse d’un tableau historique des progrès de l’esprit humain (‘Outline of an Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind’) of 1795 posited the probability of an imminent terrestrial perfectionism:

[Is] the human race destined to improve itself ... by the actual perfecting of the intellectual, moral, and physical faculties, which can be just as well the result either of the perfecting of the instruments which increase the intensity or direct the use of these faculties, or the perfecting of our natural organization itself? In answering [this question] we shall find in the experience of the past, in the observation of the progress that the sciences and civilization have made thus far, in the analysis of the advance of the human mind and the development of its faculties, the strongest motives for believing that nature has set no limits to our hopes.11

9 'Progress: Fact and Fiction', 3-5.
10 It is easy to over-estimate the secularist tendencies of the Enlightenment philosophes. Sklair has written of the ‘loose and self-deceiving “humanist” optimism of the eighteenth-century philosophes’: The ontological status of the idea of progress in eighteenth-century French philosophy was therefore much nearer that of the traditional theology than the philosophes either intended or admitted (Sklair, The Sociology of Progress, 24-25).
11 Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, Esquisse d’un tableau historique des progrès de l’esprit humain in Wagar, ed., The Idea of Progress Since the Renaissance, 85-86: trans. Wagar. Wagar also quotes Frank Manuel who suggested that the Esquisse of Condorcet (1743-1794) provided the form ‘in which the eighteenth-century idea of progress was generally assimilated by Western thought’ (in ibid., 75). Tragically, of course, the Girondist Condorcet’s fate under Robespierre has become something of a template for failed humano-secularist idealism. Condorcet would likely have been mediated to Blavatsky by Bulwer-Lytton: see infra ch. 29.
The ends of such anticipated perfection, of course, could be articulated in numerous ways: the attainment of immortality, the rejection of moral turpitude (however defined), the willing subordination of the individual will to the collective, the permanency of a state of social harmony and happiness, or the removal of aristocratic privilege and inherited inequity. To assert that man is perfectible, as John Passmore has noted, might well mean any number of things:

1) there is some task in which each and every man can perfect himself technically;
2) he is capable of wholly subordinating himself to God's will;
3) he can attain to his natural end;
4) he can be entirely free of any moral defect;
5) he can make of himself a being who is metaphysically perfect;
6) he can make of himself a being who is harmonious and orderly;
7) he can live in the manner of an ideally perfect human being;
8) he can become godlike.

It should be remembered that the idea of human perfectibilism is a telos independent of any particular historiographical construction of progress. Thus it was that, as the promise of Enlightenment progressivism - predicated on secular rationalism and materialist science - waned in the latter nineteenth century in the face of 'the existential

12 Of all end-points of nineteenth century progressivism, Blavatsky was most dismissive of happiness as the primary objective:
As long as intellectual progress will refuse to accept a subordinate position to ethical progress, and egotism will not give way to the Altruism preached by the Gautama and the true historical Jesus (the Jesus of the pagan sanctuary, not the Christ of the Churches), happiness for all the members of humanity will remain a Utopia (Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VIII, 77).

13 It should not be forgotten that Enlightenment progressivism and the idea of human perfectibilism are not cognates, but related enterprises. Thus it is that in the domain of human perfectibilism generally, the subordination of the individual will to the divine can be a desired outcome. Further, as noted supra, although Enlightenment progressivism has been characterised as a secular enterprise, its own theological roots and assumptions are the cause of much debate.

dangers of secularization', such perfectibilists as Blavatsky stepped into the breach. Admittedly, she employed the rhetoric and grammar of the Enlightenment, but with subversive purpose. She argued that, by denuding the world of its protective divinities, and fostering a mute 'messiah' ('scientism') through an over-zealous acceptance of science, the West had purchased its own enthraldom to materialism. For Blavatsky, all that the exalted reason of the *philosophes* had achieved, ironically, was to suggest the very imperfectibility of humanity: *secularist progressivism had reneged on its promise*:

The progress we have achieved, so far, relates in every case to purely physical appliances, to objects and things, not to the *inner* man. We have now every convenience and comfort of life, everything that panders to our senses and vanity, but not one atom of moral improvement. Having dismissed secular progress as a chimera of misplaced idealism, Blavatsky could hardly turn to the ecclesiastical structures which she had already dismissed as self-consciously reactionary. Arguing that '[n]o dogmatic creed can be progressive', she contended that the Christian churches had arrested human development and the cardinal sin for Theosophy - were obstructing evolution:

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16 For an examination of the disavowal of progressivism by a selection of Victorian intellectuals of Blavatsky's era, see Jeffrey Paul von Arx, *Progress and Pessimism: Religion, Politics, and History in Late Nineteenth Century Britain*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985. Von Arx's book is pertinent to the present research in so far as it questions the accepted chronologies of Victorian pessimism:

If the sixties and seventies was not a time of optimism and confidence among young radicals, the whole traditional chronology of the political evolution of mid-Victorian intellectuals is undermined (in ibid., 5).

Von Arx argues that the substantive roots of the overt pessimism of the 1890s can be traced to events thirty years prior. Interestingly, he suggests that the growing institutionalisation of the churches and the professionalisation of the clergy in the 1850s and 1860s caused deep disquiet among young intellectuals. As a consequence, von Arx posits the following:

Developmental ways of thinking about society can also be seen as subjective expressions of the desire that society should develop in a certain way or *indications of frustrations when it did not* ... [T]he need of these Victorian thinkers to discover laws of progress to direct and order change was the product of uncertainty and anxiety about the state of society and the tenor of thought (in ibid., 9-10, emphasis added).

The latter observation has profound resonances for the study of Blavatskian developmentalist thinking.

17 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XII, 277.

18 Ibid., 272.
Progress, says Carlyle, is ‘living movement’. This is true; but it is so only on condition that no dead weight, no corpse shall impede the freedom of that ‘living movement’. Now in its uncompromising conservatism and unspirituality the Church is no better than a dead body. Therefore it did and still does impede true progress. Indeed, so long as the Church - the deadliest enemy of the ethics of Christ - was in power, there was hardly any progress at all. It was only after the French Revolution that real culture and civilization had a fair start.  

Blavatsky evidently wished to maintain a developmentalist historiography (indeed, a cosmic progressivist teleology), but she wished to distance herself both from traditionalist Christian accounts and from the secularist and naturalistic philosophies which had proliferated in the wake of the Enlightenment. The former, she believed, had been comprehensively undermined by the new evolutionism and such novel disciplines as philology; the latter, by their tendency to ‘deanthropomorphize’ the cosmos. In order to navigate around these shoals, Blavatsky turned to the esoteric historiographical topos of the philosophia perennis - an arcane wisdom tradition which had a patina of age and prestige, but which also, crucially, was especially malleable. In her hands, the (Theosophical) Ancient Wisdom was retrospectively modernised to become a Universal Law of Progression, and the Masters were introduced as its crowning achievement.  

The Master, claimed Blavatsky, was ‘the grandest ideal of human perfectibility’; one who had ‘successfully passed the highest degree of initiation beyond which is perfect Adi-Buddhaship, than which there is no higher one on this earth’. It is of singular importance to recognise that Blavatsky believed her presentation of the Master to be a revolution in Western thought - and not without some justification - for the Masters in propriis personis illuminated the means to bridge the heretofore unassailable divide

19 Ibid., 268.  
20 Although Blavatsky employed the term ‘deanthropomorphization’ in a discussion of the theories of Herbert Spencer, it seems appropriate to use it in the present context: see Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. XIII, 96.  
21 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VI, 125.  
22 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. IV, 228.
between the *Ideal* and the *Real*:

Hitherto, it was remarked in almost every historical age that a wide interval, almost a chasm, lay between practical and ideal perfection. Yet, as from time to time certain great characters appeared on earth who taught mankind to look beyond the veil of illusion, man learnt that the gulf was not an impassable one; that it is the province of mankind through its higher and more spiritual races to fill the great gap more and more with every coming cycle; for every man, as a unit, has it in his power to add his mite toward filling it. Yes; there are still men, who, notwithstanding the present chaotic condition of the moral world, and the sorry *débris* of the best human ideals, still persist in believing and teaching that the now *ideal* human perfection is no dream, but a law of divine nature; and that, had Mankind to wait even millions of years, still it must some day reach it and rebecome a *race of gods*.⁵

Until such time (in later Rounds) when the mass of humanity has progressed sufficiently to reclaim its ontic divine status, an occasional *prodromus* will present himself as an exemplar of the promised perfection. Such a man is the Master:

[I]t is impossible to change the natural law of evolution which proceeds spirally in curves that never re-enter themselves, but ever ascend to so-called higher planes. At certain periods, however, of these cycles, a forecast or antetype is offered of the consummation, whereby an example of humanity in its perfect state is dimly shadowed forth. Such a period the white race is now entering upon.⁶

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²³ Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XII, 45-46. Elsewhere Blavatsky notes that, as all Monads are moving toward ultimate *apotheosis*, animals can also expect eventually to be perfected:

[There] is no reason why they [animals] too should not reach one day that perfection that gives the fully evolved man the Dhyanchohanic form (id, *Collected Writings*, vol. VII, 46).

John Passmore has classified two forms of perfectibilism: particularist and universalist. In customary fashion, Blavatsky’s Masters personify both forms. For the common person (that is, the non-Theosophist), the Master is an augury of what he might expect to be in a coming Round:

[The adept knows no more on earth, nor are his powers greater here than will be the knowledge and powers of the average good man when the latter reaches his fifth and especially his sixth cycle or round.]

For the Theosophist, who has an intimate knowledge of the cosmic processus, the rewards are more immediate. As an aspiring chela, the ‘student of the Science of Life’ has consciously accelerated his or her perfectibility by carefully emulating the Masters, and will (technically) achieve the goal of divinisation/perfection sooner than other humans. Indeed, only the student of the Ancient Wisdom will appreciate the pains which the Masters endure in attempting to expedite human perfection, for ‘he alone can sense the labours of the Eldest Brothers of the Race for their poor brethren’.

It is not hard to detect in the figure of the Master a Theosophical riposte to late nineteenth century recensions of perfectibilist thought. Among standard progressivist ideals, few were so enticing as the promise of great prolongevity - even immortality. Such was the premise of Condorcet’s Esquisse:

The improvement of medical practice which will become more efficacious with the progress of reason and the social order, will mean the end of infections and hereditary diseases and illnesses brought on by climate or working conditions. It is reasonable to hope that all other diseases will likewise disappear as their distant causes are discovered. Would it be absurd then to suppose that the perfection of the human species might be capable of indefinite progress; that the day will come when death will be due only to

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25 Passmore, The Perfectibility of Man, 27: ‘Particularist perfectibilism ascribes terrestrial perfectibility only to an elite; universalist perfectibilism ascribes it to all men’.
26 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VI, 103.
27 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. XI, 156.
28 Ibid.
29 Indeed, a number of contemporary Masters-groups refer to the Brotherhood as ‘Perfected Masters’ or ‘Perfect Masters’.
extraordinary accidents or to the decay of the vital forces, and that ultimately the average span between birth and decay will have no assignable value?30

In Blavatskian Theosophy there is no place for material immortality as terrestrial life is considered to be but a transient phenomenon. Nevertheless, a significant part of the occult accoutrements of the Masters is extreme prolongevity. It appears that intimate association with the Ancient Wisdom, gained through extended chelaship, allows the Masters access to techniques which foster control over certain organic processes. In response to a question from the eager young Theosophist, Charles Johnston, Blavatsky spoke of her experience with her Master, Morya:

My dear, I cannot tell you [his age] exactly, for I do not know. But this I will tell you. I met him first when I was twenty, - in 1851. He was in the very prime of manhood then. I am an old woman now, but he has not aged a day. He is still in the prime of manhood. That is all I can say. You may draw your own conclusions.31

Morya's age retardation is an attribute of all the members of the Brotherhood; Blavatsky notes that although 'our Masters teach us "that immortality is conditional"', the likelihood of a Master achieving quasi-immortality is 'tenfold greater than [that] of one who, being ignorant of the potentialities within his Self, allows them to remain dormant and undisturbed until it is too late to awake them to life'.32

The relationship between Theosophical perfectibilism and Condorcet's expectation of unlimited vitality is further enhanced by the Masters' ability to inhibit the onset of disease or illness:33

It was [the Masters'] prerogative and duty to reveal the secrets of Nature that were useful to mankind - the hidden virtues of plants, the art of healing the sick, and of bringing about brotherly love and

31 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VIII, 400.
32 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VI, 102-103.
33 Ibid., 51. It should be noted that, although the Masters possess such faculties, Blavatsky deemed it unlikely they would use them for their personal benefit, choosing rather to employ them in assisting humanity. Regardless, the present author has found no example in Blavatskian or Leadbeaterian Theosophy of a sick or dying Master. It might be noted, further, that such faculties are also to be found in various recensions of Rosicrucianism: see infra ch. 29.
mutual help among mankind. No Initiate was one if he could not heal.\textsuperscript{34}

Indeed, the Brotherhood is devoted not only to such beneficent acts as are reminiscent of the Christophe Christian Rosenkreutz, but they also assist scientists and 'materialistic investigators':

[The genuine Scientist and the materialistic investigator] are in the forefront of the mental, but not of the spiritual, progress of the time, and are driven forward by forces they know nothing of. Help is often given to them by the Masters, who, neglecting nothing, constantly see to it that these men make progress upon the fittest lines for them.\textsuperscript{35}

Where Blavatsky extends the secularist endowment of Enlightenment philosophy is in her insistence that all the 'thaumaturgical powers'\textsuperscript{36} which indicate the perfection of the Theosophical Master are predicated, not on his subservience to pure reason (or, indeed, a personal god), but on the spiritual and moral changes wrought by his labours toward \textit{conscious personal evolution}. Blavatsky thereby achieves something of a \textit{rapprochement} between the opposing perfectionist camps of her day: the ratiocinative autonomy favoured by the secular humanists and the submission to the divine will espoused by the churches. Mastership is certainly only won by the application of a reasoned effort and requires labour of a distinctly post-Enlightenment persuasion (familiarity with such disciplines as comparative religion and mythology, philology, perennialist forms of esotericism,\textsuperscript{37} archaeology, ethnology, \textit{inter alia}), but it also presupposes all the moral and ethical traits associated with Christian sanctity: celibacy, self-abnegation, \textit{ascesis}, humility, and so forth. Indeed the very \textit{raison d'être} for the emergence of the Brotherhood from their trans-Himalayan seclusion is bound up with the (Theosophically-defined) 'Bodhisattva Vow' whereby the Masters gainsay their own continuing spiritual and physical development in order to vouchsafe the progress... Blavatsky, \textit{Collected Writings}, vol. XIV, 252-253.

\textsuperscript{34} Blavatsky, \textit{Collected Writings}, vol. IX, 122-123.

\textsuperscript{35} Blavatsky, \textit{Collected Writings}, vol. XIV, 429.

\textsuperscript{36} Blavatsky, \textit{Collected Writings}, vol. XIV, 429.

\textsuperscript{37} In this context, 'perennialism' refers to those streams of esotericism which espouse the idea of a \textit{philosophia perennis}. It does not refer to the Perennialist (or, more accurately, Traditionalist) school, for which see \textit{supra} p. 68n39, 154n60.
of others.\textsuperscript{38} Such self-sacrifice appears to be characteristic of their noble disposition:

A real adept will either conceal forever his adeptship from the world's gaze, or, if forced to live among the common herd, will prove far above it, by his moral grandeur, the loftiness of his cultivated mind, his divine charity and his all-forgiveness of injury ... [He] ever shows the moral beauty of his spotless nature in every act of life.\textsuperscript{39}

The Theosophical Masters have often been considered as enfleshed Spirit Guides, as something akin to the Spiritualistic souls of the departed, but which Blavatsky - as mythographer and 'necromancer' - encased in a more palatable, ante-mortem package. In point of fact, the pronouncements of Blavatsky's Masters (contra Leadbeater's) have less in common with the discourses of Spiritualism than with the \textit{Apothegmata Patrum} and the idealistic prose of the Enlightenment \textit{philosophes}. The reason for this is that the Theosophical Masters, just like St. Antony and Voltaire's 'l'esprit humain',\textsuperscript{40} provide a template for, and a promise of, terrestrial perfectibility. By returning briefly to Passmore's definitions of perfectibilism, it is now clear how comprehensively the Masters fulfil this objective:

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{there is some task in which each and every man can perfect himself technically}; (Each of the Masters is especially proficient in a particular field, whether pedagogy or even librarianship, and has elevated the task to an art. This is especially true of Leadbeater's formulations, where the Masters occupy something akin to Ministerial portfolios).
\item \textit{he is capable of wholly subordinating himself to God's will}; (Each Master has a superior who has evolved closer to divinisation, whom he obeys humbly. A Master's will is always aligned with, though inferior to, the cosmic will).
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{38} There are inherent contradictions within the Theosophical construction of the 'Bodhisattva Vow': is the Master delaying his own cosmic progression, or is he required to assist others in order to complete it? For discussion see supra p. 152n56.
\textsuperscript{40} Voltaire's motif of \textit{l'esprit des hommes} ('the mind of men') informs the entirety of his historiography. For Voltaire (François Marie Arouet, 1694-1778) see Bury, \textit{The Idea of Progress}, ch. 7.
3) he can attain to his natural end; (The Master works toward his 're-spiritualisation' and ultimate reabsorption into the Absolute - the Theosophical eschaton).

4) he can be entirely free of any moral defect; (The Master is morally unblemished, and leads a blameless life).

5) he can make of himself a being who is metaphysically perfect; (The Master's paranormal faculties indicate his status on the path to perfectibility).

6) he can make of himself a being who is harmonious and orderly; (The Masters comprise an efficient and elite Brotherhood; there is no friction within the Hierarchy which comprises, in the end, a ‘sophiocracy’).

7) he can live in the manner of an ideally perfect human being; (The Master is the Theosophical exemplar for human society and advancement; he is physically, intellectually, and spiritually superior to other humans. His care for humanity is a species of noblesse oblige).

8) he can become godlike. (The Master exhibits deiform perfection; he mediates 'godlike-ness' to mundane humanity, and will soon evolve beyond human ken).

It is clear that Blavatsky applied the rhetoric of Enlightenment progressivism to the omnipresent human desire for perfectibility. In so doing she was able to manoeuvre around other constructions which she deemed discredited, whether religious, scientific, philosophical, or any combination of the three. Her drawcard was the Master, a god-like man, who didn’t have the stigma of the churches’ man-like god, nor the existential vapidity of the rationalists’ god-less man. The Master provided, quite literally, the dialectical best of two worlds; he embodied an Enlightenment critique of religion, and a religious critique of the Enlightenment.

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"Passmore, The Perfectibility of Man, 26."
Evolution

In no other arena of contemporary thought is the tension between the notions of undirected developmentalism and teleological progress more apparent than in the field of biological evolutionism. The idea of progress presupposes an optimistic and inclined trajectory for human development, and naturally suggests the likelihood of an imminent *telos* - a point at which incremental progress will have been consummated. Aside from the inherent subjectivity involved in determining exactly what represents progress and its fulfilment, the most immediate observation to be made of the idea of progressivism is that it begs the question of *authorship*: who - or what - is the exterior causal agent underpinning the upward dynamism of the process? What is the *intelligence* that calls for human, even cosmic, advancement?

Undirected developmentalism, on the other hand, need not posit an end-point, and, often being naturalistic, finds the seeds of change innate in the physical specimen. Development is thus not contingent upon exterior agency. Such developmentalism is also not necessarily cumulative, which is to say that biological evolutionism, for instance, might just as properly be termed 'biological change', because there is (at least technically) no hierarchical value judgement as to 'higher' or 'lower' forms of life (as opposed to 'complex' and 'simple'), and no sense in which any organism has progressed toward an implied destination.42 A specimen's evolution, therefore, is an adaptive mechanism which sponsors efficiency, not progress to an ultimate objective.

Such demarcations might be deemed abstruse - and, perhaps justifiably, too unambiguous - were it not for the fact that, at least in the popular imagination, evolutionism and progressivism have become somewhat synonymous terms. Darwin's theory of natural selection, for instance, is now widely viewed almost as an alternative cosmogony to Biblical creationism, complete with its own perfectibilist teleology, rather than a 'statistical-populationist theory in which neither progress nor

cumulative development plays any vital role'. It might be conjectured that a possible reason for this conflation of (Darwinian) evolutionism with progressivism is that, even at a remove of fourteen decades, the utter Creatorlessness of naturalistic evolutionism is simply too daunting a concept to bear. That there might be no progress, no spiritual Entwicklung, no possibility of perfection - on earth, let alone anywhere else - might well make life forlorn and despairing indeed. Stephen Jay Gould - himself no progressivist - has enunciated one reason for the tenacity of the notion of progress in the face of naturalistic biological evolutionism:

Progress is a noxious, culturally embedded, untestable, nonoperational, intractable idea that must be replaced if we wish to understand the patterns of history ... Progress slots into the logic of our cultural hopes as a response to scientific discoveries that we, as geologists and paleontologists, imposed upon an initially unwilling Western world ... [A]s soon as we learned that the earth is billions of years old, and that human history occupies but a metaphorical microsecond at the very end, then our central notion of human superiority in a meaningful world met is strongest challenge from science ... Progress is the doctrine that dispels this chilling thought ... [as] all that came before may now be interpreted as part of a process scheduled to yield our form from the start.

43 Nisbet, History of the Idea of Progress, 174. The ascription to Darwin of a semi-religious - indeed, semi-messianic - status in the history of biology is fostered in many of the works themselves. Cf., eg., Misia Landau's analogy:

Of all the stories paleoanthropologists have told, only Darwin's The Descent of Man (1871) approaches the status of an authorized version. Like the Bible, it can be read from many points of view (Misia Landau, Narratives of Human Evolution, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1991, 19).

Predictably, an equal but opposing response has been fielded by Biblical traditionalists who have fostered the notion that Darwin 'converted to Christianity' on his deathbed, and renounced evolutionism: for an analysis see James Moore, The Darwin Legend, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1995. The literature of deathbed conversions must surely comprise a sub-genre in itself, and it is interesting to note that Blavatsky was not exempted: Fr. Alexey Young, a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church in America has noted that 'an ex-Theosophist and Orthodox convert told this writer that Blavatsky died repentant and reconciled to the Russian Church in her last days'; Alexey Young, 'Theosophy', Missionary Leaflet #E69b, Holy Protection Russian Orthodox Church, Los Angeles, California, n.d.

44 See Trompf, Macrohistory, 270-274.

Of course there were many who advocated what might be called ‘progressive developmentalism’; that is, conceptualisers who artfully inserted scientific (or scientific-looking) evolutionism — whether Darwinian or another — into progressivist historiographies, in order to soften the naturalists’ blow. A number were reactive, attempting somehow to reconcile traditionalist Biblically-driven accounts with the new temporalities of Charles Lyell (1797-1875) and the anthropogeny of Charles Darwin (1809-1882); others, less concerned with Biblical concordance or ecclesial censure, wholeheartedly embraced the ethos of evolutionism and applied it — often as a deconstructive hermeneutic — to entirely new domains.

At the centre of such attempts was the perceived need to rejuvenate the fading tenet of anthropocentrism, hitherto the mainstay of Western religiosity. When naturalists such as Darwin breached the divide between humanity and the animal kingdom (an ironic term in the circumstances), there was a sympathetic rupture in the previously inviolable partition between creator and creature. So it was that naturalist evolutionism had removed two pivotal anchors of Western cosmology: humanity was now neither a special creation nor, as it appeared, a ‘creation’ at all.

The nature of the responses to evolutionist thought, and particularly Darwin’s biological evolutionism, varied widely. Some maintained anthropocentrism by accepting evolutionism, but truncating the implied unending developmentalism: man was the purpose, the summit, and the natural end of evolution. Such, ultimately, was the position of Darwin’s co-expositor of the theory of natural selection, Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913), who was also an early member of the Theosophical Society:

To us, the whole purpose, the only raison d’être of the living world — with all its complexities of physical structure, with its grand

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kingdoms, and the ultimate appearance of man - was the development of the human spirit in association with the human body. Such a position had obvious advantages, of course, but tended to leave unanswered larger questions of design, history, and purpose. If humanity were the apex of evolution, then did that infer some sort of modified perfectionism had been achieved, and, if so, what did this say for human inequity and brutishness? Further, with prehistory becoming expansively greater almost at every utterance by a Lyell or a Huxley, wasn’t it just a little too early to tell empirically exactly what evolution might produce?

Others maintained a dichotomous approach, arguing for a limited evolutionism which affected all organic life - except for humans. Such an argument, predictably, was buttressed with various attempts to localise an especially remarkable trait that could be employed as proof of humanity’s particularism. The noted philologist (and ardent critic of Theosophy) Max Müller deemed the possession of language to be sufficient to preserve human ontological uniqueness. Other specialists found - and continue to find - many other evidences to support limited evolutionism; it has proved a popular and enduring compromise.

Still others accepted the main thrust of biological evolutionism, but argued for a divine author behind the phenomenon of variation, as did Darwin’s American correspondent, the botanist Asa Gray (1810-1888). Such a view might at first appear to be a species

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of the compromise position noted supra, but is in fact ultimately entirely subversive of evolutionism as a naturalistic process. God becomes the instigator of every development and, ipso facto, all modification is contingent upon his design. Arguably, then, there is no evolution at all - certainly no internal tendency to deviate - as God remains the ultimate (immanent) cause. Evolutionism is reduced to a divine technology, and becomes simply a predetermined product of the hand of God. Attractive as such a proposition has been to the religiously-minded, it poses certain novel theodicies: are the less successful species (or peoples?) somehow intrinsically less beloved of God? If not, why should they exist at all, considering that God's creation and, presumably, the technologies which generated it, are 'good'?

Evolutionary theory did not, of course, begin with Darwin. Indeed, too little is made of the philosophical debt which Darwin owed to those of his forebears - and to his contemporary evolutionists - whose formulations undergirded his theorising. It appears that much of the impetus for Darwin's epoch-making espousal of 'Natural Selection' can be traced to certain extrapolations he arrived at after reading an anonymously-published tract by Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834), An Essay on the Principle of Population of 1798. Malthus had argued, quite pessimistically, that struggle for resources undergirded human existence, and that as population grows exponentially while food production increases only 'arithmetically' (that is, .

57 Oldroyd suspected another problem with this approach is that an 'outright creation of forms would appear a much more obvious way of proceeding' rather than the 'Darwinian method of "higgledy-piggledy"' (in ibid., 248). He noted, however, that even this position becomes untenable in the light of the fossil record, unless, of course, religionists argue that such remains were planted by God (as a test of faith?). Oldroyd identified an early instance of the this sophistry in P. H. Gosse, Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot, London, 1857: in ibid., 259n15. Interestingly, this approach is a mainstay of many contemporary exponents of 'Creation Science'.

56 For an interesting account of Darwin's conceptual forebears (and the response to their works) see Charles Coulston Gillispie, Genesis and Geology: A Study in the Relations of Scientific Thought, Natural Theology, and Social Opinion in Great Britain, 1790-1850, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1959, esp. chs. 7-9. It might be noted that Darwin was much indebted to the works of his own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), who combined discussion of an early evolutionary paradigm with the creation of allegorical literature, most notably (for the present purposes) Rosicrucian fiction: see Desmond King Hele, Erasmus Darwin, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1963. See also infra ch. 29.

55 Significantly, the essay is subtitled: 'On the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers'.
marginally), a crisis would ultimately ensue. Darwin extended Malthus' hypothesis to the natural world, but placed struggle *behind* the dynamic of change (*ergo* 'Natural Selection'), rather than in *front* of it. In this he was preempted by - and indebted to - the great evolutionary synthesist of the nineteenth century, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903).

Spencer has come to be regarded as the prototypical 'Social Darwinist', a somewhat ironical epithet considering that his evolutionary idiom for the most part preceded Darwin's. Although an analysis of Spencer's all-embracing evolutionist 'Synthetic Philosophy' is beyond the scope of the present work, it is significant nevertheless to recognise his contribution to the extension of evolutionism into the domain of 'social science'. Of all of the systematic responses to biological evolutionism listed *supra*, Spencer's represents the most thoroughly affirmative stance. Indeed, in his grand conception of a universal progressivism in which evolutionism (extrapolated from the natural sciences) can be discerned as the guiding dynamic of all life and relationships, his influence may very well have eclipsed that of Darwin. In fact, it is not inappropriate to see in Spencer's expansive and all-inclusive evolutionism something

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akin to a Pauline effort at religio-philosophical systematic comprehensiveness. His efforts earned him uncommon praise from Blavatsky:

We do not contemplate in the least the impertinence of criticizing such a giant of thought as Mr. H. Spencer is rightly considered to be by his friends and admirers.

The crux of Spencerian progressivist evolutionism is enunciated in a deceptively simple axiom: that there is 'an advance from the simple to the complex, through successive differentiations'. He presented this as a universal law, arrived at through empirical observation, and thus as a principle of physics; nevertheless, it is entirely correct to presume it also (perhaps primarily) corresponds to a schematic articulation of the precepts of progressivism, and is thus a species of metaphysics. Seen as a progressivist dynamic, its applicability to any number of concerns is thus immediately obvious. Indeed, Spencer viewed his maxim as something approaching a cosmic

\[\text{Evolution is a change from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity, to a definite, coherent, heterogeneity, through continuous differentiation and integrations: in ibid.}\]

This early definition has been employed for clarity. Spencer's more famous definition is as follows:

\[\text{Evolution is a change from nohowish, untalkaboutable, all-alikeness, to a somehowish and in-general-talkaboutable, not-all-alikeness, by continuous somethingelseifications, and sticktogetherations (quoted in Oldroyd, Darwinian Impacts, 206).}\]

"It might be noted, for instance, that the composer Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918), now perhaps best known for his unison chorus 'Jerusalem' (1916), applied the Spencerian thesis to the developmental history of music:

The early phase of the progress of harmony from homogeneity to heterogeneity is distinctly traceable ... In the first stage there is no variety at all; all are fifths or fourths consecutively ... When the force of circumstances drove composers to use the less perfectly consonant combinations of thirds and sixths ... their materials became more heterogenous ... [until] ultimately the composers with the higher instincts learnt to use the qualities of the different consonances (Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, The Evolution of the Art of Music, 5th ed., London, 1894, 169).

Unsurprisingly, the (Parry-Spencerian) historiography of music could be written thus: discordant primitivism led to Rhythm (exemplified by Palestrina), then to Melody (exemplified by Bach), then to Harmony (exemplified by Beethoven), then - ultimately? to Wagner.

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teleology; progressivist evolutionism (with a point of 'equilibration', or dynamic balance, as the secularised eschaton)\textsuperscript{66} encompasses all that is - organic as well as inorganic.\textsuperscript{67} It is - in Blavatsky's curiously adequate description - 'material metaphysics'.\textsuperscript{68}

Space disallows any significant treatment of Spencerian 'social science', other than to note a couple of his contentions which would later have a significant impact on Theosophical discourse.\textsuperscript{69} It is important to note that Spencer employed his evolutionary principle as a hermeneutical key, especially in his favoured field of human social relationships. Thus it was that he became convinced that the progress from the simple to the sophisticated which he had observed at a biological level was also to be found at the core of human religiosity. Rearticulating Comte's tripartite Positivist historiography in the light of evolutionary philosophy, Spencer decided that the evolutionary scale of religions must involve an upward progression from anthropomorphic fetishism to pagan polytheism, thence to early Israelite religion and Islam.\textsuperscript{70} Above Islam is semi-fetishistic Catholicism, then Protestantism, and on top of all is the (extreme deist or) agnostic. As Trompf has noted, it is no coincidence that the pinnacle of religious evolutionism is occupied by an idealised human suspiciously alike to Spencer himself.\textsuperscript{71}

Spencer's debt to Comte's three ages (and thus - at least schematically - to Joachimism) is clear, but by applying the incrementalism of evolutionary theory he

\textsuperscript{66} For a discussion of Spencer's 'state of equilibration' see Oldroyd, \textit{Darwinian Impacts}, 207.

\textsuperscript{67} Trompf has noted that:

\begin{quote}
It was a dream of Spencer's that he should preface his writings on organic evolution with something on inorganic evolution - on the emerging solar system - but it was never fulfilled (Trompf, \textit{In Search of Origins}, 20).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{68} Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. XIII, 96.

\textsuperscript{69} It might be noted that Spencer’s influence on occult movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries extends beyond Theosophy. Aleister Crowley, for instance, was much taken with the Spencerian vision, and devoted a portion of his astrological writings to charting Spencer's natal horoscope. For details cf., eg., Aleister Crowley, \textit{The Complete Astrological Writings}, ed. John Symonds & Kenneth Grant, Tandem, London, 1976, passim.

\textsuperscript{70} For a schematisation of Spencer's paradigm of religious progress see Trompf, \textit{In Search of Origins}, 24.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid. There is some irony in the fact that a significant ideological presupposition underlying Spencer's paradigm is that as religions progress they become de-anthropomorphised, yet he has nevertheless (in a very real sense) situated his own 'self' as the apex of religious evolution.
achieved a number of significant independent objectives. First, the dynamics of the system are smoother and better regulated than in Comte's Positivism, and a clearer impetus for change - via struggle - is provided. Second, the schema is more readily exportable beyond historiography and into other domains, such as ethnography. Third, the Spencerian model seemed to allow, if not encourage, philosophising about what might be termed the Ur-religion of humanity. Thus it was that by looking down Spencer's schematic paradigm, as it were, the most 'simple' form could be adduced:

Visualizing the primeval situation, Spencer contended that shadows, water reflections, dreams, moments of ecstasy or apoplexy, convinced Man that he possessed a 'double' or 'spirit' which could leave and return to him at will, while nightmares, ghostly apparitions and the fact of death, fostered in him an all-pervading sense of the spirits of his departed ancestors.

Spencer's paradigm for religious progress was, logically enough, closely allied with his own - highly influential - evolutionist ethnography. Intensely interested in the data coming to England as a result of British imperial hegemony in distant lands, and even more so in the taxonomic methodologies by which such data might be arranged, Spencer constructed a massively-well documented (if, ultimately, quixotically unscientific) model for the development of peoples. The model runs in much the same direction as for the development of religion; 'savages' (especially aboriginal peoples) and 'lower races' at the bottom, ascending in rather predictable fashion to the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant peoples of the West, though with some unexpected deviations.

Unsurprisingly, Blavatsky was later to claim that:

Theosophy, while rejecting the one-sidedness and therefore the limitation in both ideas, is alone able to reconcile the two, i.e., the [Spencerian] Evolutionists and the Positivists - on both metaphysical and practical lines (Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. XIII, 97).

It should not be assumed that Spencer's ethnographical speculations were unique, although his codification remains singular for the period. Darwin was himself occasionally given to such ruminations:

Looking to the world at no very distant date, what an endless number of the lower races will have been eliminated by the higher civilized races throughout the world (C. Darwin to W. Graham, 3 July, 1881, in Francis Darwin, ed., The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, including an Autobiographical Chapter, vol. 1, John Murray, London, 1887, 316).

One of Spencer's more celebrated inventions (aside from the dentist's chair) is the paper clip. It might be noted that the paper clip is the tool of the taxonomist par excellence - able to bind disparate entities into something approaching a unity. Without disparaging Spencer's tremendous achievements, it might be suggested that the paper clip is the perfect metaphor for his social science.
along the way. Spencerian Evolution posits an inexorable momentum, and, as part of the *processus*, the lower forms will simply die off. (It should be remembered that it was Spencer, and not Darwin, who coined the phrase ‘survival of the fittest’).\(^7^5\) Importantly, and so as to avoid unsophisticated unilinearity, the system is in constant flux, and there will inevitably be ‘survivals’ - those cultural remnants of lower forms which have yet to be eradicated fully. Among the most significant ‘survivals’ are the vestiges of folkloric *praxis* which have somehow eluded the march to modernity.\(^7^7\)

Such, in brief, is the essence of the Spencerian vision. For evolution to succeed, however, it should remain unencumbered by human intervention, regardless of how well-intentioned it might be. Thus Spencer’s negative attitude to social welfare, state education, and legislation to protect the economically-oppressed, is an extension of his uninterventionist and *laissez-faire* evolutionist outlook.\(^7^8\) As David Oldroyd has noted:

> [I]n Spencer’s view, the weakest members of society *ought* to go to the wall, for only in this way could one hope to see some improvement in society ... What was required - so Spencer supposed - was a keener prosecution of the struggle for existence, for this would enable man to become better adapted to his environmental conditions, through his own exertions and the elimination of the socially unfit.\(^7^9\)

This last observation is of profound significance: humanity as a collective would evolve only by means of the ‘exertions’ of the individual. Here, of course, Spencer is exhibiting his roots in Enlightenment perfectibilist thought, but is also demonstrating his adherence to the much earlier Lamarckian doctrine of the inheritance of *acquired*

\(^7^6\) Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts*, 207.
\(^7^7\) Trompf, *In Search of Origins*, 27.
\(^7^8\) For an overview of Spencer’s political and economic theory see Sklair, *The Sociology of Progress*, 65ff. It should be noted that the Spencerian recension of Social Darwinism has been enthusiastically received by advocates of ‘Free Trade’, including various scions of the Carnegie and Rockefeller families, and many a Prime Minister and President. Nisbet has suggested that ‘it is a matter of record that one and all of the exponents of the New Liberalism proceeded from, and with expressed admiration for, Herbert Spencer’. Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, 235. One suspects a resurgence of such sentiment has accompanied the ‘Third Way’ politics of the late 1990s, and will gain further territory as nominally socialist governments absorb the economic rationalism which completely dominated political discourse in the last two decades of the twentieth century.
\(^7^9\) Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts*, 208.
characteristics. This latter influence is crucial to understanding Spencerian evolutionism; freedom from all constraints - legal, social, and economic - will allow those individuals best suited (through consciously acquired characteristics and the inheritance thereof) the ‘space’ in which to progress unimpeded. In the Spencerian conception, humans are not only the object, but the subject of the evolutionary impetus.

The above excursus on the challenge of evolutionary thought in the Victorian era has briefly outlined some of the responses to the confronting insecurities bred by naturalism. Of those who engaged with the evolutionary paradigm, a significant number sought means by which to exempt humanity from the apparently all-deterministic dictates of biological evolutionism. Others, such as Spencer, wholeheartedly embraced the new model and extended its possibilities from inductive empiricism to deductive philosophy, thus fashioning a multi-purpose hermeneutic, with specific applicabilities in the study of human social relationships. In the process of ‘cosmicising’ the evolutionary paradigm, conceptualisers such as Spencer afforded their formulations something of the patina of authority which adhered to the inductive technique (as exemplified by Darwin), thus elevating social theory into cosmic law. It was by this process that the idea of progress, hallowed by the Enlightenment philosophes of the eighteenth century, came ultimately to gain the appearance of scientific credentials in the nineteenth.80

Although the detail of Blavatsky’s evolutionary idiom has been discussed supra, and need not be repeated, it is nevertheless important to recognise her sophisticated

80 Jean Baptiste Pierre Antoine de Monet (1744-1829), more commonly known as the Chevalier de Lamarck, was a significant, though underrated, precursor to Darwin. Lamarck posited that changes in the (cellular) structure of the body would produce sympathetic changes in the reproductory system. Thus - to use a celebrated example - a blacksmith who constantly builds strength in his arms will pass to his offspring greater potential for ‘arm strength’. Although Darwin was quite dismissive of much of the Lamarck schema, particularly the latter’s notions of a ‘subtle fluid’ and spontaneous generation, he nevertheless made significant use of the theory of acquired characteristics himself. For a concise analysis see in ibid., 29-37.

81 It might be noted here that ‘social scientific’ theory, which had gained kudos in the nineteenth century by its proximity to inductive science, was put to the test in the twentieth century, and found wanting. It would not be unfair to suggest that the last century provided something of an experimental laboratory to assess the claims of nineteenth-century (evolutionist) progressivists. Evidently, all were found wanting.
response to the central epistemological challenge of her century. Blavatsky was very well aware that the most confronting detail of Darwinian speculation was not the posited simian paternity of humanity, but the sundering of the previously all-sustaining mythology of divine-human synergy which it had caused. What the naturalists had done was to remove the mythic mediations by which Westerners had remained assured that God’s hands were still set firmly upon Creation. In so doing, the deism of the Enlightenment had come to its natural conclusion: God remained in his heaven (even if rearticulated as a Spencerian ‘persistence of force’), mute to all entreaty, and humans remained very much earth-bound and severely existentially challenged.

The centrepiece of the Blavatskian response to evolutionism was the anthropos, or, in her own religio-scientific idiom, the ‘Pilgrim Monad’. Content to accept the evidence of biological developmentalism for ‘lower’ forms, Blavatsky espoused the methodological position outlined supra by which humanity was deemed to be the culmination and consummation of the processus:

The fact is that ... the human type is the repertory of all potential organic forms, and the central point from which these latter radiate.

Yet Blavatsky also incorporated a variant of the model of human exclusivism previously outlined, whereby human life is exempted from simian paternity. To underscore this elevated anthropocentrism, she extended the sovereignty of the human Monad to all manifest and unmanifest life forms; it became the foundational unit to which all unevolved life was aspiring, and from which all evolved life would ascend.

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See supra ch. 12, 13.

For Spencer’s metaphysical ‘Force’ see Oldroyd, Darwinian Impacts, 210; Trompf, In Search of Origins, 24.


Interestingly, the term ‘unit’ appears to have been introduced into the English language by John Dee in his ‘John Dee his Mathematicall Preface’ (to H. Billingsley’s translation of The Elements of Geometrie of the most auncient Philosopher Euclide of Megara, London, 1570), as an equivalent of the term Monad:

Note the worde, Unit, to expresse the Greke Monas, & not Unitie: as we haue all, commonly, till now, used (Folio 2 of the preface).

The most striking employment of the term by the crystallomancer Dee is in his cryptic Monas Hieroglyphica of 1564. For Dee see supra ch. 7. For his coining of the term ‘unit’ see C. H. Josten, ‘A Translation of John Dee’s Monas Hieroglyphica (Antwerp, 1564), with an Introduction and Annotations’ in Ambix XII: nos. 2 & 3 (combined ed.), June & October, 1964, 84-221.

It might also be noted that Spencer employed the term ‘monad’ in his Social Statistics of 1850:

We are warranted in considering the body as a commonwealth of monads, each of which has independent powers of life, growth, and reproduction (Herbert Spencer, Social Statistics, London, 1857, ch. 30, 451).
to reintegration with the Absolute. The entirety of the natural world was thus human in potentia.

Blavatsky's first task was to deconstruct the Darwinian proposition of primate origins. She knew intuitively that recourse to traditionalist Biblical accounts would not satisfy her needs, and that a more dialectical approach was warranted. As ever, she turned to the corpus of esotericism for alternative avenues:

The pendulum of thought oscillates between extremes. Having now finally emancipated herself from the shackles of theology, Science has embraced the opposite fallacy; and in the attempt to interpret Nature on purely materialistic lines, she has built up that most extravagant theory of the ages - the derivation of man from a ferocious and brutal ape. So rooted has this doctrine, in one form or another, now become, that the most Herculean efforts will be needed to bring about its final rejection ... The anthropology of the secret volumes is ... the best possible answer to such a worthless contention.6

As previously noted, Blavatsky's means of entering the evolutionists' mêlée was to adopt two motifs which had more often than not accompanied sophisticated esoteric speculation: macrocyclicism and ascensus/descensus figurations.87 Onto these she grafted the notion of a vast prehistory and a variation of the Spencerian definition of development from the simple to the complex. As a consequence, she could posit a two-fold developmentalism; the first involving a more or less normative evolution from the cellular to the mammalian, and the second entailing the involution, through an initial hypostatisation, of the Dhyani-Chohanic (archangelic) into the human. There was sufficient room at the interstices of these two streams to accommodate such otherwise problematic items as suspiciously pithecoid fossil remains - a compromise made easier still by the massive chronologies which macrocyclic temporalism afforded her. Evolution and involution meet in 'Man':

87 See supra chs. 13, 14; for an expert commentary see also Trompf, 'Macrohistory', 274-286, esp. 282.
From the beginning of the Round, all in Nature tends to become Man. All the impulses of the dual, centripetal and centrifugal Force are directed towards one point - MAN. This Round began with astral man, the reflection of the Dhyan Chohans, called the 'Builders'. Man is the alpha and the omega of objective creation. As said in Isis Unveiled, 'all things had their origin in spirit - evolution having originally begun from above and proceeding downwards, instead of the reverse, as taught in the Darwinian theory'.

It is crucial to recognise that, although Blavatsky employs the term 'Man' to describe the meeting point of the two streams of developmentalism (the animal and the angelic), it is fully-evolved and perfected 'Man' to whom she refers, or, in other words the Master:

Adeptship is but the crown of spiritual self-evolution, and the powers of spirit develope [sic] themselves successively in the ratio of the aspirant's progress upward, morally and spiritually. This you see is to place our modern Evolution Theory upon a truly noble basis, and to give it the character of a lofty spiritual, instead of a debasing materialistic, philosophy.

The powers of the Master are thus rearticulated as a logical by-product of the evolutionary process acting on higher levels than the mundane:

The goal of the aspirant for spiritual wisdom is entrance upon a higher plane of existence; he is to become a new man, more perfect in every way than he is at present, and if he succeeds, his capabilities and faculties will receive a corresponding increase of range and power, just as in the visible world we find that each stage in the evolutionary scale is marked by increase of capacity. This is how it is that the Adept becomes endowed with marvellous powers.

88 Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, vol. II, 170. Elsewhere in the same volume Blavatsky noted: Darwinism only meets Evolution at its midway point - that is to say when astral evolution had given place to the play of the ordinary physical forces with which our present senses acquaint us (in ibid., 649).
89 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VI, 125.
that have been so often described.\textsuperscript{90} An analysis of the Master as the epitome of Theosophical evolution has been attempted elsewhere in the present work. Yet it is important in a typological discussion of this kind to isolate exactly what is inferred by 'Theosophical evolutionism'. After all, the lexical content of the term 'evolutionism' is surprisingly meagre, and the uses to which it has been put are many, and occasionally even contradictory. In approaching this question, it is perhaps unsurprising to discover that Blavatsky utterly rejected Darwinian naturalism (except, of course, those few portions of Darwinian biological evolutionism which fitted snugly into her system, and which could be employed as a foil against the churches),\textsuperscript{91} and embraced the deductive cosmicised evolutionism of Spencer.\textsuperscript{92}

There can be little doubt that - at least in the field of macrotheorising - Blavatsky and Spencer both seem to partake of a certain \textit{air de famille}.\textsuperscript{93} Though in admittedly vastly different ways, both posited a cosmic law of progressivist evolution, the form of which could be extrapolated from natural philosophy, human society, and the analysis of history. Further, it could well be argued that Blavatskian karmic reincarnationism, for instance, is not dissimilar in effect to the Lamarckian creed of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, as rearticulated by Spencer. Both privilege individual responsibility as the foundational impetus for personal and collective evolution,\textsuperscript{94} and both suggest that whatever effort is expended in the present will be

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 332-333.

\textsuperscript{91} It might be recalled that in her New York apartment, the 'Lamasery', Blavatsky kept an erect stuffed baboon dressed in evening clothes. Under the animal's arm was a manuscript of a lecture on \textit{The Origin of Species}. The baboon was labelled 'Professor Fiske' after the Darwinian academic: see Washington, \textit{Madame Blavatsky's Baboon}, 44-45.

\textsuperscript{92} Blavatsky's attraction to Spencer may well have been increased by news she received via a 'Miss Potter' who had lived 'half her life in Herbert Spencer's family' that 'Spencer [had] read \textit{Isis [Unveiled]} and found some beautiful pages and \textit{new original ideas}': see Blavatsky's notes in Olcott's Diary for 19 October, 1878: in Blavatsky, \textit{Collected Writings}, vol. I, 413.

\textsuperscript{93} One has to read Blavatsky's false modesty with skepticism: \textit{[The Secret Doctrine]} does not pretend to set up a series of explanations, complete in all their details, of the mysteries of Being; nor does it seek to win for itself the name of a distinct system of thought - like the works of Messrs. Herbert Spencer, Schopenhauer or Comte (Blavatsky, \textit{Collected Writings}, vol. XIII, 93).

\textsuperscript{94} Blavatsky suggested that: \textit{[M]}an ought to be ever striving to help the divine evolution of \textit{Ideas}, by becoming to the best of his ability \textit{a co-worker with nature} in the cyclic task (Blavatsky, \textit{The Secret Doctrine}, vol. I, 280).
rewarded in future generations (or lifetimes!). Indeed, the depth of Blavatsky’s debt to Spencer can be detected even in her choice of idiom; the following excerpt from The Secret Doctrine might just as well have been written by Spencer:

The whole order of nature evinces a progressive march towards a higher life. There is design in the action of the seemingly blindest forces. The whole process of evolution with its endless adaptations is a proof of this. The immutable laws that weed out the weak and feeble species, to make room for the strong, and which ensure the ‘survival of the fittest’, though so cruel in their immediate action - all are working toward the grand end.95

It is possible to trace the Spencerian influence in Blavatskian schematisations in several directions. For instance, it is not difficult to discern in Blavatsky’s critique of Spiritualism echoes of what Trompf has called Spencer’s ‘Ghost Theory of Religion’.96 Thus Spiritualists, or ‘unconscious NECROMANCERS’,97 are reactionaries who unknowingly mimic ‘primitive’ religiosity (and are thus kin with Spencerian animists and ancestor worshippers, who fetishise the unknown under

95 Ibid., 277. Blavatsky’s hallowing of ‘Social Darwinism’ has had some dire effects in later occult history. Her presence can be clearly discerned in the discourse of some of the neofascistic occult groups, particularly those which espouse ‘Esoterrorism’. Ray Fenriz, founder of The Church of the Final Judgement (not to be confused with The Process-Chuch of the Final Judgement), and an avid disciple of Charles Manson, has noted the following:

[Ray Fenriz:] Our idea, like that of the Norse and the Hindus, is that the cyclic process continues. There will be other Civilizations after this one, rising and falling ... Philosophically, we stand for Balance, Universal Order, as Manson put it. This Civilization has created an apocalyptic imbalance. Balance can be restored to earth by letting nature takes [sic] its course. By stopping the homocentric interference in the nature of things. As one e.g., the humanitarians have caused population imbalance with their aid programmes. Now nature is setting things aright with massive famine and disease, with AIDS in particular ... Let the fittest survive; that’s nature’s way. Evolution ... Withdraw concern for the useless and Nature will cull the world’s population. Make it better; stronger ([Ordo Sinistra Vivendi], ‘Charles Manson: An interview with Ray Fenriz, founder of The Church of the Final Judgement’ in The Heretic: A Journal of the Kulturkampf, Relapolitik, Esoterrorism, No. 8, April, 1994, 6.

96 Trompf, In Search of Origins, 28.

97 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. III, 293.
human form). The Theosophist, conversely, is not dissimilar to the Spencerian deist (or agnostic), who has abandoned an anthropomorphic personal deity in favour of the affirmation of the Unknowable. Thus it is that Blavatsky *qua* Spencerian evolutionist could argue that Theosophy itself was an evolutionary milestone in the development of religious consciousness:

Theosophy fights every anthropomorphic conception of the great UNKNOWABLE, and would impress upon the growing world, that its days of babyhood and even adolescence are over and gone by to return no more.

It is evident that Blavatsky felt she and Spencer were engaged in a fraternal pursuit to advance the cause of religion beyond its juvenile manifestations. To this end, she was especially pleased to find in him a champion of her anti-Christian cause:

In last month’s *Nineteenth Century*, the great English thinker and philosopher, Mr. Herbert Spencer, has contributed a remarkable article, ‘Religion: a Retrospect and Prospect’ ... which saps the very foundation of Christianity, breaks down the elaborate structure and sweeps away the débris of the ruin.

Of great significance is the fact that Blavatsky felt Spencer was - perhaps unknowingly - reintroducing the truths of esotericism in order to fill the gap caused by the imminent demise of the churches:

There is another point in the extract from Mr. Herbert Spencer’s paper, which must not be passed by in silence. With regard to the First Cause, he says, it is - ‘consciousness which transcend the forms of distinct thought, though it forever remains a consciousness’. We may not adopt this language in its entirety, but

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We are now dealing with the beliefs of twenty millions of modern Spiritualists; our own fellow men, living in the full blaze of the enlightened 19th century. These men ignore none of the discoveries of modern science; nay, many among them are themselves ranked high among the highest of such scientific discoverers. Notwithstanding all this, are they any the less addicted to the same ‘form of superstition’, if superstition it be, than the primitive man? (reprinted in Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. II, 170).


100 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. VI, 171.
it is perfectly plain to those who can read the signs of the times that a strong current has set in, in the Western world of thought, towards the much reviled Occult philosophy.\textsuperscript{101}

For Blavatsky, of course, the pivotal force underpinning ‘Occult philosophy’ was the figure of the Master, and it is not difficult to discern Spencerian traits in Blavatsky’s depictions of the Brotherhood. In the first instance, the Theosophical Master is portrayed as the metaphysical antithesis of the spirits of Spiritualism. The latter represent a curiously occult atavistic resurgence, whereby an undesired primitivism entered nineteenth century discourse, and contributed to, rather than fought against, the omnivorous materialism of the age. The Masters, conversely, encourage humanity to resist the primitivising urge and to disengage from the attraction to matter and lesser spirits. The truly ontic human - represented in carnate form by the Masters themselves - is emphatically not he who is attracted to ‘elemental spirits’ and lower life forms (which populate the ascending evolutionary scale), but he who desires union with the angelic hosts (who themselves instituted the descending involutionary scale) and ultimately with the Absolute - or, as Blavatsky would have it, the Spencerian ‘Unknowable’.\textsuperscript{102}

In point of fact, the Masters operate to provide a divine warrant for Spencerian cosmicised progressivism. They furnish the necessary authority such that the Theosophical Weltanschauung - premised on a universal law of ascendant progress - can become an evolutionist creed. Accordingly, spiritual and physical evolution is vouchsafed only to those whose conscious efforts raise them above their peers. The Master - as the Theosophist glorified - represents the fruits of such endeavours; he enjoys robustness, longevity, great intelligence, and other such presumed traits of the highly evolved human. Further, his adeptic endeavours in this life will advantage him

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 173. Elsewhere Blavatsky wrote:

Herbert Spencer has so far modified his Agnosticism, as to assert that the nature of the 'First Cause', which the Occultist more logically derives from the 'Causeless Cause', the 'Eternal', and the 'Unknowable', may be essentially the same as that of the Consciousness which wells up within us: in short, that the impersonal reality pervading the Kosmos is the pure noumenon of thought. This advance on his part brings him very near to the esoteric and Vedantin tenet (Blavatsky, \textit{The Secret Doctrine}, vol. I, 14-15).

\textsuperscript{102} Cf., eg., in ibid., 281, 327 (+327n), 496, 675.
in the next and so on, all the way up the ladder to his ultimate divinisation. In this he can be contrasted with the lowest form of human life, personified in the Blavatskian and Spencerian systems by the Australian aborigines.103

It should be recalled that in Blavatskian esoteric ethnography, each race will give way in its turn to higher evolutionary forms (that is, those closer to the Dhyani-Chohanic angelic forebears):

The face of the Globe was completely changed each time; the survival of the fittest nations and races was secured through timely help; and the unfit ones - the failures - were disposed of by being swept off the earth.104

In accordance with the 'systematics of overlap' which underpin Blavatsky's ethnography (and which are required so as to explain the continued existence of primal peoples), there will always be a few remnants - Spencerian 'survivals' - left from previous Rounds. Thus it is that the Australian aborigines, remnants from the Third (Lemurian) Round, are at the tail end of the evolutionary juggernaut:

As the Tasmanians are now completely extinct, and the Australians rapidly dying out, so will the other old races soon follow.105

103 The Master Koot Hoomi referred to the survivors of the seventh sub-race of the Third Root Race (e.g., Australian aborigines) - who nevertheless live in the era of the Fifth ('Aryan') Root Race - as 'fallen, degraded semblances of humanity'; see The Mahatma Letters, 1993 ed., (Letter No. 93b: October, 1882) 308. See also Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, vol. II, 162, 193, 195-196 (+196n), 197, 199n, 318, 318, 332, 729.

104 In ibid., vol. II, 330.

105 Ibid., 332. Blavatsky justifies her Spencerian laissez-faire attitude to such groups as the Australian aborigines on two significant grounds. First, the aboriginal peoples are the result of human-animal miscegenation:

Being a very low sub-race, begotten originally of animals, of monsters, whose very fossils are now resting miles under the sea floors, their stock has since existed in an environment strongly subjected to the law of retardation. Australia is one of the oldest lands now above the waters, and in the senile decrepitude of old age, its 'virgin soil' notwithstanding. It can produce no new forms, unless helped by new and fresh races, and artificial cultivation and breeding (Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, vol. 2, 197).

Second, the aborigines have a terrific karmic debt to overcome from previous lives:

Here the inferior Races, of which there are still some analogues left - as the Australians (now fast dying out) and some African and Oceanic tribes - are meant. 'They were not ready' signifies that the Karmic development of these Monads had not yet fitted them to occupy the forms of men destined for incarnation in higher intellectual Races (in ibid., 162).
Although the Master is the highest evolved state of physical humanity, and acts as the catalyst for evolution among the less perfected, even his arms are bound by such universal laws as the progression of the races. Koot Hoomi lamented thus:

[W]e cannot take a savage from the centre of Africa and make him comprehend at once the Principia of Newton or the ‘Sociology’ of Herbert Spencer.\(^{106}\)

The means by which the Masters serve the evolutionary impulse, then, is through the instruction and example they proffer to their chelas, and to Theosophists generally. Interestingly, in a Blavatskian riposte to Darwinian naturalism, the Masters exist so that evolutionism doesn’t produce only the physically strong, but also the spiritually adept. Indeed, as Blavatsky herself noted, ‘the “survival of the unfittest” ... the strongest and most material’ can only be countered by those who consciously strive to inculcate the parallel inner evolution, and this is to be achieved through cleaving to the Masters.\(^{107}\)

It is occasionally difficult not to think of Blavatskian progressivist evolutionism in terms of planar geometry. In her own words, ‘the work of evolution begins on the descending arc and works its way upwards through the ascending arc’.\(^{108}\) Fifth Round humanity - as presently constituted - is at the bottom of the curve and at the time of its densest inherence in matter, and thus enduring the period of most significant danger. All effort must be directed toward helping ‘substance to disenthral itself from the viscous [sic] grip of sense’.\(^{109}\) The few who look to be among those who begin their ‘ascensus gloriosus’ toward Pure Spirit are granted the ultimate template in the Theosophical Masters, who - through conscious effort over many lifetimes - have acquired the characteristics necessary to evolve beyond their ken. Through their teachings, their example, and, most of all, their ontic paranormalcy, the Masters testify to the veracity of a cosmicised evolutionism; they were what humans now are, they are what humans can become.

\(^{107}\) Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. XIII, 98.
\(^{109}\) Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. XIII, 98.
It is clear that Blavatsky was much impressed by the example offered by those such as Herbert Spencer who elevated evolutionism beyond the restrictive domain of inductive science and into natural law. But where Comte, and even Spencer, had appropriated the vocabulary of religious ascent for secular purposes (Comte's consecutive stages of theological, metaphysical, and positivistic or scientific development), Blavatsky chose instead to appropriate the evolutionist discourse for fundamentally religious ends. Interestingly, although the approaches differ significantly, the results are occasionally startlingly similar.

To extend the metaphor of geometry, it might be noted that Blavatsky rued how 'Darwinism only meets Evolution at its midway point'. Consequently, much of the Theosophical endeavour can be considered an enterprising attempt to 'square the circle'; that is, to reintroduce a satisfying teleology into a Western mind now perhaps more fearful of the prospect of no Plan, than of no God. The new evolutionist epistemologies had not only breached the walls of traditional Biblical verities, but - in the hands of such developmentalists as Spencer - God had been depersonalised to the extent that only complete abstraction could follow. God was floating away, and with him went meaning.

Antoine Faivre has suggested that 'esotericists prefer to stay on Jacob's ladder, upon which angels (and doubtless other entities as well) climb and descend, rather than to go beyond'. Mentioned in the course of a heuristic and (delimited) diachronic definition of esotericism, this comment is granted further valency in Blavatsky's case due to simple historical contingency. Blavatsky lived in an era when - to extend the metaphor - the rungs were being systematically detached from Jacob's ladder. Mythic mediations between humanity and God were being turned to dust under the bright glare of science - and 'scientism'. Blavatsky's self-appointed mission was to appropriate the language and rhetoric of evolutionism, and then carefully to rearticulated them in order to generate intermediaries. In the process she created a Theosophy which appealed to many precisely because it seemed to engage with the challenges of its time, and not shy away from the confrontation of evolutionism. Yet Blavatsky was

111 Faivre, 'Introduction I', xvii. Faivre's comments contrast esotericists and mystics.
perfectly well aware that all such systems which sought *rapprochement* between the temporal and the eternal were fraught with peril:

In this age of Materialism, Agnosticism, Evolutionism, and false Idealism, there is not a system, however intellectually expounded, that can stand on its own legs, or fail to be criticized by an exponent from another school of thought as materialistic as itself; even Mr. Herbert Spencer, the greatest of all, is unable to answer some criticisms.\(^{12}\)

Blavatsky felt sure that if Spencer couldn’t finish the task, she should step into the breach. After all, she (and her Masters) could exemplify the pinnacle of religious evolutionism just as readily as he.

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\(^{12}\) Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XIII, 95.
CHAPTER 28

THE ANGELIC MASTER

Enoch

It has long been recognised that during the Hellenistic period, Jewish angelologies underwent a dramatic rearticulation; names and discernible identities appeared within the literature devoted to the various supernatural beings, and a fixed hierarchical schema began to develop.1 Thus it was that the disparate supercelestial entities of the pre-Babylonian exile accounts had been - by the time of the Second Temple - harmonised into more or less distinct strata. As Martin Hengel noted:

This strictly-ordered, pyramid-like hierarchical system probably corresponded to a general religious need of the time, as it exercised a profound influence, not only on the Greek-speaking Judaism of the Diaspora and early Christianity, but through them on gnosticism and indeed on the whole of popular religion in late antiquity, as is shown by its significance for magic. Even neo-Platonism could not escape its influence.2

Such elaborate angelic hierarchies have often been interpreted as a rather mannered development, and symptomatic of a diminution of the classical monotheistic purity of Israelite religion. John Bright's analysis is typical:

Though this developing angelology represented no perversion of Israel's faith, but rather an exaggerated development of one of its primitive features, it did pose the danger, as such beliefs always do, that in popular religion lesser beings would intrude between a man and his God.3

It is worthwhile to consider the social context in which such developments took place. As Martha Himmelfarb has observed, the elaboration of sophisticated angelologies began in earnest in the bleak period following the destruction of the First Temple and

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the exile. The Temple, the focus of divine penetration into the earthly sphere, was gone, and the sundering of that intimate relationship led to a unfamiliar sense of distance between God’s people and their Creator. Seen in this context, the concentration of the contemporary commentaries and apocalypses on angelic-human interaction may not be a perversion of pristine revelation, nor a diminution of the utter transcendence of divinity (nor, indeed, a violation of the first commandment), but rather a pious attempt to span an otherwise impassable gulf and reclaim the ear of God.

There is an interesting parallelism to be observed in Blavatsky’s depiction of the Masters. In an era characterised by growing Positivist materialism, many religiously-minded individuals felt that the presence of the divine in the world had been abrogated or exorcised. The churches, heretofore the guarantor of the permeation of God’s grace into the mundane sphere, had been - for many - ‘crushed’ under the weight of Enlightenment skepticism. Some, such as Blavatsky, attempted to reestablish contact with, if not a personal God (a notion which Blavatsky deemed discredited), then at least a sense of numinosity, a theosophia. To this end, the Theosophical Society posited perhaps the most thoroughly rearticulated ‘angelology’ of modern times in the shape of the Great White Lodge. The Masters, just like the Hellenistic angels of pre-Rabbinic Judaism, were presented as possessing a distinct ontology, with an equivalent emphasis on individual identity and function.

The similitude between antique Jewish angelology and modern Theosophical constructions of an adept Brotherhood may seem simply a matter of analogy, and not contingency, were it not for the use made by Blavatsky of a text which has come to be known as 1 Enoch. The Biblical Enoch was the son of Jared and the father of Methuselah, and was famously translated bodily to God’s presence: ‘And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him’ (Gen. V:24). Unsurprisingly, Enoch had early proved to be a mainstay of esoteric discourse, not least because of the

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5 Blavatsky’s great attachment to 1 Enoch (or Ethiopic Hēnoc) has been entirely ignored by apologists and critics alike. That her interest led to 37 mentions of the work in The Secret Doctrine should surely have alerted scholars to its centrality.
6 The Authorised Version - rather than the Septuagint - is here quoted as that was the text normally employed in Blavatsky’s writings (though not, naturally, in her Orthodox youth). See also Ecclesiasticus XLIV:16.
semiotically-laden arithmosophy which surrounded him: he was the seventh in the line
of Adam, and had lived for 365 years prior to his assumption. Perhaps even more
enticing for Blavatsky were the cryptic references to the possession by the early
Christians of a text ascribed to Enoch, mentioned in the canonical Epistle of Jude.
That she had access to the work in its recently discovered and translated Ethiopian
recension - which the Western churches were forced to consider pseudepigraphical and
apocryphal - was welcome grist to her anti-ecclesial mill:

The fact that the Apostle Jude and many of the Christian Fathers
referred to it as a revelation and a sacred volume, is ... an excellent
proof that the early Christians accepted it; among these the most
learned - as, for instance, Clement of Alexandria - understood
Christianity and its doctrines in quite a different light from their
modern successors, and viewed Christ under an aspect that
Occultists only can appreciate.9

News of the continued existence of [I] Enoch was brought to the West through the
manuscripts garnered by the Scotsman James Bruce’s 1769-1773 exploration of
Abyssinia (Ethiopia), and which were first translated from Ge’ez into English by

7 For one notable example see the elaborate Enochian theurgical system and language passed via
angelic mediation to the Elizabethan, John Dee. For details see supra ch. 12. The fascination with
Enoch (and with Elias/Elijah) for Western esotericists can be traced at least as far as Paracelsus and
Guillaume Postel (1510?-1581): see Marion Leathers Kuntz, Guillaume Postel, Prophet of the
8 Blavatsky would also have been further attracted to 1 Enoch by the fact that it was a ‘Coptic’
document: see supra ch. 24. During Blavatsky’s era, the West did not distinguish between the
Ethiopian and Coptic (Egyptian) Churches, considering them under one rubric: ‘Coptic’ (and
monophysite). The reason for this was that since the time of the missionary St. Frumentius (c.300-
c.380), called Abba Salama (‘Father of Peace’) by the Ethiopians, the Patriarch of Alexandria had
reserved the right to select the abun (equivalent to a Catholicos) of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Orthodox
Church was finally granted autocephaly by Patriarch Kyrollos (Cyril) VI on 25 June, 1959 - though
the relationship has since been problematical, due in no small measure to the recent granting of
autocephaly to the Eritrean Orthodox Church by Patriarch Shenouda III.
9 H. P. Blavatsky, ‘The Book of Enoch: The Origin and the Foundation of Christianity’ in Blavatsky,
Collected Writings, vol. XIV, 82-83.

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Richard Laurence in 1821. The work aroused great attention, primarily due to its novel eschatology and the keen association it makes between sin and exploitation, thus providing a rich perspective on the social context of the theology of the Jewish intertestamental period, and on early Christian thought.

It is hardly surprising that Blavatsky's religious syncretism - underpinned by her own omnivorous reading habits - would encourage her to examine the text of 1 Enoch. It should be recalled that her programme was to discern an overarching Theosophical synthesis, and to this end any such newly-discovered or translated materials could provide a link in the chain of the philosophia perennis, whether they come from the Gnostico-Hermetic family as noted supra, or even Biblical pseudepigrapha. The failure of contemporary scholars of occultism to take account of the importance of such disciplines as paleography, archaeology, and text criticism, on the minds of polymaths such as Blavatsky has led to an imbalance in the appraisal of nineteenth century

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10 There are three versions of Enoch:

1 Enoch: the first, and oldest, is the Ethiopic text brought to the West by James Bruce. The Ethiopic version is the fullest extant; the earliest text dates to (perhaps) the fourteenth century. Otherwise, portions exist in Greek (notably the eighth century Codex Panopolitanus from the Coptic graveyard in Akhmim, Egypt; and the Chronographia of Georgius Synkellos, c. 800), in Latin (an eight century manuscript), and in Aramaic (the Qumran scroll, 4Q227/4QEn: for date see infra). It is thought the original text was either Hebrew or Aramaic (or, like parts of Daniel, a combination of the two). The text which Blavatsky employed was The Book of Enoch the Prophet, trans. Richard Laurence, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., London, 1883 (first published in 1821). The Greek fragments were later published by R. H. Charles: The Book of Enoch, trans. R. H. Charles, S. P. C. K., London, 1952 (originally published in 1917); see also The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation, trans. Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr. & Edward Cook, Hodder & Stoughton, Rydalmere, New South Wales, 1997, 264-265.

2 Enoch (called also the Book of the Secrets of Enoch, or Slavonic Enoch) was first discovered in a manuscript in the Belgrade library by Professor M. I. Sokolov in 1886. The earliest manuscript dates to the fourteenth century; original date and provenance remain controversial, but it is generally supposed the work post-dates the beginning of the Common Era (probably late first century B.C.E.). For the earliest English translation see R. H. Charles, ed., The Book of the Secrets of Enoch, trans. W. R. Morfill, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1896.

3 Enoch (or Hebrew Enoch; Sepher Hekalot; The Book of the Palaces) is a Hebrew text dating to the fifth or sixth century B.C.E., ascribed (along with many other Merkabah texts) to Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha (d. 132).

esotericism, and the dominance of the untenable 'sociology of the occult' programme."

This is not the place to analyse Blavatsky's reading of 1 Enoch. Suffice to say that such themes as angelic-human miscegenation and the doom wrought by the fostering of forbidden knowledge would reappear in the Blavatskian idiom - though with stunning rearticulation. Indeed, the story of the production of giants from intercourse between the fallen angels and women (based, no doubt, upon the enigmatic passage in Gen. VI:1-4) would become the ideal vehicle - perhaps ironically - for Blavatsky to absorb Darwinian speculation about humanity's simian ancestry into her own macrohistorical programme. Similarly, the employment of forbidden technologies by postlapsarian ancestors (such as forms of metallurgy, the manufacture of cosmetics, and, interestingly, the forging of armaments) as depicted in 1 Enoch, was reconstrued as an account of the Atlantean conflagration. Crucial for Blavatsky was the observation that the most significant cause for the catastrophe described in 1 Enoch was the use of magical technologies:

Amasras taught incantation and the cutting of roots; and Armaros the resolving of incantations; and Baraqiyal astrology, and Kokarer'el (the knowledge of) the signs, and Tam'el taught the seeing of the stars, and Asder'el taught the course of the moon as well as the deception of man. And (the people) cried and their voice reached unto heaven.

Such consonances between the Blavatskian formulations and 1 Enoch require close individual analysis, and are beyond the scope of the present work. Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that Blavatsky accorded the text chronological priority over other intertestamental materials:

"For the 'sociology of the occult' see supra ch. 1. One is reminded of Blavatsky's comment: Those who labor under the impression that the Occultists of any nation reject the Bible, in its original text and meaning, are wrong. As well reject the Books of Thoth, the Chaldaean Kabalah or the Book of Dzyan itself. Occultists only reject the one-sided interpretations and the human element in the Bible, which is an Occult, and therefore a sacred, volume as much as the others (Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. XIV, 84).

13 1 Enoch VIII:3-4 in ibid., 16."
In fairness to truth, the hypothesis ought at least to have been suggested, that the *Book of Enoch* in its present form is simply a transcript - with numerous pre-Christian and post-Christian additions and interpolations - from far older texts.\(^\text{14}\)

Blavatsky's claim - had any Biblical scholar bothered to read it - would have been considered eccentric at best, deluded at worst, for the consensus opinion of her time was that the oldest of the Jewish apocalypses was *Daniel* (with one portion of *1 Enoch*, the 'Book of Dreams' [*1 Enoch* LXXXIII - XC] considered perhaps coeval).\(^\text{15}\) *Daniel* thus came to define the apocalyptic genre - a position underscored by its canonicity and its agreement with *Revelation* in positing an imminent end.\(^\text{16}\)

Following the discovery of fragments of 11 Aramaic manuscripts of *1 Enoch* among the Dead Sea Scrolls near Qumran, the dating of the text has undergone something of a revolution.\(^\text{17}\) Consequently, the consensus view has changed considerably, with two parts of *1 Enoch* - the 'Astronomical Book of Enoch' [*1 Enoch* LXXII-LXXXII] and the 'Book of Watchers' [*1 Enoch* I-XXXVI] - now being accepted on paleographical evidence as the two oldest Jewish apocalypses extant, dating respectively to no later than the third century B.C.E. and to no later than the first quarter of the second century B.C.E.\(^\text{18}\) To appreciate Blavatsky's interest in *1 Enoch*, it is crucial to recognise that the 'Astronomical Book of Enoch' and, particularly, the 'Book of Watchers' both deal extensively with what can only be called magic (or, at least, manticism), and both leave the eschaton open-ended. No doubt Blavatsky would have felt triumphantly vindicated to learn that the portions of *1 Enoch* which most interested her predate the canonical

\(^{14}\) Blavatsky, 'The Book of Enoch' in *id.*, *Collected Writings*, vol. XIV, 78.


\(^{16}\) For details see Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 5-6.

\(^{17}\) The literature of the discovery of the Qumran materials is vast: cf., eg., Edmund Wilson, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1947-1969, Collins, Glasgow, 1969. The dating of the Aramaic fragments of *1 Enoch* from Qumran has been reevaluated in the wake of Milik's research, published in 1976: see J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1976. It should be noted that a number of Milik's broader conclusions have not been accepted: see Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 5.


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apocalypses:

The Christians who, thanks to later interpolations, have made out that *1 Enoch* contains a triple prophecy relating to the Deluge, Moses and Jesus, are mistaken, as in reality it bears directly on the punishment and loss of Atlantis and the penalty of indiscretion.¹⁹

For the present research, it is worthwhile to note that Blavatsky's primary interest in *1 Enoch* was in the figure of Enoch and the identity of the 'Son of Man' or 'the righteous one' mentioned at length in the text. The latter, normatively viewed as an early depiction of the heavenly messiah, is rearticulated in Blavatskian mapping as an allegorical representation of the proto-Masters of the Third Root Race:

> He is in reality the first Hierophant of the purely human Race (after the allegorical Fall into generation) selected to perpetuate the dying Wisdom of the Devas (Angels or Elohim). He is the first 'Son of Man' - the mysterious appellation given to the divine Initiates of the first human school of the Manushis (men), at the very close of the Third Root-Race. He is also called the 'Savior', as it was He, with the other Hierophants, who saved the Elect and the Perfect from the geological conflagration, leaving to perish in the cataclysm of the Close those who forgot the primeval wisdom in sexual sensuality.²¹

It is clear, then, that Blavatsky rearticulated the messianic indicators in *1 Enoch* as references to the successors of the first Dhyanis-human *hypostaseis*; that is, the 'Son(s) of Man' are the first offspring of the archangelic descent into humanity which occurred during the Lemurian epoch. Simpler still, *the 'Son of Man' is the very first thoroughly human Master*. That Blavatsky should find the Master in the messiah is hardly unpredictable - nor unprecedented in the broader Theosophical discourse. More interesting, perhaps, is the figure of Enoch; in a typically Blavatskian exegesis, he becomes the 'Son of Man'. Indeed, she was careful to note that '[e]soterically,

¹⁷ Blavatsky, 'The Book of Enoch' in id., *Collected Writings*, vol. XIV, 83-84.
²¹ Blavatsky, 'The Book of Enoch' in id., *Collected Writings*, vol. XIV, 81.

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Enoch is the "Son of man", the first.\textsuperscript{22}

The ambiguous ontology of Enoch has made him an ideal type for the divinised man. Antoine Faivre, who traced the various historical \textit{personae} of Hermes, identified Enoch as a Hermesian character, noting, correctly, the identification of the Hellenistic Hermes with the Koranic Idris and the Biblical Enoch.\textsuperscript{23} Yet the association is much earlier, as can be discerned from passages within the mid-second century B.C.E. Jewish text, \textit{Jubilees}.\textsuperscript{24} The \textit{Jubilees} passages which deal with Enoch (\textit{Jub. IV}:	extit{16-25}) are an obvious collation of various strains of an Enochic tradition,\textsuperscript{25} and have a distinctly Thoth-like character:

And he was the first among men that are born on earth who learnt writing and knowledge and wisdom and who wrote down the signs of heaven according to the order of their months in a book, that men might known the seasons of the years according to the order of the separate months. And he was the first to write a testimony, and he testified to the sons of men among the generations of the earth, and recounted the weeks of the jubilees, and made known to them the days of the years, and set in order the months and recounted the Sabbaths of the years.

James VanderKam has noted the obvious parallels between the \textit{Jubilees} passage and Philo of Byblos’ \textit{Phoenician History} of the first century C.E. (known mostly from quotations in Eusebius’ \textit{Preparation for the Gospel}).\textsuperscript{26} Philo’s cultural hero in this instance was Taautos:

Taautos was the first person under the sun who thought of the invention of writing and who began to compose records, thereby laying the foundation, as it were, of learning. The Egyptians call him Thouth and the Alexandrians Thoth and the Greeks translated

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 86: emphasis added.
\item Faivre, \textit{The Eternal Hermes}, 18-21. Blavatsky was also aware of this identification: see Blavatsky, \textit{The Secret Doctrine}, vol. II, 529.
\item Ibid., 179.
\item Ibid., 181-183. It should be noted that Blavatsky included Eusebius’ \textit{Preparatio Evangelica} as a 'Theosophical Source': cf., eg., Blavatsky, \textit{The Secret Doctrine}, vol. II, 392.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
his name as Hermes.27

Interestingly, it appears that the same Hellenistic influences which allowed for the creation of sophisticated Jewish angelologies, also contributed to the idealisation of Enoch as something of a Hermesian demigod. Blavatsky was well aware of the tradition: ‘Enoch, Hermes, and Libra are one’; ‘the two are identical in their esoteric meaning’.28 For Blavatsky, ‘Enoch’ is not a personal name, but an occult office:

Some say Enoch was a great Saint, beloved by God, and taken alive to heaven (i.e., one who reached Mukti or Nirvana, on earth, as Buddha did and others still do); and others maintain that he was a sorcerer, a wicked magician. This shows only that Enoch, or its equivalent, was a term, even during the days of the later Talmudists, which meant ‘Seer’, ‘Adept in the Secret Wisdom’, etc., without any specification as to the character of the title-bearer.29

It soon becomes clear that in the Blavatskian conception, Enoch is a personified template for conscious evolution. But, as she herself noted, Enoch has a special characteristic which does not appear in the pagan Hermetica; he possesses a unique fellowship with angels.30

The Jewish apocalypses, and particularly 1 Enoch, depict a highly developed and gradated angelology. As noted supra, such angelologies may well represent an attempt to fill the void of transcendence, not out of a desire to reduce God, but so as to extend the reach of humanity in his direction. Yet in positing an hierarchised ontology for invisible creation, it is not illogical also to suspect the same for visible creation. So it is that in the apocalypses, and in related works, boundaries between the angels and certain humans become quite indistinct. The dynamism of the descent of the angels to occasional visible manifestation is countervailed by a concomitant human ascent to God, and in the nexus between the two stands the divinised man: Enoch.

27 Quoted in ibid., 182.
28 Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, vol. II, 129, 532. Blavatsky also noted the similarities in Josephus’ accounts of Enoch, and the activities of Hermes Trismegistus in the Hermetica: see in ibid., 530. Further, she recounted a ‘story narrated by the Kabalists’ that Enoch passed on a mysterious book to Abrahaim, which included a record of past and future events, and tabulations - a close echo of the Thoth mythologem: see Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. XIV, 175.
30 Ibid., passim.
The ascent/descent figuration of *1 Enoch* is schematically underscored by textual devices. In the 'Book of the Watchers', the heavenly Watchers (or angels) call upon Enoch to communicate their message of dire warning and doom to the fallen Watchers on earth (*1 Enoch XII:3-6*). In return, the fallen angels exhort Enoch to word a petition in their behalf, and to read it to God (*1 Enoch XIII:4*). Thus it is that Enoch's position as (Hermesian) scribe allows him to mediate between God and creation - indeed, even between God and the angels.31 Interestingly, Enoch is also represented as the apogee of three professions: prophet, priest,32 and scribe - the same triplex often afforded to Hermes as 'Trismegistus'.33

It is significant to note that in the later apocalyptic tradition, Enoch literally becomes an angel.34 In *3 Enoch*, Enoch is now God's lieutenant, or YHWH HQTWN ('Lesser Yahweh'), and is known as the archangel Metatron Sar ha-Panim (Prince of the [divine] Countenance).35 His attributes exhibit his status: he is known under 70 names (corresponding to God's), he has 72 wings, and 365 eyes. It might be noted that Enoch's rapid rise in the angelic hierarchy has not gone unnoticed by the other angels; some of the elders, such as Uzza, Azza, and Azzael, complain about Enoch's

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31 It might be noted here that Enoch's ascent was also concomitantly a descent, or, as John Collins has termed it, a 'round trip': see John J. Collins, 'A Throne in the Heavens: Apotheosis in pre-Christian Judaism' in John J. Collins & Michael Fishbane, eds., *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1995, 46. Such was of great significance to Blavatsky who emphasised the 'circularity' of the ascent/descent motif.

32 In fact, in *Jubilees*, Enoch is presented as 'burn[ing] the incense of the sanctuary': see Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 25.

33 Himmelfarb (without noting the Hermesian similitude) wrote:

For our author the three roles of prophet, priest, and scribe coexisted as ideals, and only by bringing them together could he define the role of the most exalted of men (in ibid.).

Further Hermesian parallels could be identified: e.g., Enoch (as the angel Metatron) is often depicted in visions as being either very old or quite young. Abraham Abulafia noted that:

[Y]ou shall see the image of a youth or the image of a sheik [which] means 'elder', and also in *gematria* it equals [the phrase] 'a youth and he is old' (quoted in Moshe Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1988, 117, 165n206).

Such attributes are also strongly reminiscent of Hermes: see *supra* ch. 23.


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promotion and call him 'na'ar' ('young').\textsuperscript{36}

In a recent work, Nathaniel Deutsch has argued that ‘Metatron ... as the transformed Enoch, functions as the paradigmatic Merkabah mystic’.\textsuperscript{37} Such an observation is apposite to the present work as it indicates the degree to which the angelic Enoch - as the religiously ‘perfected’ man - has become the ideal for those mystics desirous of unitive experience (\textit{devekut}) via heavenly ascent.\textsuperscript{38} Moreover, Enoch - as the prime angelic mediator to humanity and the fellow of angels - is deemed an especially authoritative voice on all matters ‘about the universe and about the past, present, and future’; an idea not lost on Blavatsky, who noted that ‘Metatron is in Greek \textit{αρσελως} (Messenger), or the Great Teacher’.\textsuperscript{39}

In order to appreciate Blavatsky’s interest in Enoch, it is necessary to recognise that even in the earliest texts, he is represented as the ‘cosmic anthropos’, the celestial man. Such an identification is predicated upon the notion that Enoch’s ascent is also simultaneously a return to the pristine state of prelapsarian humanity.\textsuperscript{40} Enoch, in arriving at the station of the angels, is also coevally instantiating the regenerate Adam.

\textsuperscript{36} Enoch VI: 1-3 et passim, in Charlesworth, ed., \textit{The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume I}, 261. For a discussion of other possible interpretations of the term see Himmelfarb, \textit{Ascent to Heaven}, 67ff.

\textsuperscript{37} Nathaniel Deutsch, \textit{The Gnostic Imagination: Gnosticism, Mandaeism, and Merkabah Mysticism}, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1995, 134. Merkabah (or Merkavah) mysticism is considered by Gershom Scholem as ‘[t]he first phase in the development of Jewish mysticism before its crystallization in the mediaeval Kabbalah’: Scholem, \textit{Major Trends}, 40. The ‘merkabah’ itself is God’s throne-chariot, as described in the first chapter of \textit{Ezekiel}.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Devekut} has broad semantic possibilities, but is perhaps best considered as ‘cleaving to God’. The approach to the notion of \textit{devekut} in Jewish mystical texts (and practice) has proved a somewhat problematical exercise. Following Scholem’s seminal \textit{Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism} (1941), there has been a pronounced tendency in much of the literature to follow Scholem in assuming that Judaism’s insistence upon the utter transcendence of God has disallowed the fullness of ‘cleaving’ assumed by the term \textit{unio mystica}. Scholem’s negation of this form of mysticism, which he emphasised in several works, such as \textit{Kabbalah} (Meridian, New York, 1978, 174-176), has since been thoroughly revised by Moshe Idel, who holds that ‘[t]he fact that a religion that gives rise to a certain mystical movement subscribes to a transcendental theology cannot be adduced as decisive proof for the suppression of unitive imagery’: Moshe Idel, \textit{Kabbalah: New Perspectives}, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988, 61. Idel’s meticulous works have become indispensable in any discussion of mystical union in Jewish thought: cf. in ibid., 35-73; id., ‘Universalization and Integration: Two Conceptions of Mystical Union in Jewish Mysticism’ in Moshe Idel & Bernard McGinn, eds., \textit{Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam}, Continuum, New York, 1996, 27-57.


\textsuperscript{40} See Idel, \textit{Kabbalah}, 33 et passim.
Such a notion, of course, has direct parallels with Blavatsky’s Masters who, as they progress ‘upwards’, are also (in a macrocyclicist framework) returning to the ‘beginning’ via a process of respiritualisation. That such formulations have profound resonances with later post-Heikhalot Kabbalah is obvious.41 As Moshe Idel has noted, from the middle of the twelfth century (in the writings of Rabbi Abraham ibn ‘Ezra) it is possible to conclude that ‘the cleaving of the soul [devekut] is a return to her primordial state and, implicitly, a restoration of her primordial universality’.42 Such themes were elaborated in later variants of Jewish mysticism, notably in the ecstatic Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia (1240-c.1291) and in certain forms of Hasidic mysticism.43

The notion of the supernal anthropos - the heavenly man - is perhaps best represented within Lurianic Kabbalah (named for Isaac Luria, 1534-1572), in which, indeed, God himself is articulated as the macro-anthropos.44 The Lurianic Kabbalah extends such anthropomorphism to a probable upper limit by suggesting that the ‘Adam Kadmon (or

41 Rebecca Lesses has defined the Heikhalot literature (such as 3 Enoch) in the following terms:

The hekhalot literature, stemming from the third- to eighth-century CE Palestine and Babylonia, contains ascetic preparations and directions for rituals of adjuration to bring angels down from heaven to teach wisdom to human beings and answer one’s questions in dreams. The adjurations form only one part of a much larger and varied literature that includes: instructions for ascents to the seven heavenly palaces to see God and participate in the liturgy of the angels; numerous hymns that use hypnotic repetition of phrases to praise God and the angels; descriptions of the multitudes of angels, the divine throne, and the other furniture of heaven; a report of the elevation of Enoch the son of Jared to heaven and his transformation into Metatron Sar ha-Panim (Prince of the [divine] Countenance), the foremost angel who stands before God (Rebecca Lesses, ‘Speaking with Angels: Jewish and Greco-Egyptian Revelatory Adjurations’ in Harvard Theological Review, 89:1, 1996, 41-60).

Moshe Idel has underlined the significance of the Heikhalot materials in the historiography of mystical ascent:

Heikhalot literature contained a cosmology and a theology unrelated to the halakhic worldview, although not conflicting with it; its importance lay - as in Gnosticism - in its serving as the scheme for the mystical ascent (Idel, Kabbalah, 262).

41 Idel, ‘Mystical Union’, 28-29.

42 For Abulafia see Idel, The Mystical Experience, esp. ch. 3. For Hasidism see id., Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1995, 53ff et passim. Elsewhere, Idel has noted:

The main heirs of Heikhalot mysticism were the Ashkenazic Hasidic masters of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, who preserved the ancient texts, probably redacted parts of them, and, I assume, also continued the practice of their mystical techniques (Idel, Kabbalah, 91).

44 Scholem, Major Trends, 269.
Primordial Man) was the first emanation of the divine pleroma which issued from the 'Eiyn Sof (the unknowable infinite or the 'rootless root' - a favoured Blavatskian term). Accordingly, the various sefirot (the vessels of the divine essence) issue forth from 'Adam Kadmon, and it is he who comprises the four worlds of the Kabbalah. The centrality of the notion of Tikkun ('restitution') to Lurianic Kabbalah cannot be overstated; cosmo-history is devolved upon the notion of the (re)integration of humanity with the divine in order to bring about the restitution of the supernal primordial man:

Concerning the study of the Torah ... all his intention must be to link his soul and bind her to her supernal source by the means of Torah. And his intention must be to achieve thereby the restoration of the supernal anthropos, which is the ultimate intention of the creation of man and the goal of the commandment to study Torah.

Such theosophical cosmosophy may mean little for the present research were it not for the fact that Blavatsky was well aware of such notions, and wrote about them at length, though often in an attempt to prioritise Oriental religious motifs (and thus, perhaps, disguise her reliance on the Occidental forms):

The Ain-Soph of the Chaldaeans and later of the Jews is assuredly a copy of the Vaidic Deity; while the 'Heavenly Adam', the Macrocosm which united in itself the totality of beings and is the Esse of the visible Universe, finds his original in the Puranic

Esse of the visible Universe, finds his original in the Puranic

For discussions of the 'Adam Kadmon motif in Lurianic Kabbalah see in ibid., 244-286; Idel, Kabbalah, 119-120. Blavatsky employs the term 'rootless root' and several cognates in The Secret Doctrine: see supra ch. 12.

Scholem, Major Trends, 268-273; Idel, Kabbalah, 119. For Kabbalistic theosophy, and particularly the sometimes problematic definitions of the sefirot see in ibid., ch. 6. It is interesting, of course, to recognise the cosmic cyclicism of theosophical Kabbalah, and its positing of various eras, each governed by a particular sefirah. Such thought was certainly known and understood by Blavatsky - and was likely incorporated in her own macrohistory. For details see in ibid., 154-155.

The degree to which Kabbalistic macrohistories were percolated into the Theosophical synthesis can be detected from the correlation made between ‘Elohistic days’ and the Theosophical ‘Rounds’ in Harrison, The Transcendental Universe, 152ff (the work was first published in 1894).

Hayyim Vital, Sha’ar ha-Mizvot: quoted in Idel, Kabbalah, 57. As an aside, it is interesting to note that Idel recounts the belief among Luria’s followers that:

[Elvery night Luria visited one of the celestial academies and thereafter transmitted the teachings to his students. This perception of Luria is no doubt closely connected to the huge amount of Kabbalistic material he communicated that produced the extensive Lurianic literature (in ibid., 92-93).

There are obvious close parallels between this account and that of Leadbeater, who claimed that most of his teachings were delivered to him 'on the astral' (and at night) in the teaching headquarters of the Brotherhood.
Brahma ... And it is not venturing too much to say that even a Rabbi quite familiar with his own special Rabbinical Hebrew would only comprehend its secrets thoroughly if he added to his learning a serious knowledge of the Hindu philosophies.48

The degree to which Kabbalistic motifs had been subtly absorbed into Blavatsky's cosmology can be discerned by the phenomenological sympathies between her depiction of the Hindu Manus and the 'Adam Kadmon' of the Kabbalah. The following statement, for instance, could just as easily be a paraphrastic redaction of the Lurianic Kabbalah:

[The] Manu stands for the spiritual, heavenly man, the real and non-dying Ego in us, which is the direct emanation of the 'One Life' or the Absolute Deity.49

Blavatsky was well aware of the extreme anthropomorphism which characterised much of the Kabbalistic literature. The notion that the human is the supercelestial template for all phenomena, and that all life had as its object the restitution of primeval (human) glory, provided a perfect ideational vehicle for her own anthropocentrism. (Blavatsky's aim, of course, was the dismantling of philosophical materialism and scientific naturalism, both of which, to quote Trompf, 'looked ready to displace or at least dislodge homo from his pedestal').50 Indeed, the antique prototype of the

48 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XIV, 185.
49 Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, 248. In typical fashion, Leadbeater extended the Blavatskian idiom beyond anything she would have accepted - but there is still an overtly Kabbalistic flavour to his description of the *Manu*. It is worth quoting at some length:

For the entire period of a Root-Race the Manu works out the details of its evolution, and the Bodhisattva, as World-Teacher, Minister of Education and Religion, helps its members to develop whatever of spirituality is possible for them at that stage, while the Mahachohan directs the minds of men so that the different forms of culture and civilization shall be unfolded according to the cyclic plan. Head and Heart are These, and the Hand with five Fingers, all active in the world, moulding the Race into one organic being, a Heavenly Man. This last term is no mere simile, but describes a literal fact, for at the close of each Root-Race effort, those who have attained Adeptship within it form a mighty organism which is in a very real sense one, a Heavenly Man, in whom, as in an earthly man, are seven great centres, each of which is a mighty Adept. The Manu and the Bodhisattva will occupy in this great Being the place of the brain and heart centres, and in Them and as part of Them, gloriously one with Them, shall we Their servants be; and the splendid totality will go on in its further evolution to become a Minister of some future Solar Deity (Leadbeater, *The Masters and the Path* (1925), 305-306).
50 Trompf, 'Macrohistory', 271.
supernal anthropos - in the Heikhalot and apocalyptic materials31 - was himself a terrestrial man who had (as Blavatsky saw it) progressed to become the ‘Lesser Yahweh’. Enoch, whose attributes came to appear ever more Hermesian under the cultural impact of Hellenism, became the ideal prototype of the Theosophical Master. Like Hermes, he enjoyed an ambivalent ontology which predisposed those so inclined to ascribe to him semi-divine status. But Blavatsky found in Enoch a special characteristic that availed her of the opportunity to ally her presentation of the Masters with a mainstay of the Western imaginal: ‘the angelic’. Enoch, by spending three hundred years in the company of angels, had become an angel himself. Thus Blavatsky’s use of 1 Enoch, and of its sophisticated angelology, allowed her to tap into the Judaeo-Christian stream of thought about a celestial stratum which was otherwise unavailable to her from the Hermetic corpus.

31 At this point it is worthwhile to note Himmelfarb’s contribution to the discussion of the pseudepigraphal apocalypses, especially 1 Enoch. Unlike others who have attempted to find in the apocalypses evidence of unitive practices, Himmelfarb noted the unlikelihood of such ‘small pious groups’ of visionaries ever having existed:

The picture of the apocalypses as coming from small pious groups engaged in ascetic practices related to their visions is very appealing to those who wish to understand the apocalypses as reflecting the visionary experience of their authors. I have already suggested that the evidence for the existence of the groups is thin. The evidence for practices designed to produce ascent is even thinner (Himmelfarb, Ascent to Heaven, 106).

In a conclusion of far-reaching significance, she suspected that the apocalyptic materials might rather be part of a specific literary genre designed, primarily, to be read (though for what exact purpose she remained unsure): in ibid., 95-114. Interestingly, this conclusion puts her in agreement with David Helperin’s interpretation of the Heikhalot materials: see David Halperin, The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel’s Vision, (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum, 16), J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen, 1988; id., ‘A New Edition of the Hekhalot Literature’, [rev. art.], in Journal of the American Oriental Society, 104, 1984, 549-551. Halperin posited the view that the process of reading the ascent literature, and the repetition of certain portions thereof, would achieve the same results that were claimed for the ‘original’ visionaries residing inside the text: i.e., a species of ascent.

It is highly significant that this conclusion closely echoes that espoused by Richard Valantasis’ interpretation of various third-century texts which speak of a ‘spiritual guide’, such as Gregory Thaumaturgos’ Thanksgiving Speech: see supra ch. 25. The same conclusion was reached by Richard Reitzenstein’s reading of the Hermetica: see supra ch. 23.

It appears not unlikely that the notion of a latent ‘divinity’ in the text - capable of acting as spiritual preceptor, or able to encourage heavenly ascent - was something of a mainstay of antique esotericism (at least - as here - in the Heikhalot materials, the Hermetica, and - interestingly - the ‘spiritual guide’ literature of the third century). Although it is unwise to extrapolate further, it might well be that this notion of an energised text is a phenomenon of esotericism (and which just might encourage a contrary definition of the esoteric domain to the dominant Faivrean heuristic). It might be noted that the present author has suggested that Blavatsky intended her texts to operate in just such a way: see supra chs. 23, 25.
Aside from the added *cachet* of finding a progressivist perfectionism - indeed, an identifiable (and Kabbalistically-hallowed) 'Master' - *within* Christianity, the antediluvian Enoch provided both a ready-made semantic prize for Blavatskian arithmosophy and esoteric calendography, as well as a great mythistorical expanse in which to place her Rounds, Root Races, and - crucially - the prehistoric and unchanging Brotherhood of Masters. It is in reference to the latter that it is worthwhile to ponder Scholem’s notion that, in the Kabbalistic construct of the ‘Adam Kadmon, ‘the God who can be apprehended by man is himself the first Man’ and wonder whether Blavatsky would have adjusted it slightly to read: *the God who can be apprehended by man is himself the first Master.*

*Melchizedek*

Enoch is by no means alone in the canonical testaments as the possessor of a dubious ontology. For Blavatsky’s purposes he was an ideal template of evolution from the purely human (his humanity is confirmed by his Adamic ancestry) to the angelic/Dhyani-chohan (as Metatron and ‘Lesser Yahweh’). Thus it was that Enoch provided the paradigmatic model of ascent-progressivism, emphasised by his ‘promotion’ over lesser angels. Yet the ambiguity which attended Enoch - who ‘walked with God’ - is also discernible in other figures, most notably in Melchizedek.

References to Melchizedek occur in three canonical texts: *Gen. XIV:17-20; Ps. CX:4;*...
Heb. V:10-11, VII. The Genesis pericope relates the story of the blessing of Abram (later Abraham) by Melchizedek, who is referred to as the ‘king of Salem’ and ‘priest of the most high God’. Psalms speaks of a divinely-sanctioned eternal priesthood: ‘The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek’. The author of Hebrews redacts the Psalms passage such that Christ becomes the High Priest of God, and then goes on to recount how such understandings are difficult both to explain and to grasp, and are fit for mature people accustomed to ‘solid food’. In a sophisticated exegesis of the Genesis account, the author of Hebrews continued his explication in chapter VII, and noted the ambiguity of Melchizedek:

[Melchizedek] first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. (Heb. VII: 2b-3).

That Melchizedek was depicted as being without human parentage, and the possessor of an eternal, superior priesthood (based neither upon appointment nor inheritance, by divine decree and oath), as well as his position as king of the archetypal city of Salem (Jerusalem), allowed him to become a potent semiotic gestalt in the hands of subsequent mythographers. That he also appeared spontaneously to Abram, the instigator of an elite community, and provided both benediction and sacrament, would certainly have aroused the attention of esotericists such as Blavatsky.

Primary among the redactors of the Melchizedek tradition were the Egyptian Gnostics. In terms of likely chronological priority, the earliest of the Gnostic materials is that contained in the ‘Bala’izah Fragment’, dated to the fourth or fifth century. Written in (Sahidic) Coptic, and discovered at Deir al-Bala’izah (probably the

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site of the celebrated Coptic monastery of Apa Apollo),\(^{37}\) the few fragments are a ‘Gnostic midrash’ by Jesus to John\(^{38}\) on the central figures of Genesis.\(^{39}\) Unfortunately, little remains of the Melchizedek account, except - crucially - the germ of an allegorical interpretation of Heb. VII:3 (quoted supra).

The next significant text is the Nag Hammadi tractate Melchizedek (IX, 1), which was originally written in Greek, probably in the third century.\(^{40}\) Melchizedek emphasises the identification of Melchizedek with Jesus Christ; indeed, the former becomes, in Pearson’s vernacular, the ‘alter ego’ of the latter.\(^{41}\) Yet the Nag Hammadi tractate elevates Melchizedek beyond the terrestrial sphere and involves him in an eschatological war with celestial ‘archons’. This presentation of Melchizedek as a ‘holy warrior’ indicates, significantly, the reliance of Melchizedek on Jewish apocalyptic sources, similar to that displayed in 2 Enoch.\(^{42}\) In fact, the ‘heavenly Melchizedek’ is remarkably akin to the figure of Enoch in 1 Enoch, who is described (in 1 Enoch LXXI:14) as ‘Son of Man’, and accorded quasi-messianic status.


\(^{38}\) Thus it is that the ‘Bala’izah Fragment’ can be compared (in a limited way) with manuscripts of the Apocryphon of John: see Pearson, Gnosticism, 109.


\(^{41}\) Pearson, Gnosticism, 111.

\(^{42}\) Although outside the scope of the present work, tracing the genealogy of the apocalyptic Melchizedek gestalt has been made more fascinating by the discovery at Qumran of fragments of a Melchizedek story (11QMelch) from the first century B.C.E. These fragments indicate that the idea of Melchizedek as a heavenly being - much like the archangel Michael or Enoch - predates the common era (and thus Hebrews). For details cf., eg., Craig A. Evans, Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation, Hendrickson, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1992, 63; Culianu, ‘The Angels of the Nations’, 89.
The third text of interest is the *Second Book of Jeu* (*2 Jeu*), a Sahidic work dating to about the middle of the third century. *2 Jeu* is a more rigorously Gnostic work than its predecessors in that Jesus discusses with his disciples the means by which the souls of the dead are carried away by the 'receivers' (a species of *psychopompoi*) and deposited in the 'Treasury of Light' (*2 Jeu* XLII-XKIV), which in later Gnostic works becomes synonymous with the *Pleroma*. Jesus also performs three baptisms of the disciples, by means of fire, water, and Spirit. To achieve this end, Jesus calls upon 'Zorokothora Melchizedek' to bring to earth heavenly water and fire. Thus it is that the figures of Jesus and Melchizedek are - to a point - transposed, with the latter operating as the 'heavenly priest', and the former as earthly preceptor. One further point of interest is that the *Hebrews* account plays no rôle whatsoever in *2 Jeu*.

The fourth and last text in the Gnostic Melchizedek tradition here examined is *Pistis Sophia*, the name given to the myriad Gnostic tracts found in the Askew Codex (MS. Add.5114) in the British Museum. Compiled at some time in the fourth or fifth century, the portions which contain the Melchizedek materials (now among those described as 'Book 4') are considered the earliest, and date to the third century. At the outset it should be noted that the significance of *Pistis Sophia* to Theosophy cannot be overestimated. In 1890, Blavatsky's close disciple, and member of the Inner Group, George Robert Stowe Mead, translated M. G. Schwartz's Latin version of the *Pistis Sophia* into English, and published the results in Blavatsky's magazine.
Lucifer. Blavatsky herself added a significant number of amendments and "explanatory" footnotes to Mead's text. It might be noted that, although most of the translation was available to her only in the last year of her life, it profoundly affected her Inner Group teachings, and her own responses to the text comprise a significant portion of her late writings. Indeed, as early as 1887, Blavatsky was to state that:

Among other works with most suggestive allegories in them, we have still the so-called Apocryphal Gospels, and the last discovered as the most precious relic of Gnostic literature, a fragment called Pistis-Sophia, 'Knowledge-Wisdom'.

The Melchizedek of Pistis Sophia is a tremendous departure from the canonical descriptions. Aside from the Egyptian mythologems and astrology which attended the descriptions (and which always attracted Blavatsky), her attention was particularly drawn to the idea that Melchizedek had become a 'creature of light', and was now responsible as prime 'Receiver' for the gathering of human souls and the delivering of them to the 'Treasury of Light':

Jesus, that it to say, Aberamenthô, said:

"When the father of my father - the same is Ieou - who is the providence of all the rulers and gods and powers, which are in the matter of the light of the treasure, and Zorokothora Melchisedec, who is the legate for all the light-powers which are purified among the rulers, to bring them into the treasure of light - these two alone are the great lights, and their appointed task is to descend below among the rulers and purify them, and then Zorokothora Melchisedec taketh away the pure radiance of their light from them whom they have cleansed among the rulers, that they may bring it unto the treasure of light. ... [and then] Zorokotha Melchisedec

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48 Mead's massive translation was published in Lucifer vols. VI, VII, and VIII (April, 1890 - May, 1891). He later revised his translation and published a full edition in 1895: see Mead, Pistis Sophia. It was this version which was much beloved by Jung (see supra p. 512n46). It should be noted that Mead excised Blavatsky's contribution from the printed volume: for details see Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VIII, 238-239.


50 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VIII, 216.

51 Pearson suspected that the author of Pistis Sophia was acquainted with the text of 2 Jeu, thus explaining the use of this very particular title.
beareth away the light-radiances and bringeth them unto the gate of them of the midst, to carry them into the treasure of light”.72

Melchizedek is depicted as being in every sense superior to Jesus Christ. Indeed, when Hekate and other evil forces capture various of the souls, it is Melchizedek who comes in power to overcome their thrall, and it is he who brings the souls to earthly rebirth that they may in future have a chance to rise to the Treasury of Light:

Zorokothora Melchisedec may look down from on high, and the world be thrown into confusion, and its mountains, and the æons be troubled, that he may look down on all the regions of Hekatê, that her regions may be dissolved and perish, and that all the souls in her torments may be brought forth, and restored again to the spheres, for they are being undone in the fire of her torments.73

The Melchizedek of Pistis Sophia is a heavenly saviour,74 and, like the Enoch of the later Jewish apocalypses, is presented as something approaching a ‘Lesser Yahweh’. Such a depiction appealed to Blavatsky for a number of reasons. First, the notion that antique pseudepigraphal and apocryphal sources diminish the ontological uniqueness of Christ by applying similar epithets - such as the ‘Son of Man’ and the ‘Lesser Yahweh’ - to Enoch and Melchizedek, would have had an obvious appeal.75 Second, the fact that Melchizedek was seamlessly incorporated into Gnostic exegesis (and thence into entirely nonscriptual mythologies and cosmologies) appealed to the gnostic in Blavatsky - a point emphasised by Melchizedek’s Hermesian rôle as the circulator of

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72 Pistis Sophia: A Gnostic Gospel, trans. & intro. G. R S. Mead, 366-367. As Mead’s translation was that available to Blavatsky, it has been used for the present work in all quotations (unless otherwise stated).
73 Ibid., 370-371.
74 Blavatsky was well aware of this aspect of the Melchizedek tradition from Pistis Sophia. In one of her commentaries, she noted the following: In Philosophumena, VII, 36, we find mention of the ‘Melchizedeciani’ who, the author says, owed the foundation of their School to Theodotus, a banker. The main feature of their teaching was that the Christos descended on the man, Jesus, at his Baptism, but that Melchizedec was a heavenly power, higher than the Christos. That which the Christos was to do for men, Melchizedec did for Angels (Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. XIII, 39).
This passage is quite interesting because it suggests that Blavatsky believed Melchizedek to be part of the angelic order of evolution.
75 Blavatsky marshalled many methodologies to undermine the uniqueness of Christ by reference to Melchizedek; one such approach was through a form of Kabbalistic gematria: see Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VIII, 211.

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souls and the catalyst of rebirth. Third, Melchizedek, like Enoch, had some pedigree in esoteric speculation, particularly in Freemasonry. Fourth, the cosmic Melchizedek could quite easily, again like Enoch, be rearticulated as a part of the Hierarchy of Masters. This last point requires some explanation.

In one of her commentaries on *Pistis Sophia*, Blavatsky noted the following:

For the occult significance of 'Melchizedec' compare The Secret Doctrine, I, 208 and 265, on the 'Great Sacrifice' and 'Silent Watcher'.

As with many of the hints which Blavatsky gave about the origin and presentation of Theosophy and the Masters, it appears no-one has ever examined the reference. The description of the 'Great Sacrifice' is nothing less than a cosmicised (Theosophical) 'Bodhisattva Vow', and is an obvious reference to the advanced Masters of the cosmic Hierarchy:

It is he who changes form, yet remains ever the same. And it is he again who holds spiritual sway over the initiated adepts throughout the whole world ... He is the 'Initiator', called the 'Great Sacrifice' ... Why does he sit by the fountain of primeval Wisdom, of which he drinks no longer, as he has naught to learn which he does not know - aye, neither on the Earth, nor in its heaven? Because the lonely, sore-footed pilgrims on their way back to their home are never sure to the last moment of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion and matter called Earth-Life. Because he would fain show the way to that region of freedom and light, from which he is a voluntary exile himself, to every prisoner who has succeeded

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6 An examination of the use of the Melchizedek figure in Freemasonry is beyond the scope of the present work. The gestalt has extensive currency, though for the present purposes one example will suffice to illustrate its presence. The 'Order [or degree] of the High Priesthood' (an honorary degree in American Masonry bestowed upon the High Priest of a Royal Arch Chapter, established circa 1800) is based upon the meeting of Abraham with Melchizedek: Mackey, *Mackey's Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, vol. I, 452-454; Ward, *Freemasonry and the Ancient Gods*, 264-265. It might also be noted that Melchizedek features prominently in the literature of contemporary Masters-oriented groups, such as The Ancient Mystical White Brotherhood After The Order Of Melchizedek, which is an obvious hypostatisation of Blavatskian Theosophy and contemporary esoteric Christianity: see 'Frater Achad', *Ancient Mystical White Brotherhood*, Great Seal Press, Phoenix, Arizona, 1976.

in liberating himself from the bonds of flesh and illusion. Because, in short, he has sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind, though but a few Elect may profit by the GREAT SACRIFICE."

It seems, then, that Melchizedek is a representation of the senior of the celestial Hierarchy - the 'Master of Masters'. This impression is confirmed by reference to the 'Silent Watcher': according to Blavatsky, 'The Watcher, or the divine prototype, is at the upper ring of the ladder of being'. Later in *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky attempts to prove her Theosophical interpretation of the figure of Melchizedek on textual grounds. After a rather tortuous exegesis, she comes to the conclusion that Melchizedek and Noah represent identical personifications of the cosmic progenitor/saviour, and that from 'him' has come the Hierarchy which passes down from the angels to the Masters, to the initiates (Theosophists?), and then to the mundane races:

'[T]he mighty ones' are identical with our primeval Dhyan-Chohans, with the corporeal and the incorporeal Pitris, and with all the rulers and instructors of the primeval races, which are referred to as the Gods and Kings of the divine Dynasties.'

Blavatsky’s use of the Melchizedek figure differs somewhat from that of her depiction of Enoch. For the latter, there was a much more straight-forward progressivism from the human to the divine spheres. Enoch, indeed, becomes for Blavatsky the ideal scriptural form of the Perfected Man *qua* angel - *represented in her day by the Masters*. Melchizedek, due to the more obvious Christological parallels, and the ambiguous qualities of supramundane priesthood and kingship which he embodied, becomes something of a personified cosmic governor. His soteriological and cosmological semiotic potential (drawn from the extensive Melchizedek tradition, notably *Pistis Sophia*) allowed her to encapsulate the ultimate stage of 'Master-ship' in the supracelestial - and Biblical! - Melchizedek, whereby the cosmic Master of Masters denies himself complete reintegration with the Absolute in order to oversee the Hierarchy of which he is the summit. Thus it is that Melchizedek - even to the degree

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72 Ibid., 265.
73 Ibid., vol. II, 393.

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of embodying the 'Great Sacrifice' - is the macrocosmic exemplar of the Master. Blavatsky’s Theosophical concordance thus aligns the cosmological *macro-anthropos* with an allegorical scriptural hermeneutic and a paradigm of progressivism. As a consequence, the Master is deliberately placed at the interstice between the temporal and the infinite, the personal and the cosmic, the signifier and the signified, the mythological and the theological, *the human and the angelic.*

*Theosophical Historiography, Messianism, and Kabbalah*

The historiographer of esotericism faces peculiar challenges. Aside from those difficulties which accrue to the study of esotericism generally, the historiographer is faced with two special dilemmas both of which have to do with the notion of 'tradition', and which concern the dynamics of dissemination and impact. Thus it is that it is often supremely difficult to discern which texts, teachings or oral instructions were available at any given time, and the degree to which a particular esoteric construct permeated into the general religious and social consciousness of a people (or, indeed, emerged from it). To this end, it should be recalled that although in no way are esotericism and secrecy synonymous, they are nevertheless often comrades-in-arms, and mutually self-reinforcing. In response, there is an omnipresent temptation for historiographers is to posit the existence of a discernible esoteric tradition which spans the generations, and which thus provides the conduit by means of which a certain *Weltanschauung* can be delivered (and thus traced) diachronically. Although certain forms of such a tradition no doubt have existed (as initiatic societies, as disseminated text, as communal rule, or even as family/domestic tradition), the danger is that such historiography can be prey to the pressures of exterior constructs being applied to the data, and can often make esoteric constructs seem to stand outside of historical contingency.

Given such caveats, the field of esoteric historiography must necessarily be a field of

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81 It is worth remembering that Blavatsky’s continuators have emphasised the importance of Melchizedek in their cosmological systems. To note only one, Dion Fortune considered - not unexpectedly - Melchizedek to be a Manu ‘of the Chaldean and early Semitic Races in addition to his Atlantean connection’: Dion Fortune (Violet Mary Firth), *Applied Magic*, The Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1973, 85. Melchizedek had come from Venus (presumably in an earlier global/planetary cycle). For the place of Melchizedek in Fortune’s cosmology see in ibid., 83-110.
urgent scholarly concern, if only to reclaim the domain of esotericism from heresiology and psycho-sociology. To this end, the researches of Gershom Scholem (1897-1982) into Kabbalistic historiography - a field which he pioneered, and which fostered the reclamation of Kabbalism as an appropriate academic territory - provide something of a template for scholars in related studies. The following discussion of Theosophical historiography is thereby indebted to the example of Scholem and his continuators. Certain observations are made about sympathetic echoes in Kabbalistic and in Theosophical historiography which are of a highly provisional nature, and are intended simply to encourage discussion about the historiography of late modern esotericism (and occultism), which remains - for the most part - unchartered territory.

In the wake of Scholem's researches a huge literature has developed with the purpose of limning the genesis of the Kabbalah. Although such an exercise is beyond the scope of the present work, it is nevertheless necessary to note that Scholem's view tended to emphasise the composite quality of Jewish mysticism. Kabbalah, thus, was a result of the syncretising tendencies of the Jewish mystical milieux of twelfth and thirteenth century Provence and Catalonia. Kabbalah, according to Scholem, emerged from a crucible of gnostic and Neoplatonic thought. In recent times, Moshe Idel has proposed an alternative view which has transtemporal sympathies with Blavatsky's Theosophical project:

Kabbalah emerged in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries as

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82 Central figures in the field of Kabbalistic historiography include Isaiah Tishby, Ephraim Gottlieb, Joseph Dan, Moshe Idel, Georges Vajda, and Alexander Altmann.
83 Cf., eg., Scholem's idea that Merkabah mysticism was a form of Jewish gnosticism, with parallels to many other Middle Eastern and Mediterranean religious constructs. This view reflects the concerns of the Religionswissenschaftschule (which was the prevailing opinion in Scholem's early career). For an analysis of Scholem's opinion on Merkabah, e.g., see Deutsch, The Gnostic Imagination, ch. 2.
84 Cf., eg., Scholem, Kabbalah, 42-48; id., Major Trends, 86. One suspects that Scholem would have felt much comforted if he had been able to prove contact between the early Kabbalists and the Cathars of Languedoc (cf. id, Kabbalah, 45), but, as Joseph Dan has noted: [Sixty years of scholarship have failed to establish even one close textual, terminological, or ideological parallel between these Christian heresies and the teachings of the Sefer ha-Bahir and the early Kabbalists of Provence ... If Gnosticism had an impact on the seminal Bahir, it was a Gnosticism of the Oriental world, centuries before the Catharic and Albigensian movements developed (Joseph Dan, 'Introduction' in The Early Kabbalah, ed. Joseph Dan, Paulist Press, New York, 1986, 6).
a sort of reaction to the dismissal of earlier mystical traditions by Maimonides' audacious reinterpretation of Jewish esotericism and his attempt to replace the mystical traditions with a philosophical understanding.\textsuperscript{45}

Idel's hypothesis is that 'historical Kabbalah represented an ongoing effort to systematise existing elements of Jewish theurgy, myth, and mysticism into a full-fledged response to the rationalistic challenge'.\textsuperscript{46}

The 'rationalistic challenge' to which Idel refers was the rearticulation of antique Jewish mystical speculation in primarily Aristotelian terms, as found in the teachings of Moses ben Maimon ('Maimonides', 1135-1204).\textsuperscript{87} Maimonides' introduction of the Greek and, particularly, Arabic philosophical idiom into Jewish thought (notably his ideas of intellection and cognition) fostered a rationalistic and occasionally reductive hermeneutic to enter mediaeval Jewish mystical speculation.\textsuperscript{48} This perceived threat was countered by the early Kabbalists with 'an ongoing building of an alternative to his system on the basis of earlier materials'.\textsuperscript{89} This construction of a tertium quid was not an outright rejection of the place of discursive philosophical conjecture in mysticism,\textsuperscript{90} but an attempt to reinvigorate Jewish mystico-esoteric contemplation by applying novel exegetical techniques to traditional wisdom literature

The parallels to Blavatsky's experience are clear. She feared the ascendancy of the materialist rationalist philosophies of her own day, and - like the Kabbalists - resented the reduction of her beloved esotericisms to instantiations of one or another

\textsuperscript{45} Idel, \textit{Kabbalah}, 253.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} For a concise analysis of Maimonides' thought see Dan, 'Introduction', 14-18; Idel, \textit{Kabbalah}, passim.
\textsuperscript{88} Dan, 'Introduction', 15; Scholem, \textit{Kabbalah}, 42ff. For an interesting discussion of Kabbalistic hermeneutics, see Moshe Idel, 'Between Authority and Indeterminacy: Some Reflections on Kabbalistic Hermeneutics' in Collins & Fishbane, eds., \textit{Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys}, 249-268.
\textsuperscript{89} Idel, \textit{Kabbalah}, 253.
\textsuperscript{90} Idel notes that attacks on Maimonides by the early Kabbalists was 'an extremely rare phenomenon': in ibid (but cf. Dan, 'Introduction', 17).
philosophical, psychological, or sociological function.91 She, too, countered the threat by self-consciously turning to antique mythologems. Her Theosophy was a deliberately constructed ‘renaissance’ of the esoteric streams of Western thought, and, like other renascences, its success was predicated on its ability to create something akin to a Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk from its component parts, and then present it as a novel revelation. The key, of course, was to elevate the rejuvenated esoteric Weltanschauung by claiming for it (and the political ideology which underpinned it) a divine sanction. In this respect, Blavatsky is most closely allied in the history of the Kabbalah to the figure of Isaac Luria.

Scholem suspected that the roots of Lurianic Kabbalah could best be traced to the trauma resulting from the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.92 The yearning for redemption from such catastrophes was transposed by Kabbalists to a cosmicised macrodrama, whereby the universe was itself desirous of a return to a primordial harmony. Lurianic Kabbalah (developed in Safed, Palestine, in the sixteenth century) was thus a cosmogony, but one which was - like Boehme’s - predicated on a theogony, for the archetypal Jewish experience of exile was mirrored in the godhead itself.93 Creation of the physical world was God’s means of expelling from himself the seeds of evil. Such creation was effected by God’s withdrawal into himself (tzimtzum) in order to create a space (tehiru) into which his emanations could be directed.94 In the moment of the first catharsis, a part of God was divorced from himself, and it is the restoration (tikkun) of the divine unity which underpins the cosmic telos. Such a process is mirrored in the human yearning for the restitution of the fallen state to its intended blissful ontology as the cosmicised ‘Adam Kadmon.95

91 It is surely not coincidental that Maimonides’ Guide to the Perplexed, after falling out of favour for many years, resurfaced as an ideological impetus behind the Jewish Enlightenment of the eighteenth century: see Zohar: The Book of Splendour, ed. Gershom Scholem, Schocken Books, New York, 1977, 7-8.
92 See Biale, Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History, 156ff; Joseph Dan, Gershom Scholem and the Mystical Dimension in Jewish History, New York University Press, New York, 1988, ch. 10. A critique which examines Scholem’s psychologising of history and tendency to promote linear causative models is to be found in Idel, Kabbalah, 264-267. Idel notes that Scholem’s ‘historiosophy’ has been accepted uncritically and that the influence of the expulsion on Lurianic Kabbalah may not be as straight-forward as previously believed.
94 An extended analysis of Scholem’s reading of the Lurianic Kabbalah is offered in Dan, Gershom Scholem and the Mystical Dimension, 256-285.
95 Ibid., 261ff.
There is little indication that Blavatsky owed a direct debt to Luria, though she was aware of his teachings. More significant are the sympathies which are evident in her approach to the construction of her Theosophy, particularly, as noted supra, the concentration on anthropocentrism. Interestingly, Luria found divine warrant for his teachings by claiming Elijah as his teacher; Blavatsky echoed this assertion in her reliance on the Masters. More significant historiographically is the fact that both promoted a cosmological system which had at its core the motif of restoration and reintegration. In neither system is there pure 'good' (or, in the Blavatskian idiom, pure 'spirit' - as spirit is invariably hypostatically united to matter), even in the godhead, until complete post-historical reintegration has occurred. Of greatest significance for Theosophical historiography, in Lurianic Kabbalah the importance of the Messiah was 'neutralized' for - in a process of tikkun beginning at the moment of the first divine catharsis and extending far into cosmic 'time' - redemption will not come, as David Biale has noted, 'suddenly, like a thief in the night'. Indeed, in an open-ended trajectory, each generation is called upon to 'fulfill [sic] its quota of "restorations"'. Thus the Messiah - as Scholem suggested - would not erupt spontaneously in eschatological triumph, but would be a result, even a prize, for preparatory actions. Idel noted succinctly:

The individual Messiah was emblematic of the attainment of the messianic age rather than its instigator.

Luria's approach to messianism (and its attendant ambivalent eschatology) is in every way analogous to Blavatsky's construction, wherein the messiah 'will only come at the culmination of the Great Cycle', and even then it will be 'into the whole of humanity collectively, not in a single individual'.

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As instigators of diverse yet homologous esotericisms, both Luria and Blavatsky were concerned to create a broad mythscape, with sufficiently expansive theogonies, cosmogonies, and cosmologies to incorporate all previous theosophies into an inclusive and definitive system. Crucially, both Lurianic Kabbalah and Blavatskian Theosophy had their origins in periods of tremendous social and epistemological rupture. Both attempted to 'cosmicise' their experiences and thus create a refractive mechanism to displace notions of alienation and disintegration onto space, history, and time. The success of the enterprise was not devolved solely upon the sophisticated use of the device of displacement, but also on the employment of novel exegetical techniques to forge a mythos of reintegration and restitution from the traditional 'Scriptures' (whether Biblical or otherwise).

Scholem's historiography of Kabbalism posited a direct link between Lurianism and the next major movement in Jewish mystical speculation, messianic Sabbatianism. Having moved onto the centre stage of Jewish religious discourse, as it were, the Lurianic emphasis on tikkun and on personal 'restorations', rather than displacing the sense of exile onto a cosmic canvas, actually reinforced the need for social redemption - and thus led to Sabbatianism.104 Idel has carefully deconstructed Scholem's linear view by noting that Luria's teachings were reserved for a Kabbalistically-literate elite, that a number of Luria's followers did not interpret Lurianism as being emphatically messianic (even on a cosmic scale), and that other earlier configurations were at least as messianically-inclined (such as that of Abraham Abulafia and the thirteenth century Kabbalistic chef d'oeuvre, the Zohar).105 Regardless, for the present purposes it might be noted that the Sabbatian episode has sometimes startling parallels to the Theosophy of Blavatsky's successor as ideologue, Leadbeater, and to his promotion of Krishnamurti.

The story of Sabbatai Zevi (1625-1676) is sufficiently well-known not to require retelling here.106 More rarely acknowledged is the centrality of the figure of Nathan of

104 Scholem, Major Trends, 287-288.
105 Idel, Kabbalah, 258-259.
Gaza (1644-1680) to the messianic movement centred upon Sabbatai Zevi. Scholem has described Nathan in the following terms:

He had all the qualities which one misses in Sabbatai Zevi: tireless activity, originality of theological thought, and abundant productive power and literary ability. He proclaims the Messiah and blazes the trail for him, and at the same time he is by far the most influential theologian of the movement. 107

In terms of Theosophical (messianic) historiography, there are interesting parallels between Nathan and Leadbeater. 108 Of course, this is not to suggest that there was any causative connection, nor indeed that Leadbeater's occultism is in any way systematically akin to Nathan's messianic Judaism. Nevertheless, the dynamics of their propagandistic efforts bear some comparison.

Nathan, it seems, confirmed in Zevi's mind the truth of the latter's messianic status, and did so in an elevated mystical state which encased his pronouncements with a revelatory authority. 109 Further, Nathan promoted Zevi with a propagandistic fervour which made Sabbatianism a pan-Jewish phenomenon unrivalled in modern times. 110 Yet, to achieve his ends Nathan was required to rearticulate the inherited wisdom of Jewish mysticism (mostly under a Lurianic aspect) such that Zevi became the fulfilment of previous messianic speculation. 111 The hermeneutical challenge, therefore, was to create a Sabbatian exegesis which would force Lurianic Kabbalists to accept that Zevi was not a deviation from, but the culmination of, their beliefs. 112 In

108 There is no intention here to 'gloss over' obvious discrepancies between Nathan-Zevi and Leadbeater-Krishnamurti. It must be acknowledged that Nathan was only (just) in his twenties at the time of the proclamation, and Sabbatai Zevi about 40. Also it should be noted that Zevi had made self-referential messianic claims for years prior to meeting Nathan. Nevertheless, the broad agreements between Leadbeater and Nathan, and Krishnamurti and Zevi, are informative as possible patternings for the historiography of esotericism.
110 Nathan's letters to Jewish communities in the diaspora fanned the flames of messianic fervour, such that riots erupted in many European, African, and Near East port cities and towns. Interestingly, a number of Christian commentators found Sabbatianism a welcome phenomenon because they believed it would lead to the promised conversion of the Jews. One anonymous commentator in London (of 1687) suspected that: 'Perhaps God by this Man is willing to Convert the Jews and other Infidels': in ibid., 155.
111 There is an obvious parallel here with the exegetical techniques of the early Christian apologists - a fact of which Scholem made note. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, 307ff.
a discussion of the relationship between Lurianic Kabbalah and Sabbatianism, Idel has
highlighted Nathan's pivotal mediational role in this process:

I want to stress that Sabbatianism indeed benefited from Lurianic
Kabbalah, primarily through the adoption of its theosophy and
mythology. Although Sevi was not particularly interested in this
type of Kabbalah, his prophet, Nathan of Gaza, can be considered
as a Lurianic Kabbalist who employed Lurianic terminology
creatively, giving it a special twist that 'illuminated' the personal
myth of Sevi.113

That Sabbatai Zevi was himself more interested in the ecstatic Kabbalah (represented,
famously, by Abraham Abulafia) and the Zohar, was perhaps rather incidental to the
main issue - as Nathan and others understood it - of providing a nexus between
Sabbatianism and the mythology and theosophy of the sophisticated Lurianic
Kabbalah.114 This project, somewhat ironically, was not nearly so dependent upon the
person of the messiah Zevi as may at first be presumed. Thus it was that, upon
hearing news of the messiah's entirely unexpected apostasy and conversion to Islam
(under the name of Aziz Mehmed Effendi) in 1666 - which Sabbatai chose instead of
martyrdom at the hands of the Turkish Sultan, Mehmed IV - the movement simply
rearticulated their theology of divine paradoxy as an overt antinomianism, and
continued valiantly and unapologetically for several generations more.115 Such would
simply not have been possible had not Nathan and his fellow apologists so thoroughly
reconstrued (at least to the movement's satisfaction) Lurianic Kabbalah as the 'Baptist'
to Sabbatianism's Messiah.116 Consequently, if all historical and theological indicators

113 Idel, Kabbalah, 259.
114 For Zevi's Kabbalistic interests see Idel, Kabbalah, 264 et passim.
115 For the apostasy and the continuing Sabbatians, see Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi, passim; id.,
Kabbalah, 264-286, also ch. 3. Joseph Weiss considered that the influence of Sabbatian theological
constructs continued well into modern times:

[T]he positive role of actual sin central in Sabbatian theology was replaced in
Hasidism by the positive role of sinful fantasy. All this gave an unexpectedly
wide diffusion to religious ideas of a Sabbatian structure, though in a much­mitigated and hence more acceptable form (Joseph Weiss, Studies in Eastern
European Jewish Mysticism, ed. David Goldstein, Oxford University Press,

116 Nathan's cosmology, in which the unmanifest Messiah existed from the first in the primordial
space of creation (tehiru) and was thus the only soul not bound by the Torah, provided a mystico­
theological justification for Zevi's antinomianism - his 'strange acts - and thus eased the blow of his
apostasy. No doubt, the 'cognitive dissonance' was thus eased for the faithful by Nathan's
sophisticated argument. For the notion of 'cognitive dissonance' see supra ch. 1.
led irrevocably to Sabbatai Zevi, then even something as outrageous as apostasy was *ipso facto* a messianic trait, either to be appreciated ('moderate Sabbatianism') or emulated ('radical Sabbatianism') by his followers.  

Leadbeater's promotion of Krishnamurti has some interesting resonances with Nathan's *apologia* for Sabbatai Zevi. Scholem's comment that Nathan was 'at once the John the Baptist and the Paul of the new Messiah' could just as easily be applied to Leadbeater's championing of the young Krishnamurti. On the most mundane level there are similarities in the way in which revelatory visions provided divine sanction for the messianic candidate - though similar phenomena are not uncommon in messianic discourse. There are several such superficial similarities. By far the most telling sympathy between Leadbeater and Nathan is the untiring propagation of a comprehensive messianic discourse predicated upon the manipulation of preexisting speculative systems. Just as Nathan was required to find justification for his

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117 Scholem not unnaturally made a demarcation between the responses to Zevi's apostasy on the grounds of attitudes to antinomianism and conversion. In the moderate camp are those who believed the messiah's conversion was the initiating of a new world, and thus of a new Torah. The old order (represented by rabbinical Judaism and adherence to customary law) was to be overturned - but only once the messiah had fully completed his mission to transform the world *from within himself*. Thus it was that many moderate Sabbatians were able to reconcile the paradoxy of following the law, but nevertheless believing that it is in the process of being made redundant. The radical Sabbatians took the inherent contradiction of this position to natural ends. They promoted a radical antinomianism by following their messiah's example; for evil to be conquered, a descent into evil was required. This position not unsurprisingly led to a theology of the 'holiness of sin', which reached its 'sacramental' fulfillment in the abrogation of the directives of the Torah. With the removal of the stigma of sin, the radical Sabbatians tended toward extreme nihilism and the utter inversion of religio-social constraints, with predictable results. Perhaps the most famous representative of this school of thought was Jacob Frank (1726-1791), whom Scholem considered to be 'the most hideous and uncanny figure in the whole history of Jewish Messianism': Scholem, *Major Trends*, 308. Frank, himself claimed as an incarnation of God (in ibid., 317), led a number of his followers into a quixotic conversion to Catholicism, and preached an elaborate antinomianism. (It is difficult to understand exactly why Biale considered that 'the FranIdsts in Eastern Europe prefigured the more assimilationist tendencies in modern Judaism because they chose apostasy': Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*, 161).


119 One of the more obvious similarities is the theology both posited for 'strange acts'. Nathan created a sophisticated philosophical justification for Zevi's regular lapses (now often considered the likely result of a 'maniac-depressive psychosis': Scholem, *Major Trends*, 290) - which later became the basis for a theologised antinomianism (and, ultimately, the idea of the 'holiness of sin'). Leadbeater did the same so as to explain various of Krishnamurti's perceived shortcomings, such as his academic failure, disinterest in Liberal Catholicism, his painful 'process', and his stubborn refusal to learn anything about Theosophy. In contemplating this last point, it is an intriguing phenomenon that just as Nathan had reworked Lurianism in order to promote the interests of a messiah who had no interest in Lurianism, so Leadbeater reconstructed Theosophy for a Vehicle who exhibited no interest in Theosophy.
messianism in Lurianic Kabbalah, Leadbeater needed to be able to promote the Coming of the World-Teacher (Krishnamurti) as an inherent ingredient of *Blavatskian* Theosophy.

Blavatsky's Theosophy (like Luria's Kabbalah) purposely left the *eschaton* open-ended, so as to highlight personal responsibility for spiritual progression. Accordingly, her soteriology was predicated upon the notion of personal salvation through evolution and karmic law; indeed, her assurance that the 'messiah' would come only at the end of the 'Great Cycle', and then incarnate in all evolved Monads, indicates the degree to which she considered messiahship as the fruit of personal achievement. Leadbeater's 'messianism', on the other hand, was displaced from the individual Theosophist to the person of Krishnamurti. It would be Krishnamurti - as the World-Teacher - who would 'redeem' Theosophists through his spiritual power. In fact, Blavatsky's and Leadbeater's views on messianism - as in much else - were diametrically opposed.

Leadbeater overcame the very real divide between his conception of messianism and that of his forebear by craftily rearticulating Blavatsky's temporality and cosmology, just as Nathan had done with the Lurianic formulations. Leadbeater comprehensively truncated Blavatsky's cosmic time and thereby brought forward the next evolutionary leap; for instance, attention shifted from the *Root* Races to the *sub*-races, and specifically to the imminent sixth sub-race. Then, by appropriating Blavatsky's notion of the Seven Rays, and super-imposing onto it the idea of a *succession* of Masters, he was able to alter Blavatsky's synoptic historiography, and replace it with one in which the appearance of the World-Teacher/messiah was a logical necessity.

Just as Nathan had altered the Lurianic cosmo-history such that it could be proved the messiah had *de jure* always existed, Leadbeater reordered the Blavatskian system to produce an identical result. Thus it was that he restructured her celestial hierarchy of Masters such that the messiah (or World-Teacher) became an office *within* the eternal Hierarchy. So, too, he altered Blavatskian macrohistory by presenting various of the great figures of the past - Christ, Krishna, *inter alia* - as having first been Vehicles of
the messiah, and only later becoming adepts or Masters. Indeed, it could be argued that Leadbeater carefully grafted messianism into the Theosophical tree, and not only made it look as if it had always been there, but convinced most of the faithful that the tree would have died without it. It is precisely this ability which has such a strong resonance with the achievements of Nathan of Gaza.

Following Krishnamurti’s apostasy, Theosophists reacted in similar ways as the Sabbatians had done centuries before. Some left the movement and returned to more normative religionisms. Those who remained were much comforted by the efforts of Leadbeater (and others) who - like Nathan - had created sufficient conceptual room so that the messiah’s actions could be interpreted as part of the plan for Redemption. Some - the ‘moderate devotees’ - remained within the Theosophical edifice, and continued in their observances, while all the time waiting for the moment when such preparatory ‘Torahs’ as the Liberal Catholic Church and Co-Freemasonry would be superseded by the new era of Brotherhood and Individuality (and Seventh Ray magic rather than Sixth Ray piety!) which the Lord Maitreya would bring in his wake. Others - the ‘radical devotees’ - followed Krishnamurti into exile and became converts to his idiosyncratic antinomianism, his ‘pathlessness’, believing that the new era had begun and that it was their task to completely ‘deconstruct’ all religious observance.

If there is a criticism of Scholem’s historiography of the Kabbalah, it is his tendency to emphasise a lineal tradition, based on causative links from one period to another. Thus, for Scholem, the Kabbalah of the Zohar contains the seeds of Lurianism, and Lurianism the seeds of Sabbatianism, and so on. Such ‘timeline’ historiography, while attractive for a great many reasons, tends to exclude more data than it includes.

One should not underestimate the effect of Krishnamurti’s denial of his Vehicular status on the popular membership, and on the reputation of Theosophy generally. David Biale’s comments could just as easily refer to Theosophy:

In Sabbatianism ... the apocalyptic elements in messianism joined forces with the underground tradition of Gnosticism in the Kabbalah to make an explosive mixture that would demolish the traditional Jewish world (Biale, Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History, 156).

For the idea of ‘linearity’ see Elliot R. Wolfson, ‘Weeping, Death, and Spiritual Ascent in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Mysticism’ in Collins & Fishbane, Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys, 209.
delineated modalities. Nevertheless, the above discussion indicates certain atemporal sympathies between the development of Jewish Kabbalistic mysticism and Theosophy. Whether the Luria-Nathan-Sabbatai Zevi / Blavatsky-Leadbeater-Krishnamurti developmentalist dynamic is a function of religious discourse generally (Moses-Paul-Jesus?), or specific to esotericism, is a question yet to be addressed.
CHAPTER 29

THE ROSICRUCIAN MASTER

The Rosicrucian Novel

It has long been assumed that the Great White Lodge of Theosophical lore was a modern redaction of the Rosicrucian Fraternity, first brought to public attention in 1614/1615 by the publication of the Fama Fratemitatis des Lüblichen Ordens des Rosenkreutzes and the Confessio Fratemitatis. It can hardly be doubted that Blavatsky, particularly, was influenced by the mythopoeic potentialities of Rosicrucianism, but care should be exercised in assessing the means by which such notions were mediated to her. Although, by Blavatsky's time, Rosicrucianism was the common coin of esotericism, particularly in Masonic circles, a more direct influence came through an unlikely source: the tradition of the Rosicrucian novel. An examination of the various permutations of Rosicrucian fiction is a journey into Blavatsky's conceptual heartland.

The topos of the immortal human appears to be ubiquitous in its appeal to authors and philosophers. Indeed, the theme of immortality, or at least prolongevity, has provided particularly potent grist to whichever philosophical mill an author has chosen to subscribe, and, being the stuff of legend, the concept has proven malleable and

1 The Hesse-Kassel Rosicrucian pamphlets appear to have been circulating in manuscript form from at least as early as 1610. The two most significant Rosicrucian manifests, at least from an historiographical point of view, are the Fama Fratemitatis or A Discovery of the Fraternity of the Most Noble Order of the Rosy Cross (1614) and the Confession Fratemitatis or The Confession of the Laudable Fraternity of the Most Honourable Order of the Rosy Cross. Written to All the Learned of Europe (1615). The literature on Rosicrucianism is vast and uneven. For various translations and interpretations of the manifestoes see McIntosh, The Rose Cross; id., The Rosy Cross Unveiled: The History, Mythology and Rituals of an Occult Order, The Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1980; Yates, The Rosicrucian Enlightenment; Ralph White, ed., The Rosicrucian Enlightenment Revisited, Lindisfarne Books, Hudson, New York, 1999; Anonymous [Johann Valentin Andreae?], The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz, trans. Joscelyn Godwin, Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks #18, Phanes Press, Grand Rapids, MI, 1991; A. E. Waite, The Real History of the Rosicrucians: Founded on Their Own Manifestoes, and on Facts and Documents Collected from the Writing of Initiated Brethren, George Redway, London, 1887; id., The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross; Paul M. Allen, ed., A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology, 3rd ed., Spiritual Science Library, Blauvelt, New York, 1981.


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immensely popular. It would seem that the novelist’s mischievous subversion of one of life’s verities satisfies a mysterious communal appetite.

More than in any other genre, the immortal proved a staple of the Gothic horror novel - to the point where the two are often, though erroneously, considered synonymous. Tales of the ‘undead’ proliferated throughout the literature of the nineteenth century and these are the inventions which have helped to inspire the modern public perception of the era. Infamous among the pantheon of the immortals is the vampire with his insatiable appetite for human blood; no less arresting is the Wandering Jew, the eternal vagrant, doomed as only those who have offended a god can be. Into this unholy company must be admitted both the Faustian magus, whose immortality is won through the sale of his soul, and also the animated cadaver of the sort exemplified by Frankenstein’s Monster.

Each of these creations is evidence of what can only be termed the moral imperative of death: to live beyond the allotted span is to have violated the divine order and to have succumbed to diabolic influences. Thus it follows that the Gothic immortal was often physically stigmatised as a mark of having occasioned the displeasure of God.


Just as the transformation from beauty to hideousness is indicative of the demoniacal nature of Frankenstein’s Monster, so too the atavistic elements in the vampire myth (elongated canine teeth, the ability to summon and control night animals, and the identification with bats and rodents) coupled with the inability of the vampire to face daylight, suggests Luciferian devilishness. The most terrible of the stigma, however, must surely be the burning brand of the cross which adorns the forehead of the Wandering Jew. The parallels between the Wandering Jew and its prototype, Cain, are immediately apparent: see George K. Anderson, The Legend of the Wandering Jew, Brown University Press, Providence, Rhode Island, 1970, 1-23, 212-290.
Consequently, whether required to be parasitic or penitential in the activities of their half-life, the members of the cabal of immortals were inevitably shunned by society and often vilified or destroyed.

If the moral and physical necessity of death is established in Gothic fiction by the various monsters and megalomaniacs represented by the figure of the immortal, then what of the Fraternity of the Rosy Cross? The members of this legendary Brotherhood, typologically related to the band of immortals through their possession of the elixir vitae, are said to have viewed prolongevity not as the bane of their existence but as a God-given boon and, unlike the other species of Gothic immortal, were reputed to be benevolent healers and mystics, devoted to 'the highest and only truth, the greatest good-will and brotherly love'. Paradoxically, then, the presentation of the immortals of the brethren of the Rosy Cross in the Gothic novel is sometimes as saintly in nature as that of the undead vampire and the Wandering Jew is diabolic.

Prior to an investigation into the Rosicrucian novel, it is worthwhile to examine in brief the genesis of the legend itself. The Fama Fraternitatis and the Confessio Fraternitatis introduced the founder of the Fraternity, 'C. R. C.' or 'C. Ros. C.', understood to be Christian Rosenkreutz. Rosenkreutz, born in 1378 to an impoverished family of Teutonic nobles, found himself alone en route to Jerusalem after the death of his monastic fellow pilgrim. From Damascus, Rosenkreutz journeyed through a number of Middle-Eastern and North-African cities searching for the esoteric secrets of mathematics and physics, and encountering various mysterious sages. Ultimately, Rosenkreutz returned to Germany, intent upon engineering social

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* For details see McIntosh, The Rose Cross, 24ff.
* For an acute analysis of the esoteric substance of the Rosicrucian manifestoes, see Faivre, Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition, 171-190.
reform through the application of various radical programs.9 Ridiculed for his attempts, Rosenkreutz decided instead to continue his efforts in private through the establishment of a secret fraternity.

Following Rosenkreutz’s death in 1484, aged 106 years, his disciples interred his body in a secret tomb in their headquarters, the House of the Holy Spirit. One hundred and twenty years passed and the tomb containing the uncorrupted corpse of Christian Rosenkreutz was discovered by the descendants of the original Brotherhood. Having interpreted their find as an omen of peculiar destiny, the event provided the impetus for the Fraternity to begin its work in the world by issuing the manifestoes.

Scholars have debated the historical authenticity of the Fraternity since the Fama Fraternitatis and the Confessio Fraternitatis first appeared.10 The consensus view is that the most likely candidate for authorship of the two pamphlets was Johan Valentin Andreae (1586-1654), a Lutheran pastor and theologian much given to utopian speculation and membership of small esoteric societies.11 Andreae, who claimed in his autobiography to have been the author of the third Rosicrucian pamphlet, entitled Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreutz (‘The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz’) was a member of the circle of German Lutheran intellectuals centred around Tübingen University who looked to a great socio-religious Renovatio.12 Even though Andreae referred to the manifestoes as his ludibrium, he nevertheless appears to have intended the Rosicrucian pamphlets to reinvigorate the ebbing spiritual promise of the Reformation by fusing Joachimism, neo-Paracelsianism, mediaeval visionary mysticism, and alchemy, with a re-politicised

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10 Given the anti-papal nature of the manifestoes, it is not surprising that the majority of Rosicrucian apologists were Lutheran Protestants and their opponents Roman Catholic. Typical of the latter is WARNUNG für die Rosenkreutzen Ungeziefer of 1621, for which see Waite, The Brotherhood, 342.

11 McIntosh, The Rose Cross, 26ff; id., The Rosy Cross Unveiled, 43-47.

12 See Faivre, Access, 64-66.
Lutheranism.13

It is undeniable that whatever the intended purpose of the manifestoes, the Fraternity was immediately seized upon by esotericists and philosophers of all sorts as an identifiable historical entity. The disparaging comments of Andreae (‘Listen ye mortals, in vain do you wait for the coming of the Brotherhood, the Comedy is at an end’) did little to discourage those who considered themselves to be potential recruits.14 Not unexpectedly, the reputation of the Fraternity grew to encompass not only such figures of renown as Agrippa, Paracelsus, and Dee, but also the entire plethora of paranormal phenomena associated with theurgy, alchemy, and Hermeticism. Control of the spirit-world, invisibility, the ability to heal all sickness and to speak all languages, and possession of the fabled *lapis philosophicus* and the *elixir vitae*, were all reputed to be the exclusive domain of the hidden Fraternity.15

The concept of the immortal Rosicrucian, although only hinted at in the *Confessio Fraternitatis* (‘Were it not a precious thing, that you could always live so, as if you had lived from the beginning of the world and, moreover, as you should still live to the end thereof’),16 became a central motif in the iconography of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. It was this element of the mythos which provided Gothic novelists with a fitting addition to their menagerie of fictional immortals.

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13 For details see Edighoffer, ‘Hermeticism in Early Rosicrucianism’, 197-215; Bamford, ‘The Meaning of the Rose Cross’, 43-72. Frances Yates (The Rosicrucian Enlightenment, 80-81) has argued that *ludibrium* in this context does not mean a joke or farce, but an allegorical ‘divine comedy’. Further credence is given to the possibility of Andreae’s authorship of all three manifestoes by the fact that Andreae’s family arms, like those of Luther, bore both the rose and the cross. Marie Roberts has proposed that Andreae employed this symbolism to emphasise the ‘Protestant backlash to Hapsburg hegemony’ which preceded the Thirty Years’ War; see Marie Roberts, *Gothic Immortals: The Fiction of the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, Routledge, London, 1990.

14 Descartes (1596-1650) searched in vain for the Fraternity, only to conclude it was fictive. He was, however, required to come out from a self-imposed seclusion in order to prove to his acquaintances that he had not been taught by the Brotherhood how to become invisible; see Marie Roberts, ‘The English Rosicrucian Novel’ in, *Cauda Pavonis: Studies in Hermeticism*, 8:1, 1989, 7.

15 The process of accretion, by which the Rosicrucian Fraternity became the repository of all esoteric knowledge, began as early as 1615 when Julius Sperber’s *Echo der von Gott hocherleuchteten Fraternitet* purported that Christian Rosenkreutz was the recipient of a secret doctrine that had been maintained from the time of Adam. The unbroken tradition - a Rosicrucian *philosophia perennis* - had been transmitted by Zoroaster, the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, the Jewish Kabbalists, Cornelius Agrippa, Johannes Reuchlin, Marsilio Ficino, and Pico della Mirandola, *inter alia*. See Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosicrucians*, Crucible, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1987, 53-54.

The Rosicrucian novel, as a discrete literary genre, was first identified by Edith Birkhead in 1921. She traced the genesis of the form to William Godwin (1756-1836), author of *St. Leon. A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* of 1799. It seems that Godwin’s fascination with prolongevity and immortality must have become something of a family concern given that other permutations of the mythos were provided by Godwin’s son-in-law Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), in his *Zastrozzi* (1810) and *St. Irvyne: The Rosicrucian* (1811), and by Godwin’s daughter, Mary Shelley (1797-1851), in her *Frankenstein* (1818), *The Last Man* (1826), and *The Mortal Immortal* (1834). A further example of a Gothic immortal presented within the guise of the Rosicrucian novel is included in *Melmoth the Wanderer* of 1820, by Charles Robert Maturin (1782-1824). The last exponent of the Rosicrucian novel was Edward Bulwer-Lytton, and it is in his occult fiction, now largely forgotten, that the concerns of each of the aforementioned works culminated to produce the definitive Rosicrucian novel. His *Zanoni* of 1842 is undoubtedly the apogee of the genre, and was the most singularly influential fictional work in the later elaboration of the Theosophical Masters. Indeed, Blavatsky noted her debt to Bulwer-Lytton thus:

No author in the world of literature ever gave a more truthful or more poetical description of these beings [the Masters] than Sir E. Bulwer-Lytton, the author of *Zanoni.*

In order to appreciate the significance of the Rosicrucian novel within the ambit of nineteenth century occultism generally, and the articulation of the Theosophical Masters in particular, it is important briefly to examine a selection of such works. By establishing the aggregate components of the genre, it is possible to appreciate why the form developed when it did, and, crucially, why it declined so suddenly in the wake of

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17 Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror*, Russell & Russell, New York, 1963, 100-127. It should be noted that the present work discusses only a small number of works ranging from 1799 (*St. Leon*) to 1842 (*Zanoni*). There are, of course, Rosicrucian novels in several other languages, and the genre continues to the present day: cf., eg., David Foster, *The Adventures of Christian Rosy Cross*, King Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1986. Nevertheless, the novels examined *infra* appear to exhibit the range of concerns central to the genre, and to have been favourites of Blavatsky.


19 That Bulwer-Lytton’s *Zanoni* is here presented as the zenith of the Rosicrucian novel does not presuppose its literary or stylistic talents surpass other contributors to the genre - rather that it remains the most comprehensive treatment of the themes suggested by Rosicrucianism.

Some commentators have expressed surprise that the anarchical political philosopher, William Godwin, was responsible for the birth of the Rosicrucian novel. A number have suggested that his novels have achieved nothing but to have belittled his reputation as a reformer. The error of this position can be established by an investigation of the story of St. Leon and of its treatment of a number of concerns germane to the Aufklärung.

The story introduces Count Reginald de St. Leon, a man much given to gambling and a profligate lifestyle. Unable to choose between his attraction to the wild Parisian streets and a serene pastoral home with his children and saintly wife, Marguerite, St. Leon vacillates hopelessly between the two. St. Leon believes his troubles are over after he meets a mysterious elderly man named Zampieri from whom he receives the Philosopher’s Stone and the Elixir of Life. Unfortunately, eternal life and great wealth serve only to alienate him from his family and friends; Marguerite dies, St. Leon is imprisoned and must face the Inquisition on charges of being a black magician. In the end St. Leon is doomed to a life of self-imposed exile from all those whom he holds dear.

There were Rosicrucian novels published subsequent to Zanoni, but for the next several decades the Rosicrucian genre tended to be represented by writers who could be classified primarily as occultists rather than novelists. The prime example is that of Pascal Beverly Randolph, whose two celebrated Rosicrucian novels follow Zanoni in their pretensions to semi-autobiographical status: P. B. Randolph, The Rosicrucian’s Story: The Wonderful Things That Happened to Mr. Thomas W. and his Wife. Embracing the Celebrated ‘Miranda Theory’, M. J. Randolph, Utica, 1863; id., The Wonderful Story of Ravalette. Also, Tom Clark and his Wife: Their Double Dreams and the Curious Things that Befell Them Therein; or, The Rosicrucian’s Story, S. Tousey, New York, 1863. That Randolph was well aware of the existence of a Rosicrucian fiction tradition is evidenced by his use of the nom de plume ‘Count de St. Leon’ (in his Love and its Hidden History, 1869): see Deveney, Paschal Beverly Randolph, 344, 354-355.

There is a survey of responses to St. Leon in B. J. Tysdahl, William Godwin as Novelist, Athlone, London, 1981, 77-96. It is interesting to note that Godwin’s Caleb Williams (1794) is generally regarded as the first detective novel in English; later, the figurative type of the Master was often incorporated into this genre; see infra Appendix C.

A parody of St. Leon appeared in 1800 under the title St. Godwin: A Tale of the 16th, 17th and 18th Century, by Count Reginald de St. Leon (alias Robert Dubois). In it the author suggests the public ‘burlesqued my works’ and the novels ‘made me look like a fool’; see Roberts, Gothic Immortals, 49. A good reading of St. Leon is offered by Juliet Beckett’s ‘Introduction’ to the Arno Press (N.Y.) edition of St. Leon, 1972, i-xxix

It is commonly suggested that Marguerite is a portrait of Godwin’s wife, the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), who had died only a year prior to the publication of St. Leon. See Birkhead, The Tale of Terror, 112.
Godwin’s interest in esoteric matters was slight; his only other foray into the field was with the publication of *The Lives of the Necromancers* (1834), a major reference text for Blavatsky. Rather, Godwin’s concerns were those germane to Enlightenment epistemologies. His interest in the prolongevity of the human species was established in his *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on Morals and Happiness* (1793) and in an essay of 1831, *Of the Duration of Human Life*, both of which are evidence of Godwin’s profound belief in human perfectibility. He considered that such perfectibility would act as a bridge between the ideals of the religious temper and the desire for equitable socioeconomic conditions - and would be achievable only through the faculty of a reasoned rule of mind:

> There is no principle of reason less liable to question than this, that, if we have in any respect a little power now, and, if mind be essentially progressive, that power may, and, barring any extraordinary concussions of nature, infallibly will, extend beyond any bounds we are able to prescribe to it.

For Godwin, the possibility of immortality relied upon the premise that humanity could eschew superstition and self-serving ideologies and then, in a kind of apotheosis of rationalism, ethically altruistic persons would attain perfection through social reform. It follows that the degradation and alienation of St. Leon is a result of the Elixir of Life and the Philosopher’s Stone being employed for personal advancement and not for the advancement (and resultant *macrobiosis*) of society as a whole. While not exactly Machiavellian, St. Leon is selfish and, according to Godwin, immortality is emancipatory only for the selfless. It is significant that Blavatsky concurred completely - which is hardly surprising since she regarded Godwin as one of the ‘first authorities on archaic sciences’.

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1. Tysdahl’s comment that Godwin was ‘a liberal Tory manqué and a believer manqué (in the Devil more than in God)’ could be extended to his esotericism: see Tysdahl, *William Godwin*, 96. For Blavatsky’s use of Godwin, cf., e.g., Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XI, 535-541; vol. XIV, 298.
4. This goes far to support Gerald Gruman’s reading of Carl Becker - which is to suggest that much of Enlightenment thinking represented a secularised version of Christian eschatology: in ibid., 85.
Godwin's use of the Rosicrucian quest for immortality as an allegorical device, which allowed for comment upon the Enlightenment preoccupation with notions of perfectibility and progress, established the Rosicrucian novel as an ideal vehicle for reflections upon the \textit{Zeitgeist} of its period, particularly with regard to the idea of prolongevity. This tendency is continued throughout the nineteenth century, during which the genre flourished, and is very evident in the Rosicrucian works of its next exponent, Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Shelley's interest in the præternatural had begun in his childhood: in response to a tutor's enquiry regarding his experiments at Eton, the young Shelley is said to have replied, 'Please sir, I am raising the devil'. With age Shelley's goetic endeavours waned, but his interest in the interchange between science and magic did not. In \textit{St. Irvyne: The Rosicrucian}, Shelley places the Rosicrucian immortal within the ethos of the Romantic hero - an individual whose moral conscience is sorely tested by trial and ordeal, and who is at once prey to the vicissitudes of human life and yet is forever removed from the companionship and sympathy of others.

\textit{St. Irvyne: The Rosicrucian} is a complex, occasionally unconvincing, tale of the adventures of Wolfstein, his sister Eloise, and a character named Ginotti (or Nempere). Ginotti possesses the \textit{elixir vitæ} as a result of having formed a compact with the devil, and desires to pass it on to the unsuspecting Wolfstein. Wolfstein, whose lover Megalena has just died, decides to partake of the elixir at a secret meeting with Ginotti in the grounds of a church dedicated to St. Irvyne. At the last moment Wolfstein rejects the \textit{elixir} as he cannot make the requisite denial of God. Ginotti, having failed to secure Wolfstein for the devil, is 'mouldered to a gigantic skeleton' and forced to endure an eternity in hell; Wolfstein is also destroyed, but 'over him had the power of hell no influence'. Shelley has thus grafted the Faustian-Mephistophilian compact onto the legend of the Rosicrucian Fraternity in order to

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31 Shelley's early fictional accounts of the Rosicrucians, the 'Bavarian Illuminati', and the Assassins are not his best work. Andrew Lang stated that \textit{St. Irvyne} 'proves that Shelley at Oxford was a donkey': quoted in Marie Roberts, \textit{British Poets and Secret Societies}, Crook Helm, London, 1986, 95.
heighten the tropological reading of Wolfstein's quest for immortality. Unlike St. Leon, Wolfstein has the foreknowledge that in order to possess unending earthly life, he must first deny eternal spiritual life 'from Him who alone can give an eternity of happiness'.

Where Shelley's novel differs from other Gothic works which deal with secret societies (Bavarian Illuminism, the Assassins, Freemasonry, inter alia) is in its presentation of the esotericist as a temperamental Romantic hero and not as a political radical. Wolfstein is tortured by love interests and by an insatiable curiosity for answers to questions germane to philosophical ontology - the same questions which appear to be symptomatic of the romantic sensibility. So, in Shelley's hands, the Rosicrucian elixir became the medium through which the author could deliberate upon the character of Romantic heroism. For her part, Blavatsky believed the 'great young Shelley' to be one of her personal heroes; indeed, she claimed for him an 'immortal name'.

Mary Shelley's first foray into the field of Rosicrucian fiction was the publication in 1818 of *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*. This novel, perhaps more than any other, has gained a reputation for its abilities to 'curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart'. This aspect of the work has encouraged the suppression of its Rosicrucian elements: it is pertinent to note that Walter Scott suggested that 'Frankenstein' is a novel upon the same plan as *St. Leon*.

The tale of *Frankenstein* documents the successful experiment of Victor Frankenstein to animate a creature formed from the body members of various cadavers. The creature ultimately proves to be hideous in all respects and is shunned by polite

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33 Ibid., 220.
society. Victor, in an attempt to alleviate the misery of the 'monster', creates for it a female partner, but eventually destroys the female as he fears the monsters will breed and create a race of artificial beings. In revenge, the monster goes on a homicidal rampage, murders Victor's bride and finally kills its creator, only to flee and (presumably) end its life.

Marie Roberts (*inter alia*) has suggested that the figure upon which Shelley based her doctor was Johann Konrad Dippel (1673-1734), who inhabited Castle Frankenstein under the patronage of the Landgrave of Hesse. Dippel’s necromantic experiments certainly do parallel those of Victor Frankenstein, and his lifelong interest in the Rosicrucian quest for immortality has been amply demonstrated. Roberts also noted that Shelley was responding to the experiments of Erasmus Darwin, whose *The Botanic Garden* (1791) employed the Rosicrucian mythos in order to document the creation of a monster.

Whatever Mary Shelley’s sources for *Frankenstein* happen to have been, the themes which she explored are germane to those of Rosicrucian fiction as established by Godwin and P. B. Shelley. The Promethean theft of fire is equated with the Rosicrucian ‘theft’ of immortality - both document the inevitable punishments for the possession of forbidden knowledge. Mary Shelley, however, extends the boundaries of the genre by encompassing within the allegorical schemata the (im)morality of Enlightenment scientific rationalism.

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*Ibid.*, 99-100. An English-language survey of the esoteric interests of the landowners of Hesse-Kassel remains to be written and would provide valuable keys in delineating the descent of continental Rosicrucian Freemasonry. It is not insignificant that the first Rosicrucian manifestoes were published at Kassel in 1614, nor that Prince Karl of Hesse-Kassel granted a warrant to the Masonic lodge *Aurora zur aufgehendes Morgenröte* in 1807 to operate the Rectified Rite of Strict Observance. The latter undoubtedly provided a link between English and German Freemasonry which ultimately encouraged the establishment of such bodies as the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*.

Sadly for Dippel, his claim in 1733 to having discovered the means to extend his lifespan to 135 years was disproved due to his death the following year: in *ibid.*, 100.

*Ibid.*, 102. As noted *supra*, Erasmus Darwin was the grandfather of the naturalist, Charles Darwin, and is now being recognised as one source of the latter’s evolutionary idiom: see Helie, *Erasmus Darwin*. Shelley may well also have been thinking of a painting, *The Rosicrucian Cavern* of 1804 by the artist Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), a close friend of her father’s.
It is pertinent that in *Frankenstein*, Shelley's Rosicrucian scientist, Victor Frankenstein, is encouraged in his pursuits after having consulted the works of Agrippa. Agrippa, like Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus, was championed by Rosicrucian apologists as an early exponent of the protoscience which the Rosicrucians themselves were said to represent. His experiments in medicine and alchemy, always imbued with generous amounts of astrology and *goetia*, were believed to have placed him in the nexus formed between Renaissance magic and pre-Newtonian science. For Shelley, however, Victor Frankenstein is the new post-Enlightenment Agrippa, a tragic figure - and thoroughly Romantic. His is the audacity of genuine solipsism wherein the blasphemies and sacrileges of self-indulgent science are seen as the inevitable consequence of the desire for the apotheosis of man: 'supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world'.

Where Percy Shelley's Rosicrucian fiction stands at the cusp of Romanticism, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is wholly immersed in the Romantic ethos while still retaining the form of the Gothic *schauerromantik*. The alienation of the monster is allegorically aligned to the loneliness of genius, and by extension to the necessary isolation of the artist. The immortality which Victor attempts to bestow upon mankind through his experiments, no matter how beneficent in design, is doomed to fail as it is an immortality of the body only, and not of the mind or spirit. Mary Shelley seems to indicate that the soul is ultimately of pure stuff and thus unsuited to an eternal corporeal life.

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42 'I entered with the greatest diligence into the search of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life': Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 35.
43 'Men actually generations ahead of their times in learning and science, but real children of their age in following truths down those alluring bypaths which seemed to be royal roads to knowledge and proved to be delusory': Butler, *The Myth of the Magus*, 161.
44 The work of self-avowed Rosicrucians of the German Aufklärung such as Sincerus Renatus (Samuel Richter), as well as the parallel existence and memberships of the (Rosicrucian) Invisible College and the Royal Society in England, has helped to dispel the notion that the epistemological shift from theurgy and *magia naturalis* to Newtonian physics was dramatic, rapid, and final.
46 A similar connotation is made in her *The Mortal Immortal* of 1834 wherein the immortal determines to 'set at liberty the life imprisoned within, and so cruelly prevented from soaring from this dim earth to a sphere more congenial to its immortal existence': Mary Shelley, *Collected Tales and Stories*, ed., C. E. Robinson, John Hopkins University Press, London, 1976, 230.
The only important Rosicrucian novel to appear between Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bulwer-Lytton's *Zanoni* was Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* of 1820. Maturin, a Calvinist preacher from the Established Church of Ireland, considered the *elixir vitæ* and the *lapis philosophicus* to be disastrous temptations which attract the unholy by their promise to circumvent judgement, redemption, and (Christian) salvation. In *Melmoth the Wanderer*, the desire for prolongevity is presented as the most egregious heresy, for '[w]hat enemy has man so deadly as himself?'.

The story of *Melmoth the Wanderer* is expressed through a series of interwoven smaller tales which each document the vain attempts of a number of immortals to convince various candidates to replace them in their wanderings. Chief among these is Melmoth, who roams through convent, asylum, and dungeon in order to appear at the deathbed of the sad and lonely. After one hundred and fifty years, Melmoth has still never been able to procure another's soul in exchange for his own:

> I have been on earth a terror, but not an evil to its inhabitants. None can participate in my destiny but with his own consent ... No one has ever exchanged destinies with Melmoth the Wanderer'.

The price extracted for Melmoth's failure is his ultimate damnation; finally, he ages and decays in a matter of minutes, just as Faustus had done. His last words are an admonition to his young relative, John Melmoth: ‘remember your lives will be the forfeit of your desperate curiosity. For the same stake I risked more than life - and lost it! - Be warned - retire!’. 

There can be little doubt that Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* proved to be one of the last great examples of the *schauerromantik* phase of Gothic fiction. A large proportion of the iconography of Gothic horror is assembled: ‘the mysterious portrait, the decaying parchment, ruins and storms, Inquisition and convent cells, entombed

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48 Ibid., 697. See also Varma, *The Gothic Flame*,165.
50 Edith Birkhead has stated that ‘[w]ith all his faults Maturin was the greatest as well as the last of the Goths': Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror*, 93.
lovers, dead bride and insane bridegroom, idyllic nature in the Indian islands'. Yet, for all of this, Maturin's Rosicrucian novel is in reality little other than a thinly-disguised theological polemic. The Rosicrucian heresy, as Maturin would have it, devolves upon the adept who has attempted to obviate the necessity of redemption through a forbidden knowledge of the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life. This alienated figure must wander in search of a surrogate salvation - achievable only through the vicarious means of bringing another wanderer into the midst of the immortals: 'I have literally worked out my salvation by your fear and trembling'.

It is crucial to recognise that in the four novels examined supra, the figure of the Rosicrucian is employed as a literary trope, valuable in so far as he can be exploited as a canvas upon which various philosophical and epistemological themes can be illustrated. His worth lies in the transgressive nature of his demiurgic power to arrogate unto himself what are held to be divine prerogatives. This transgressive power availed each of the authors the means by which to illuminate their particular engagement with the Zeitgeist of the early nineteenth century: from late Enlightenment to early Victorian England. Crucially, the Rosicrucian was an empathic figure - and even an inspirational one - and thus unique among the grotesqueries of the Gothic pantheon. Unsurprisingly, it was the semantic potential of the Rosicrucian that attracted the attention of Blavatsky, who read such literature voraciously.

The quest for prolongevity and the desire for esoteric arcana (symbolised by the elixir and the lapis philosophicus, respectively) were portrayed by Godwin as reasonable pursuits for society as a collective to undertake. After all, Godwin's preoccupation with perfectibility was an extension of both his own social activism and a predictable by-product of Enlightenment humanistic progressivism. For Percy Shelley, the Rosicrucian immortal was to become an embodiment of the Romantic temperament. Consequently, the lure of secret knowledge involved an inherent moral dilemma: to

51 Varma, *The Gothic Flame*, 166.
53 To this degree, the Rosicrucian novel, as a discrete genre, is singularly valuable as a chronological map of the science-theology interface of the early nineteenth century. The fact that esotericism was seen as a valuable tertium quid - capable of hermeneutical manipulation - is further indication of the continuing engagement of esotericism with modernity.
submit to such a temptation was to fall prey to moral turpitude, but to reject the Mephistophelian offer was to remain mortal with all of the fears which such a state state presupposed. Mary Shelley’s Rosicrucian, Victor Frankenstein, was a hybrid of the Romantic hero and the protoscientist of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This combination allowed the author to portray in miniature the epistemological shift from the concordances of Paracelsus to the causalities of René Descartes (1596-1650), and to relate the search for the Philosopher’s Stone to the Romantic concept of genius. The monster incarnates a rampant epistemology, divorced from, and ultimately inimical to, those concerns deemed appropriate for the human stratum. Maturin’s Rosicrucian wanderer, Melmoth, is typologically related to the Wandering Jew, in so far as both have rejected a freely-given, if hard won, redemption. Melmoth’s doom is no less final than that of the Wandering Jew: his heretical desire for forbidden knowledge is considered a rebuff to his Biblical saviour - no less scandalous than Malchus’ banishment of Jesus from his door. According to Maturin, such knowledge can only bring a justifiable anathema from the Christian community as no right-thinking person would accept ‘all that man could bestow, or earth afford’ if it involved diabolic pacts, the absolution of conscience, and the loss of the possibility of salvation.

The above analyses of four exponents of the Rosicrucian novel have been included so as to highlight the depth of interpenetration between philosophical paradigms and esoteric motifs in the early nineteenth century. That Blavatsky was well aware of such literature is confirmed by her own writings; significantly, she opined that ‘theosophic literature’ contained much of factual truth:

[T]ruth is often stranger than fiction, and what is thought fiction is still more often truth. No wonder then that occult literature is growing with every day. Occultism and sorcery are in the air, with no true philosophical knowledge to guide the experimenters and thus check evil results. ‘Works of fiction’, the various novels and romances are called. ‘Fiction’ in the arrangement of their characters and the adventures of their heroes and heroines - admitted. Not so,

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as to the facts presented ... [T]he tree of Occultism is now preparing for 'fruited', and the Spirit of the Occult is awakening ... in novels and works of fiction. Woe to the ignorant and the unprepared.57

It is clear that Blavatsky intended Theosophy, and particularly the idea of the Masters, to provide the 'true philosophical knowledge to guide the experimenters'. In this quest she was aided substantially by her own Rosicrucian idol, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, and his occult novel Zanoni, 'a work which will ever be prized by the occultist'.58

Zanoni

The last exponent of the Rosicrucian novel proved to be its most adept apologist. Edward Bulwer-Lytton was able to synthesise the concerns of his literary forebears into a cohesive pattern and create the paradigmatic Rosicrucian hero in the character of Zanoni. That the figure of Zanoni has profoundly influenced the shape and development of occultism is undeniable, though rarely acknowledged. More important, perhaps, is the fact that Bulwer-Lytton's ambivalence about his sources and hints of membership of esoteric Rosicrucian societies encouraged the belief in those disposed to such interests that the Rosicrucians did indeed exist - and could be contacted. In this, Bulwer-Lytton had brought the saga of Rosicrucianism to a full circle, for what had begun as an almost hysterical search for secret fraternities in the early seventeenth century, only then to become the province of philosophers, politicians, and writers of fiction, finally ended in the mid-nineteenth century with a renewed vigour for discovering those presumed to possess the elixir vitæ and the lapis philosophicus. In reestablishing the links between the literary model of the Rosicrucian and tantalising suggestions of real Rosicrucians, Bulwer-Lytton unwittingly sounded the death knell for the literary genre and a rallying cry for fratres manqué, among them the young Helena Blavatsky.

Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer-Lytton, first Baron Lytton, is a name unknown to the general literary public, unknown even to many enthusiasts of nineteenth century

57 Ibid., 107-108.
58 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. IV, 613.
fiction." That such is the case is hardly surprising since Bulwer-Lytton was parodied mercilessly by a number of his contemporaries and gained little favour among his successors: Thackeray said of 'Sir Edward Bulwig' that 'there are big words which make me furious, and a pretentious fine writing against which I can't help rebelling'.

It is certainly true that Bulwer-Lytton's literary style (dubbed 'Bulwerese') and personal demeanour bordered on pomposity. Yet to reject Bulwer-Lytton out of hand is to overlook the influence he exerted over many other authors whose fame has endured more readily, and to ignore his seminal position both as a writer of occult

Bulwer-Lytton's lack of recognition is a little surprising given the interchange of influence between him and his political and literary colleagues. Allen Christensen (Allen C. Christensen, Edward Bulwer-Lytton: The Fiction of New Regions, University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1976, 223) has noted that Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) consciously modelled himself after the character of Pelham in Bulwer-Lytton's eponymously titled novel of 1828. In fact, Disraeli attributed his social success to his ability to 'Pelhamize' people and found the introductions afforded him by Bulwer-Lytton (including that of his future wife) furnished the possibility of a highly successful political life. It is also possible to detect Bulwer-Lytton's influence in Disraeli's novels starting from the 1830s. By far the most enduring literary friendship of Bulwer-Lytton's life was that of Charles Dickens, one of whose children was named for him: see J. Keates, 'Bulwer-Lytton' in J. Wintle, ed., Makers of Nineteenth Century Culture: 1800-1914, Routledge, London, 1982, 88. Of Bulwer-Lytton's occult novels, Dickens wrote:

If you were the Magician's servant instead of the Magician, these potent spirits would get the better of you; but you are the Magician, and they don't, and you make them serve your purpose (E. B. Gose, Jr.,Imagination Indulged: The irrational in the nineteenth-century novel, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1972, 82).

The degree to which Dickens respected Bulwer-Lytton's talents can be gauged by Dickens' decision to substitute for his own ending for Great Expectations (1861) one devised by Bulwer-Lytton, after the latter had complained about the original: J. H. Buckley, Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1974, 60-61. Though it seems unacknowledged by Dickens scholars (with the notable exception of Jack Lindsay), it is also almost impossible to believe that the ending of A Tale Of Two Cities (1859) was not suggested to Dickens by Bulwer-Lytton's Zanoni (1842), in which the focal character also dies by means of the guillotine at the height of the Terror, and whose substitution for another serves to demonstrate the invincibility of selfless love: J. L. Campbell, Sr., Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1986, 118. The degree of Bulwer-Lytton's influence on a host of other writers and artists has never been analysed in depth but promises to be a fertile enquiry. Sufficient to say that his encouragement of the young Robert Browning, his place as 'the most powerful influence on Poe's early prose writing' (Chrisensen, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 224), and a source for George Bernard Shaw's satire - as well as his Rienzi (1835) having provided the story for Wagner's first successful opera, 'Rienzi' - indicates that scholars have ignored Bulwer-Lytton to the detriment of analyses of nineteenth century literature.


Christensen, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 227.

It might be noted that since 1982 the English Department of San Jose State University has sponsored an annual 'Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest', designed to 'challenge entrants to compose the opening sentence to the worst of all possible novels'. The contest is based upon the perception that Bulwer-Lytton's first sentence for his Paul Clifford (1830) is the worst of all time. The famous line begins: 'It was a dark and stormy night...', and was (first?) pilloried by the dog 'Snoopy' in Charles Schulz's 'Peanuts' cartoon strip.
fiction and, perhaps unknowingly, as the progenitor of a number of esoteric sodalities.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton was born in London on 25 May, 1803.63 His literary production was vast: he published fifty-nine major works which included collections of short stories, fourteen plays, nine volumes of poetry, a dozen volumes of prose (including translations, historical studies, and social criticism),64 as well as thirty novels. These last represent almost every major genre in the available canon: crime, historical, domestic, and utopian novels, as well as costume, metaphysical, scientific, and occult romances.65 Many of Bulwer-Lytton’s novels and romances contain elements of the German bildungsroman, as established by Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister of 1796, which has encouraged some critics to credit Bulwer-Lytton with having imported German romantic aesthetics, particularly Hegelian Idealism, into English literature.66

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63 An overview of the biographical and bibliographical material available on Bulwer-Lytton is offered by G. H. Ford, ed., *Victorian Fiction: A Second Guide to Research*, Modern Language Association, New York, 1978, 28-33. A number of biographies are available, though none appears to analyse his esoteric interests satisfactorily (the best of the latter is Robert Lee Wolff, *Strange Stories and Other Explorations in Victorian Fiction*, Gambit, Boston, 1971). The standard biography, Sadleir’s *Bulwer and His Wife*, ends in 1836 with its subject aged 33 years! Entirely unreliable is Edward Robert Lytton, first earl of, *The Life, Letters and Literary Remains of Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton, by His Son*, 2 vols., Kegan Paul, London, 1883. [V. A. Lytton, second earl of], *The Life of Edward Bulwer, First Lord Lytton, by His Grandson, the Earl of Lytton*, 2 vols., Macmillan, London, 1913 is better. The most effective literary criticism of Bulwer-Lytton’s œuvre is offered by Christensen, *Edward Bulwer-Lytton*. The most useful and detailed modern biographies are: Sybilla Jane Flower, *Bulwer-Lytton*, Shire Publications, London, 1973; Campbell, *Edward Bulwer-Lytton*. Bulwer-Lytton’s achievements extended to a parliamentary career which began with his election for St. Ives, Huntingdonshire, in April, 1831, as a Whig-Liberal with a dedication to Benthamite reforms. In his first years in Parliament he spoke in defence of the Reform Bill of 1831 and in favour of the immediate abolition of ‘negro apprenticeship’ in 1838. Bulwer-Lytton lost his seat in 1841 but returned as the Conservative member for Hertfordshire in 1852 (due, probably, to his inheritance of property and his growing friendship with Benjamin Disraeli) and remained moderately active until his elevation to the peerage in 1866, having served as Colonial Secretary from 1858-1859. He was elected in 1856 and in 1858 as Lord Rector of Glasgow, the only Englishman to have been so honoured twice. In 1870 he accepted the Order of St. Michael and St. George following the death of Lord Derby, and was awarded an honorary L.L.D. from both Cambridge and Oxford Universities. Bulwer-Lytton died at Torquay on 18 January, 1873, aged 69 years, and was buried in Westminster Abbey near the Poets’ Corner (though he appears, interestingly, to have desired to be buried in unconsecrated ground).

64 Bulwer-Lytton’s *England and the English* (2 vols., Richard Bentley, London, 1833) is, according to Wolff (*Strange Stories*, 146), ‘what we would now call sociology’.

65 The term ‘metaphysical’ is here employed in the same way as defined by Edwin M. Eigner in *The Metaphysical Novel in England and America; Dickens, Bulwer, Hawthorne, Melville*, University of California Press, London, 1978, 2-7.

66 Ibid., 70ff.
Of all of Bulwer-Lytton’s works, the occult novels were the author’s favourite.\textsuperscript{67} Exhibiting a profound fascination with all manner of esoteric leitmotifs, Bulwer-Lytton’s first purely occult novel, \textit{Zanoni}, appeared in 1842. That the last novel to be published within the author’s lifetime, \textit{The Coming Race} of 1871, also contained esoteric \textit{topoi} is testament to his lifelong interest in the arcana of Hermeticism and Rosicrucianism. It has been customary for commentators to ignore or demean this aspect of his \textit{oeuvre} or to classify it as an aberration in his otherwise sound corpus; at best, Bulwer-Lytton’s occultism has been interpreted as symptomatic of his dandified temperament.\textsuperscript{68} A detailed study of the entirety of Bulwer-Lytton’s occult fiction remains to be written but an examination of the Rosicrucian novel, \textit{Zanoni}, might help to explain the novel’s extraordinary currency in modern occultism and exactly why it is that the notoriously critical Blavatsky considered Bulwer-Lytton to be especially authoritative:

[Bulwer-Lytton is] one whose memory will ever be dear and sacred to the heart of every true Theosophist ... one who ranked higher than any other in the small number of genuine mystical writers, for he knew what he was talking about, which is more than can be said of other writers in this department of literature.\textsuperscript{69}

The introduction to \textit{Zanoni} describes the meeting in a Covent Garden book store between a young man, eager to discover the Rosicrucian secrets, and an elderly painter

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Escott, \textit{Edward Bulwer}, 86.
\item The critic W. E. Aytoun parodied Bulwer-Lytton’s occult literature thus:
  Yes, I am he who on the Novel shed
  Obscure philosophy’s enchanting light,
  Until the public, ‘wildered as they read,
  Believed they saw that which was not in sight.
  Of course, ‘twas not for me to put them right
\item Blavatsky, \textit{Collected Writings}, vol. II, 141-142.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
who appears to the young narrator to be a member of that 'August Fraternity'.\footnote{E. Bulwer-Lytton, \textit{Zanoni}, 2 vols., Lippincourt, Philadelphia, 1867: quote in vol. I, xi. The identification of the book store's owner as 'old D-' is certainly an \textit{homage} to John Denley (1764-1842) whose premises were to be found on Catherine Street, Covent Garden. It is believed that Denley supplied Francis Barrett with many of the materials which the latter assembled in his \textit{The Magus} of 1801: see Francis X. King, \textit{The Flying Sorcerer: Being the magical and aeronautical adventures of Francis Barrett, author of 'The Magus'}, Mandrake, Oxford, 1992, 20; Timothy d'Arch Smith, \textit{The Books of the Beast}, Crucible, n.p., 1987, 89-97. See also Francis Barrett, \textit{The Magus, or the Celestial Intelligencer: Being a Complete System of Occult Philosophy}, University Books, New York, 1967.}

After a short acquaintance, spent discussing the 'Greek' \textit{versus} the 'Dutch' schools of painting, the four levels of divine madness outlined in Plato's \textit{Phaedrus}, and the philosophies of the Pythagoreans and Neoplatonists, the elderly man dies and leaves to his young friend the manuscript of a very long book, completely encoded in a cipher.\footnote{The \textit{topos} of the mysterious book, which, when 'opened' promises the secrets of the universe, is a standard of esotericism. Most notably employed in certain Islamic esotericisms (and thus to be see in such works as the \textit{Emerald Tablet}), it became a staple of Rosicrucianism, with Rosenkreutz himself having been instructed for a year from a mysterious tome, 'M'. For a discussion of the device see Faivre, \textit{Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition}, 172, 185. The cipher of \textit{Zanoni} is similar in type to those contained within Trithemius' \textit{Polygraphie et universelle Ecriture Cabalistique}, traduit par Gabriel de Collange (Paris, 1561) and also to John Dee's Enochian alphabet, examples of both of which were available to Bulwer-Lytton in the British Library.}

After two years of concerted effort at translation, the narrator had succeeded only in 'the insertion of a few desultory chapters, in a periodical'.\footnote{Bulwer-Lytton, \textit{Zanoni}, vol. I, xxi.} Soon afterwards, he discovers that the manuscript is in fact comprised of two separate works, one an expansion of the other, so he goes to work on transcribing the second, longer work - which ultimately becomes the text of \textit{Zanoni}.

In introducing his novel in this fashion, Bulwer-Lytton has succeeded in establishing his philosophical framework and in indicating a number of his early objectives. In the first place, \textit{Zanoni} is placed squarely within the tradition of the metaphysical novel for, as Eigner has suggested, the location of an allegorical (or, in this case, occult) tale within the parameters of a realistic and temporally-specific story, reconciles the two and creates a form of literary transcendence.\footnote{Eigner, \textit{The Metaphysical Novel}, 226.} Bulwer-Lytton has allied this literary device with his thematic structure by means of a discussion of the conceptual interchange between the Real and the Ideal; he suggests that in art, as well as in literature, a demarcation must be drawn between 'the imitation of actual life [the
“Dutch” school] and the exaltation of Nature into the Ideal [the “Greek” school’]. 74
There can be little doubt as to which Bulwer-Lytton favours for, according to his lofty
concept of art, the great writer must never descend to ‘a passion that is false or a
personage who is real’. 75

By embedding his occult tale in the mundane world, Bulwer-Lytton also overcame a
number of pragmatic authorial difficulties. He had originally published a synopsis of
Zanoni as a novella entitled Zicci in the Monthly Chronicle in 1838. 76 The existence
of two encoded manuscripts thus explains to the reader the reason for the overlap of
characters and situations within both Zanoni and Zicci. It also encourages the
identification of Bulwer-Lytton with the narrator and, by extension, with the
Rosicrucians. After all, the reader is informed, ‘[w]ho but a Rosicrucian could explain
the Rosicrucian mysteries!’ 77 Immediately, then, the novel is transported into the
mesocosmic space between fiction and non-fiction, and Bulwer-Lytton becomes the
sole link between the literary Rosicrucians which fill his tale and the real Rosicrucians
which, the reader presumes, suggested them.

Zanoni is divided into four parts, each of which reflects one of the four stages of
Divine Madness (mania) as elucidated by Socrates to Plato in the Phaedrus: the
musical/poetic (poetike’), the initiatory (telestike’), the prophetic (mantike’), and the
amatory (erotike’). 78 The first part of the book (poetike’), called ‘The Musician’,
introduces a violin virtuoso by the name of Pisano, and his daughter Viola, the diva of
the Neapolitan Opera. As Viola sings an aria from her father’s opera, she notices an
enchanting Adonian stranger in the audience who, she subsequently discovers, is a
traveller by the name of Zanoni, recently returned with a vast fortune from India. The
reader is then introduced to a number of Zanoni’s attributes, each of which recalls the
traditional powers popularly ascribed to the Rosicrucian (and, later, to the
Theosophical Master): Zanoni appears to have lived for millennia (vol. 1, p.57); he can

75 Bulwer-Lytton, Zanoni, vol. 1, xii.
76 Ibid, xiv.
78 Bulwer-Lytton, Zanoni, vol. 1, xiii.
79 This order is taken from Thomas Taylor’s 1820 translation of, and commentary upon, Iamblichus’ On the Mysteries, which Robert Lee Wolff has demonstrated was probably that employed by Bulwer-Lytton: see Wolff, Strange Stories, 161.

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cure illness (p.73); he is a noted herbalist and naturalist (p.111); he dresses simply (p.115); he is celibate (p.126); he speaks all languages (p.140); he mysteriously raises the moral standards of those who surround him (p.141); he cannot be poisoned (p.275); and he can remain invisible to others’ eyes (vol.2; p.32).

Zanoni realises that Viola loves him and that to return her love may involve the loss of his powers: ‘[a]s a calamity, I shun what to man seems the fairest fate - the love of the daughters of earth’. To resolve his dilemma, Zanoni visits the only other extant member of his Fraternity, Mejnour. Mejnour differs from Zanoni in that he achieved his immortality in old age and has become an ‘austere and remorseless Hierophant’ who cares little for humanity. (The two immortals are hereafter made to represent many polar opposites: Age and Youth, Science and Art, the Actual and the Ideal). The two immortals discuss the impending calamity for mankind which is looming in the shape of the French Revolution, and Mejnour prophesies danger for Zanoni if he involves himself in the affairs of human society. Zanoni concurs:

Methinks I behold a ghastly limit to the wondrous existence I have held - methinks that, after ages of the Ideal Life, I see my course merge into the most stormy whirlpool of the Real.\(^\text{51}\)

Zanoni then travels to Paris in order to attend a soiree at which Condorcet (1743-1794), Gillaume de Malsherbes, Chamfort (c.1741-1794), Jean Bailly (1736-1793), Jacques Cazotte (1719-1792), and Jean de la Harpe (d.1803) are all to be present. Cazotte, a pupil of Martinès de Pasqually, recognises Zanoni from past Kabbalistic ceremonies, and is encouraged by him to divine the futures of the other guests. Cazotte then prophesies that the majority (including himself) will die on the scaffold of

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\(^{77}\) Bulwer-Lytton, \textit{Zanoni}, vol. 1, 126.  
\(^{80}\) Ibid., 217.  
\(^{51}\) Ibid., 218.  
\(^{82}\) This meeting, and the predictions made therein, is documented in La Harpe’s memoirs and is said to have taken place in 1788 (naturally without the presence of the fictional Zanoni). The prophecies regained popularity with the surge of interest in Magnetism in the 1820s and 1830s, and Spiritualism in the 1850s and 1860s, for which see Wolff, \textit{Strange Stories}, 345n10. Eliphas Lévi believed that the reason that all present died (with the exception of La Harpe) was that they had ‘divulged or at least profaned the mysteries’: see McIntosh, \textit{Eliphas Lévi}, 34-36.
the French Revolution. This episode allows Bulwer-Lytton to comment upon the failed idealism of the *philosophes*, an idealism based upon a misplaced faith in the benevolence of human reason. The presence of Condorcet among the invited guests is not accidental, for more than any other he represents for Bulwer-Lytton the dangers of a philosophy based exclusively upon the Real; the reader is reminded that, 'Unpolluted by the Actual, the Ideal lives only with Art and Beauty'. In *Zanoni*, Condorcet states that, '[[l]ife, I grant, cannot be made eternal; but it may be prolonged almost indefinitely'. As noted supra, Condorcet's social program, as outlined in his *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* ('Outline of an Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind') of 1795, entailed the improvement of the natural environment, the inheritance of improved characteristics, and the advancement of medicine. While beneficent in intention, Bulwer-Lytton is indicating that social programs, underpinned by little or no emphasis on the improvement of the spirit of man, can lead only to 'murderers [who] will have no word but philosophy on their lips!'. Indeed, the author makes clear his position by employing an esoteric metaphor: the French Revolution is the end product of 'the

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83 The society founded by Martinès de Pasqually, the *Ordre des Chevaliers Élus Cohens de l'Univers*, was established in the early 1760s and is important for the study of *Zanoni* for two reasons. First, the 'Order of the Knights Elect Cohens of the Universe' appears to have been the first major modern non-Masonic Western esoteric fraternity (thus outside the aegis of Baron Hund's 'Strict Observance') to have propagated the concept of theurgic contact with invisible spirit masters (an example of whom was to appear in the form of 'Adon-Ai' in *Zanoni*). It should be added that the influence of Swedenborg, who was known to Pasqually, can be detected in the rituals of the group. Second, Pasquals' successor, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803), described by Bulwer-Lytton in *Zanoni* in saintly terms ('no man more beneficent, generous, pure and virtuous, that St Martin, adorned the last century': ibid., p.67) is undoubtedly the historical model for the Rosicrucian, Zanoni. 'Martinism', as established by Saint-Martin's latter-day disciple 'Papus' (Gerard Encausse, 1865-1916), is both an occult philosophy and a fraternity which exists in many countries to this day. In suggesting that the character of Zanoni was based upon the occult entrepreneur, the Comte de Saint-Germain, E. M. Butler was certainly mistaken, for Bulwer-Lytton held St. Germain in the same disregard as he did Cagliostro ('the quack': ibid., p. 57). See Butler, *The Myth of the Magus*, 267; J. M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies*, Paladin (Granada), St. Albans, Hertfordshire, 1974, 118-121.

84 Bulwer-Lytton, *Zanoni*, vol. 1, 83.
85 Ibid., 66. Bulwer-Lytton, in a footnote, directs his readers to consult 'Condorcet's posthumous work on the Progress of the Human Mind'. The language is very similar to that employed by Condorcet: 'Certainly man will not become immortal, but will not the interval between the first breath that he draws and the time when in the natural course of events, without disease or accident, he expires, increase indefinitely?': Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*, 200. For Condorcet see also supra ch. 27.
86 See in ibid., 158ff; see also Gruman, 'A History of Ideas about the Prolongation of Life', 85-89.
philosopher [who] will carry about with him, not the elixir, but the poison'.

Bulwer-Lytton is also making a none-too-subtle reference to the prolongevity theories of his friend William Godwin, the originator of the Rosicrucian fiction genre. According to Bulwer-Lytton, the two great prolongevity theorists of the eighteenth century, Condorcet and Godwin, were blinded by their impatience to alter the physical and social state of humanity without having first edified the spirit within. Neither the regeneration of individual social responsibility as advocated by Godwin, nor the fostering of collective consciousness as suggested by Condorcet, would ever be enough to extend the lifespan of humankind, as too many had so ‘prated of equality, and lisped of enlightenment’.

The second part of the story, the initiatory (telestikē), in which the soul ascends closer to its source by means of an enthusiasm for the mystical, begins with the introduction of an Englishman, Glyndon. Glyndon’s nationality and his artistic profession indicate that he is in fact the elderly man the narrator had met in the Covent Garden book store, and that the enciphered manuscript - which ‘becomes’ the text of Zanoni - is in reality the chronicle of his memoirs. (There is also good reason to interpret in the ancestry of Glyndon an implied link with Bulwer-Lytton, thereby compounding the latter’s claims to Rosicrucian initiation). Zanoni attempts to encourage a love to develop between Glyndon and Viola in order that he may remain aloof from earthly passions, but is thwarted by Glyndon’s eagerness to become a neophyte in Zanoni’s Fraternity:

I renounce love. I renounce happiness. Welcome solitude -
welcome despair; it they are the entrances to thy dark and sublime secret.

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88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., 63.
90 Zanoni describes to Glyndon the latter’s ‘forefather, who, in the revival of science, sought the secrets of Apollonius and Paracelsus’ (vol. 1, p. 198). Bulwer-Lytton’s seventeenth century ‘forefather’ was Dr. John Bulwer who wrote works on necromancy, the most memorable of which is Anthropo-Metamorphosis or Man Transformed, or the Artificial Changeling (1653).
As a postulant in the esoteric Fraternity, Glyndon is apprenticed to Mejnour and begins his training in a remote Italian castle. Unsurprisingly, the young novice is too eager for occult power and is ill-prepared to 'reduce Being as far as possible into Mind. The senses must be mortified and subdued - not the whisper of one passion heard'. Glyndon rashly enters Mejnour's inner sanctum and imbibes the forbidden elixir. The punishment for such a transgression is the appearance to Glyndon of the dreaded 'Dweller of the Threshold' (also called 'Shadow' or 'Guardian'), a hideous spectre - indeed, the manifestation of Glyndon's own fear and lust - whose task it is to pursue the wretched Glyndon all the days of his life.

Glyndon is dismissed from Mejnour's presence and is told by the sage, '[t]hou pantest for this Millenium - thou shalt behold it! Thou shalt be one of the agents of the era of Light and Reason'. This comment ushers in the third part of the novel, the prophetic (mantiké), which deals in major part with the French Revolution and culminates in the Terror. Zanoni has spent two idyllic years with his beloved Viola on an unspoiled island during which time the latter gave birth to their child. Even so, Zanoni, having descended from the Ideal into the Real, feels his powers ebb: 'I feel it - the earth grows upon my spirit'. The failed and bitter neophyte, Glyndon, subsequently encounters Viola in Venice and convinces her to flee with her child from Zanoni as she would from a sorcerer, and to escape to Paris. Divining that the lives of his wife and child may well be ransomed with his own, Zanoni follows.

The fourth phase of the soul's elevation - and thus of the novel - the amatory (erotiké), begins with Zanoni's desperate search for Viola. Encountering Glyndon on the streets of Paris, Zanoni first rescues him from the mob and then exorcises his 'Shadow'. In this, Bulwer-Lytton is indicating that the first stage of selfless love is forgiveness; the second, it would seem, is sacrifice. Zanoni soon discovers that Viola

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82 Ibid., vol. 2, 61.
83 Allen Christensen, in noting that the 'Dweller of the Threshold' refers to Glyndon as 'my mortal lover', suspects the former of being 'an outbreak of the collective human unconscious': Christensen, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 92-94. Adèle Gladwell suspects that 'Lytton's frequent use of the term "Shadow" prefigures its use as a psychological signifier for alter-ego or anti-social immoral self': Gladwell & Havoc, eds., Blood and Roses, 24.
85 Ibid., 90.
has been denounced by the ignorant atheistical artist Nicot (probably an unfavourable portrait of Jacques Louis David [1748-1825]), and is to go to the guillotine. The night before the scheduled execution, Zanoni bribes a gaoler and secretly enters the prison. There he spends a last night with Viola and their child and, as his lover sleeps, he takes her place in the tumbrel. At the moment of his execution, Zanoni is granted a Neoplatonic vision of the hosts of heaven ranked in a celestial hierarchy; the choir sings: ‘Welcome! O purified by sacrifice, and immortal only through the grave - this it is to die’. Here the reader is reminded of the injunction of Zanoni’s ‘superior’, the spirit Adon-Ai:

Thy courage has restored thy power ... Wiser now, in the moment when thou comprehendest Death, than when thy unfettered spirit learned the solemn mystery of Life; ... eternity ... commences from the grave’.  De death, it seems, provides the only possible redemption for the Rosicrucian. Zanoni’s real initiation - as opposed to the rites of his earthly Fraternity - comes as he rises successively through the spheres of inspiration as outlined by Plato. His ultimate realisation, that the Ideal and the Real can only be synthesised in heaven, convinces him that immortality is achievable only on the other side of the grave.

Zanoni’s glorious demise is deliberately juxtaposed by Bulwer-Lytton with that of Robespierre. The latter (‘vain seer, who wouldst make thyself the instrument of the Eternal’) is symptomatic in the author’s view of the degenerated ideal of the French Revolution: ‘knowledge and atheism are incompatible’. The identification of the failures of Robespierre and of Glyndon is an unmistakable subtext throughout; the impatience of Glyndon to partake of the elixir vitae, which led to his confrontation with the ‘Dweller of the Threshold’, is a metaphor for the impatience of the philosophes to accelerate radical social change, which itself bred the Terror. In fact the Reign of Terror is directly aligned with the horror of the ‘Dweller on the

\[^{86} \text{Wolff, } \textit{Strange Stories}, 178.\]
\[^{90} \text{Bulwer-Lytton, } \textit{Zanoni}, \text{ vol. 2, 311.}\]
\[^{86} \text{Ibid., 277.}\]
\[^{90} \text{Ibid., 270.}\]
\[^{90} \text{Ibid., 87. The rather cynical contrivance, } \textit{L’Etre Suprême}, \text{ is included in references in ibid. 183, 269.}\]

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Threshold':

Everywhere ... I see its dim shapelessness going before the men of blood, and marshalling their way ... its loathsome keeper has seized them as its prey.101

The identification of the failed revolutionary and the thwarted aspirant after occult power is reinforced in the description of Robespierre's ascension to the Barrière du Trône on the 10° Thermidor:

Around him they throng - they hoot - they execrate! their faces gleaming in the tossing torches! He, and not the starry Magian, the real Sorcerer! And round his last hours gather the Fiends he raised!102

When Zanoni was published, the critical reaction was vigorous and polarised. Thomas Carlyle credited the novel with being a 'liberating voice for much that lay dumb imprisoned in human souls'.103 The critic for the Athenaeum considered Zanoni to be filled with 'tinselled truisms [figuring] as new discoveries, and obscurity of meaning [passing] for elevation of thought'.104 By contrast, the reviewer for the Literary Gazette thought the work to be 'an effusion of genius'.105 Bulwer-Lytton believed that there was 'nothing like it in the language'106 and, with characteristic modesty, was to proclaim that Zanoni was 'the loftiest conception in English prose fiction'.107 He held no illusions, however, as to its popularity with the wider literary audience: 'Zanoni will be no favourite with that largest of all asses - the English public'.108

101 Ibid., 207-208. Also: 'Saturn hath devoured his children, and lives alone - in his true name of Moloch': in ibid., 176.
102 Ibid., 312.
103 In Wolff, Strange Stories, 202.
104 Campbell, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 117.
105 Wolff, Strange Stories, 205.
106 In ibid.
108 Ibid.
There can be little doubt that the responses to *Zanoni* have polarised over the self-evidently esoteric nature of the work: Blavatsky considered it ‘exquisite’. Certainly, scattered throughout the text are references to a number of occult luminaries; indeed, it could be argued that Bulwer-Lytton missed no opportunity to exhibit his erudition in such matters. It is important to remember, however, that he was writing within an established genre and that he employed the Rosicrucian ethos, as had the other exponents of the field, to make a much broader series of comments upon matters of a political, aesthetic, literary, epistemological, and philosophical nature.

The source of much of Bulwer-Lytton’s philosophical idiom surely lies with Hegel. He was fluent in German (having, significantly, translated the poems of Schiller), and an avid reader of German visionary literature, philosophy, and aesthetics. Hegel had called art ‘the sensuous appearance [Scheinen] of the Idea’ which is echoed by Zanoni’s suggestion that ‘painting [is] but the fixing into substance the Invisible’.

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110 The cast is extensive: (in no particular order) Averroes (1026-1098), Paracelsus, the Chaldeans, the Gymnosophists, the Abbé de Villars (1635-1673?), the *Comte de Gabalis*, the Pythagoreans, Apollonius of Tyana, Martines de Pasqualis, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, Cagliostro, Baptista Porta (Giambattista della Porta, c.1535-1615), Albertus Magnus, Agrippa, and, of course, Hermes.

111 It would be a mistake to interpret *Zanoni* as a metaphysical romance or *bildungsroman* with no political agenda; Bulwer-Lytton, a professional politician himself, exhibits acute political awareness throughout his *œuvre*, though not always in a consistent or entirely attractive way; nb., eg., his portrayal of the ‘parasitic’ Jew: see Edgar Rosenberg, *From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction*, Peter Owen, London, 1961, 138-161. Marie Roberts has established intriguing sympathies between the Rosicrucian hero and Marx’s four stages of economic and social alienation. First, the worker is isolated from the product of his labour, which now exists outside of him (the ‘Dweller of the Threshold’, the product of Glyndon’s ill-fated magical labours, cowers and controls its creator). Second, humanity is estranged from nature (Zanoni’s fifty centuries have dissipated any joy he found in nature. He is an example of ‘the weary Science that, traversing the secrets of creation, comes at last to death for their solution’: *Zanoni*, vol. 2, 305). Third, humans are sundered from their own species (the austere Prospero-like hierophant, Mejnour, is ‘a Human Book, insensate to the precepts it announces’ in ibid., 85). Fourth, the individual becomes alienated from himself (Zanoni’s inability to discover cogent sympathies with others means that he can never fully appreciate the essence of his own nature). In considering Bulwer-Lytton’s portrayal of the Rosicrucian’s predicament, one is reminded of Marx’s comment that ‘[a] being which does not have its nature outside itself is not a natural being, and plays no part in the system of nature’: Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. M. Milligan, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, 64.

112 Christensen, *Edward Bulwer-Lytton*, 113-114. It might be noted that Bulwer-Lytton quoted from Schiller’s *Ideen und das Leben in Zanoni*, vol. 2, 166. Surely the image of the blue flower to be found in *Zanoni* is a reference to the paradigmatic icon of Romanticism found in the posthumously published *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* of 1802 by Novalis (Baron Friedrich Leopold von Hardenberg, 1772-1801).


The other aspect of Hegelian metaphysical aesthetics which appealed to Bulwer-Lytton was the notion of dialectical synthesis. Bulwer-Lytton interpreted the Rosicrucian quest for the Elixir of Life and the Philosopher’s Stone as metaphors for the yearning to fix the Ideal within the parameters of the Real. Such a Hegelian concentration on integration [Aufhebung], as personified in the ‘mortal Immortal’ Zanoni, is - as Blavatsky consistently claimed - a typological prefigurement of her own Masters.

Bulwer-Lytton’s Zanoni is the culmination of the nineteenth-century genre of the English Rosicrucian novel in so far as it examines in greatest detail the semiotics of Rosicrucianism. Nevertheless, for all of its literary sophistication and esoteric erudition, the novel retains its place of preeminence in the occult imaginal because of the suspicion - actively fostered by its author - that the work is not a fictional account of a mythical fraternity, but an accurate depiction of a real brotherhood of immortals. As Blavatsky herself noted:

[Bulwer-Lytton’s] words sound more like the faithful echo of memory than the exuberant outflow of mere imagination ... one whom many with reason believed to know more than he was prepared to admit in the face of an incredulous public.

To appreciate the extraordinary currency of the notion that Bulwer-Lytton was a genuine Rosicrucian, it is necessary to examine briefly the depth of the author’s active involvement with nineteenth century occultism. The standard argumentum e silentio, as proposed by many of his biographers, notably his grandson Victor, will not suffice:

As this was a secret society, it is not surprising that among Bulwer’s papers there should be no documents which throw any light on his

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115 It is intriguing to consider that Hegel himself used the iconography of the Rosy Cross to express this dialectic: both the preface to the Philosophy of Right and the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion employ the rose and the cross as signifiers of the Ideal and the Real. Marie Roberts suggests that these concepts always retain a fluidity in Hegelian philosophy as exhibited by his term ‘Rosenkreuzerei, oder ... Kreuzroserei’: Roberts, Gothic Immortals, 164-166; id., “Rosicrucianism or Cross-rosism” in Hegel’s Phenomenology’ in History of European Ideas 6:1, 1985, 99-100. It is important to note that Hegel was employed at the Tübinger Stift in Tübingen just as Andreae had been; it can be assumed that Rosicrucianism was still much in discussion in the university town. See also T. Pinkard, Hegel’s Dialectic: The Explanation of a Possibility, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1988, 26-41.


connection with it, nor any mention of it in his correspondence.\textsuperscript{118}

Hargrave Jennings, the author of \textit{The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries} (1870), appealed to Bulwer-Lytton for patronage, and received from the latter a typically elliptical and tantalising response:\textsuperscript{119}

There are reasons why I cannot enter the subject of the ‘Rosicrucian Brotherhood’, a society still existing, but not under any name by which it can be recognised by those without its pale. But you have with much learning and much acuteness traced its connection with early and symbolical religions, and no better book upon such a theme has been written, or indeed, could be written, unless a member of the Fraternity were to break the vow which enjoins them to secrecy.\textsuperscript{120}

It is known that Bulwer-Lytton was profoundly interested in Spiritualism, Mesmerism, phrenology, and clairvoyance, though his skepticism about the claims of the great majority of the proponents of these fields is well documented.\textsuperscript{121} He wrote: ‘I believe that ... whatever they [the ‘spirits’] be, they serve no useful purpose nor will they conduce to any higher knowledge. They may be very injurious to ordinary understandings and very disappointing to the highest’.\textsuperscript{122} It appears that Bulwer-Lytton was particularly concerned that the guides of Spiritualism appeared to cast doubt upon post-mortem progressivism:

They profess to be spirits of the dead, but I much doubt, supposing they are spirits at all, whether they are not rather brownies or fairies ... [for] the wonder is that they go so far and no farther. To judge by them, even the highest departed spirits discovered seem to have

\textsuperscript{118} V. A. Lytton, \textit{The Life of Edward Bulwer}, vol. 1, 41.

\textsuperscript{119} A full transcription of Jennings’ letter is included in Godwin, \textit{The Theosophical Enlightenment}, 383-385.

\textsuperscript{120} Quoted in Roberts, \textit{Gothic Immortals}, 157-158. If Bulwer-Lytton was telling the truth about his opinion of Jennings’ book, this bodes poorly for the possibility that Bulwer-Lytton was a frater, for \textit{The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries}, as noted supra, is highly mannered and contains little that would relate it to the Fraternity of the manifestoes.

\textsuperscript{121} Robert Lee Wolff documents some of the many mediumistic experiments at which Bulwer-Lytton was present in his \textit{Strange Stories}, 233-264. That supporters of these occultisms were eager to enlist Bulwer-Lytton’s support is obvious: ‘Nothing in Home’s career rankled longer than the elusiveness of this particular quarry’ (see J. Burton, \textit{Heyday of a Wizard: Daniel Home the Medium}, George Harrap & Co., London, 1948, 70-71).

\textsuperscript{122} E. Bulwer-Lytton to Lady Combermere, 1854, in Wolff, \textit{Strange Stories}, 249.
made no visible progress - to be as uncertain and contradicting as ourselves or more so.\textsuperscript{123}

Bulwer-Lytton's misgivings about Spiritualism did not inhibit his amused participation in séances, however, and a number of such gatherings were conducted in his house on Park Lane and at Knebworth by the famous medium Daniel Douglas Home.\textsuperscript{124}

A survey of the visitors to Knebworth during Bulwer-Lytton's Baronage, if such records were available \textit{in toto}, would include the names of a number of the more famous occult dignitaries of the mid-nineteenth century. It is known that Eliphas Lévi became acquainted with Bulwer-Lytton during the former's first visit to England in 1854, and that he was later invited as a guest to Knebworth in 1861.\textsuperscript{125} During his first stay in London, described in his \textit{Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie} of 1856, Lévi was said to have engaged in necromantic experiments designed to raise the spirit of Apollonius of Tyana at the behest of a young female acquaintance of 'a friend of Sir B--- L---'.\textsuperscript{126} It would appear that the mention of Bulwer-Lytton's name, in this instance at least, had become something of an occult calling card. Lévi was accompanied on his second visit to Knebworth by another of Bulwer-Lytton's friends, the alchemist Count Alexander [Ksawery?] Branicki (1814?-1879?), who maintained his laboratory in the house of Mme. de Balzac, the Château de Beauregard, at

\textsuperscript{123} An undated letter of E. Bulwer-Lytton in ibid., 248.

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 244-260; Burton, \textit{Heyday of a Wizard}, 70-71. Among those who attended séances with Bulwer-Lytton and Home was Sir William Crookes. Crookes, an active member of the Society for Psychical Research and a sometime alumnus of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, was in later life an avid Theosophist. It might be remembered that he was very supportive of Leadbeater's clairvoyant observations and supplied him and Besant with elements to examine for their 'Occult Chemistry' investigations.


\textsuperscript{126} Lévi, \textit{Transcendental Magic}, 114. There is a popular tradition in occult historiography that Lévi repeated his evocation on two subsequent occasions, accompanied, at one time, by Bulwer-Lytton. The evocation is said to have occurred in 1861 on the roof of a store, the \textit{Pantheon} (!), on Regent Street in London: cf., eg., McIntosh, \textit{Eliphas Lévi}, 104; Godwin, \textit{The Theosophical Enlightenment}, 215; Wolff, \textit{Strange Stories, passim}. The present author has been unable to verify this claim.
The only Rosicrucian order of which evidence of Bulwer-Lytton’s involvement can be incontrovertibly established is that of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia. Formed in 1866 by Robert Wentworth Little (1839-1878), a Freemasonic entrepreneur par excellence, the ‘S. R. I. A.’ was - and remains - predominantly a Rosicrucian study group open for membership to Master Masons. It is true that Bulwer-Lytton was elected to the position of Grand Patron honoris causa on 14 July, 1870. Unfortunately for the Masonic Rosicrucians, he seems not to have been informed of his elevation until December, 1872, at which time he wrote a letter of complaint to a member of the organisation. Bulwer-Lytton died only a month later, on 18 January, 1873, so his tenure was both brief and involuntary - though this has not eradicated the
What can be stated with certainty is that Bulwer-Lytton enjoyed immensely the mythopoeia which he was able to generate by his occult writings, and the mystique which surrounded both his erudition in such matters and his acquaintance with some of its brighter apologists. There can be little doubt that he would have enjoyed nothing more than to have discovered real ambassadors from the ‘August Fraternity’ of Rosicrucians, convinced, as he was, of human perfectibilism. Madame Home said of Bulwer-Lytton that he ‘was half persuaded of the possibility of youth being thus renewed, and had a half-hope that he might one day revive his own’.  

The claims made by occultists about Bulwer-Lytton’s Rosicrucian initiatory status are legion and extraordinary. An American twentieth century Rosicrucian, Reuben Swinburne Clymer (1878-1966), said of Bulwer-Lytton that he was the ‘Highest Arcane Initiate; Member of the Great or World Council; Order of the Rose, L’Ordre du Lis, Count de L., Hierophant of the World, Fraternitae Rosae Crucis’. Another, Pascal Beverly Randolph, claimed that Bulwer-Lytton had presided over his initiation and that of Eliphas Lévi at the ‘Supreme Grand Dome’ of Rosicrucianism in Paris. It might also be remembered that Emma Hardinge Britten included Bulwer-Lytton among the members of the mysterious ‘Orphic Circle’. The American

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131 James Campbell, whose Edward Bulwer-Lytton is considered to be the prime modern criticism of Bulwer-Lytton’s novels (and which is based upon Campbell’s own doctoral dissertation), has stated: He [Bulwer-Lytton] especially relished the notoriety of being a member of the revived Rosicrucian order in which he rose to the high office of grand patron sometime in the early 1850’s (Campbell, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 110).


134 Godwin has suggested that ‘[I]t is probable that a secret magical group did exist ... and Bulwer-Lytton took part in it’: Godwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment, 212. See also id., ‘The Hidden hand, Part II: The Brotherhood of Light’, 66-68.
leaders of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor took the names ‘Zanoni’, ‘Mejnour’, and ‘Glyndon’ as pseudonyms in their publications. It should not be forgotten, of course, that Leadbeater claimed a personal acquaintance with Bulwer-Lytton (and sought Lady Emily Lutyens’ favour in part because she was the novelist’s granddaughter). A complete list of Bulwer-Lytton’s putative occult laurels would fill many pages, but Koot Hoomi’s comments bear repeating:

The greatest as well as most promising of such schools in Europe, the last attempt in this direction, - failed most signally some 20 years ago in London. It was the secret school for the practical teaching of magick, founded under the name of a club, by a dozen enthusiasts under the leadership of Lord Lytton’s father [i.e., Bulwer-Lytton]. He had collected together for the purpose the most ardent and enterprising as well as some of the most advanced scholars in mesmerism and ‘ceremonial magick’, such as Eliphas Levi, Reganozzi, and the Copt Zergvan Bey. And yet in the pestilent London atmosphere the ‘Club’ came to an untimely end. I visited it about half a dozen times.

Bulwer-Lytton’s literary inventions have fared no differently. Alice Bailey devoted two chapters of her posthumously published *Glamour: A World Problem* (1950) to the occult nature of ‘The Dweller on [sic] the Threshold’. *Zanoni*, both as novel and character, has provided the ideational foundation for a number of self-described Rosicrucian fraternities, the most celebrated being the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The central tenet of the novel - that it is not really a work of fiction at all, but enciphered memoirs of real events - is echoed in the putated origins of the Golden Dawn itself. William Wynn Westcott claimed to have come into possession of an

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137 Tillett, *The Elder Brother*, 148, 303.
138 *The Mahatma Letters*, 1993 ed., (Letter No. 11: December, 1880) 31. Interestingly, Koot Hoomi seems to suggest that Bulwer-Lytton’s ‘Club’ was established by the Masters, which might well be an example of the ‘provocation theory’ applied beyond Spiritualism: see supra ch. 6.
139 Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem*, Lucis Publishing Co., New York, 1982, 90-93, 152-160. As it happens the ‘Dweller of [or on] the Threshold’ has inspired a small fictional literature of its own: cf., eg., R. Hitchens, *The Dweller on the Threshold*, Methuen, London, 1911. It might also be noted that its historical significance to esotericism was understood by the luminary Van Morrison, who employed it as the title of a song (and has used it in lyrics elsewhere).
enciphered manuscript which, when rendered into English, revealed embryonic notes for five hitherto unknown Rosicrucian rituals.\textsuperscript{140} Samuel Liddell Mathers, the gifted occult impresario at the centre of the Golden Dawn, was himself so enamoured of the novel that his wife began to call him ‘Zan’.\textsuperscript{141} Mathers believed wholeheartedly in the veracity of Lytton’s novel, and explained Zanoni’s powers in the unmistakable occultist idiom particular to the Order:

Zanoni ... overcame the effects of the poisoned wine of the Prince di D---- as follows. In the first place, he changed his breath to the right nostril, and threw an envelope of Akasa Tattwa over his antagonist ... In the latter case he brought the Water, Apas, Tattwa into course, directed it with the full force of his trained will towards the poisoned wine, and consequently the burning heat of the poison was counteracted.\textsuperscript{142}

References to Zanoni in the works of the adepti of the Golden Dawn (who were often


Christopher Bamford, following Rafal Prinke, suggests that Lytton may have authored the Golden Dawn cipher manuscript himself: see Christopher Bamford, 'Introduction' in C. G. Harrison, The Transcendental Universe, Lindisfarne, Hudson, New York, 1993, 38. This can probably be discounted due to the fact that the text, when translated, contains the word ‘occultism’ which first appeared in something approaching its modern usage in 1842 in Richard de Radonvillier’s Dictionnaire des mots nouveaux, and seems not to have appeared in English until the publication of Blavatsky’s Isis Unveiled in 1877. It should be noted, however, that the term was popularised by Lévi as occultisme, and could have been mediated to Bulwer-Lytton via that source.

\textsuperscript{141} Colquhoun, Sword of Wisdom, 51. Mathers also refers to Zanoni in an introduction to his translation of the Abramelin manuscript from the Arsenal: The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin [sic], the Mage; As Delivered by Abraham the Jew Unto His Son Lamech, trans: S. L. MacGregor-Mathers, de Laurence, Chicago, 1948, p. xvi. Mina Mathers (1865-1928), the third highest ranking initiate of the Golden Dawn in 1900, was the sister of the Nobellaureate, Henri Louis Bergson (1859-1935). Bergson’s notion of ‘Vitalism’ (or ‘Creative Evolution’) has occasional echoes in esoteric constructs, and deserves further research. Mina Mathers also employed the model of Zanoni in her teaching materials: e.g., Flying Roll No. XXI: Know Thyself in Francis King, ed., Astral Projection, Ritual Magic and Alchemy, Neville Spearman, London, 1971, 142.

also Theosophists) are legion. Indeed, it could be argued that the Order - in reality something akin to a Rosicrucian academy - was specifically designed to *produce* Zanonis.

Of all of Bulwer-Lytton’s admirers, none was as closely in concert with the author's intent as was Blavatsky. An avid reader of Bulwer-Lytton’s novels from her youth, she understood perfectly well that they both were involved in what can only be termed a fraternal enterprise: the strategic creation of new mythologies (from traditional esoteric templates) which might parry with the materialist philosophies of a Western world committed to the reducibility of mystery. To this end, Bulwer-Lytton employed the motif of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood as a semiotically-rich literary device - a lesson he had learned through a close study of the genre of Rosicrucian fiction. Throughout Zanoni’s thousands of years of life, during which he learned all of the secrets of nature (thus personifying, as the ultimate Rosicrucian ‘magico-scientist’, the new rationalist epistemologies of the nineteenth century), he never appreciated the most significant lesson of all: *progress cannot be inhibited.* To facilitate the reader’s appreciation of this central theme, Bulwer-Lytton employed an *ascensus/descensus* framework (so beloved by Blavatsky); it is only when Zanoni

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143 Even the Golden Dawn alumnus and self-styled ‘Mega Therion 666’, Aleister Crowley, exhibits direct borrowings from Bulwer-Lytton in his many works. Crowley included Zanoni at the top of his recommended reading list of fictional works for initiates of his own Order, the *Argenteum Astrum*: Aleister Crowley, ‘Curriculum of A.: A.:’ in A. Crowley, ed., *The Equinox: The Official Organ of the A.: A.:*, Weiser, New York, 1974, 23. It is rather telling that Crowley’s diary, which includes a number of references to Bulwer-Lytton, contains the following entry:

‘The word in my Kamma work (in Burma) was *Augoeides*, (a subsequent entry implies that the word was ‘given’ me directly from the unseen world’) (Aleister Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography*, ed. John Symonds & Kenneth Grant, Jonathan Cape, London, 1969, 526).

The concept of the *Augoeides* (or ‘indwelling divine spirit’), of Pythagorean ancestry, had been reintroduced to Western esotericism via the works of Cornelius Agrippa and had been brought to the attention of Blavatsky and others by a reference in *Zanoni*. It follows that the *Augoeides* seems likely to have been suggested to Crowley by Bulwer-Lytton’s novel.

144 In this context it is valuable to recall Liljegren’s theory that Blavatsky’s account of her first meeting with Morya (in Ramsgate, 1851) might have been, rather, an encounter with the dashing Bulwer-Lytton, then at the height of his literary fame. The theory is certainly not impossible, but remains implausible. Nevertheless, it speaks to the effect which Bulwer-Lytton exerted on the mind of the impressionable young occultist. See *supra* ch. 4.

descends into the Real (by prioritising love over power, and altruistic self-sacrifice over egocentric immortality) that he may ascend to the Ideal/divine (through his post-mortem acceptance into a Neoplatonistic celestial hierarchy). Unlike the glorious ascent of Zanoni, Glyndon/Robespierre, representing the failure of Positivist-materialist rationalism to create anything other than the idealism-devouring ‘Dweller of the Threshold’/Terror, descends to atheistical anarchy, materialism - and oblivion.

Underscoring Bulwer-Lytton’s figurations is an obvious Gnostico-Hermetic template of emanationism and reintegration. Crucially, he adopted the Hermetic god-man motif as the focal means to represent the spiritual and physical development of humanity on its path toward divinisation. Zanoni is thus Bulwer-Lytton’s answer to the postmortem entities of Spiritualism which, the author noted, ‘seem to have made no visible progress’. In fact, Zanoni is Bulwer-Lytton’s archetype of physical, spiritual, and moral perfectibilism. That he thus embodies the Ideal is undeniable; more important, still, is that the author - through myriad hints and suggestions - presented him as being Real as well. It could be argued, then, that Zanoni is the ultimate Hegelian synthesis: incarnate Aufhebung.

It is precisely this aspect of Bulwer-Lytton’s depiction of Zanoni which provided Blavatsky with an ideational reference point for the presentation of her own Masters. The perichoresis between the Ideal and the Real, always a distinguishing feature of the

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146 This ascent/descent leitmotif is, of course, made explicit by Bulwer-Lytton’s structural reliance on Plato’s quaternary modelling of mania.

147 Again, Bulwer-Lytton underscored his theme structurally; the headings of the book’s seven parts reflect Glyndon’s descent: (1) The Musician; (2) Art, Love and Wonder; (3) Theurgia; (4) The Dweller of the Threshold; (5) The Effects of the Elixir; (6) Superstition Deserting Faith; (7) The Reign of Terror. See also Martin, Orthodox Heresy, 71.

148 Mejnour describes the race of proto-Masters that he hopes to produce thus:

a race that may proceed, in their deathless destinies, from stage to stage of celestial glory, and rank at last amongst the nearest ministrants and agents gathered round the Throne of Thrones (Bulwer-Lytton, Zanoni, vol. 1, 266).

149 See supra p. 676.

150 Bulwer-Lytton clearly situates Zanoni (and, to a lesser degree, Mejnour) at the interslice between the human and the divine, earth and heaven, creature and creator. Zanoni is part of the ‘secret and solemn race that fills up the interval in creation between mankind and the children of the empyreal’: Bulwer-Lytton, Zanoni, vol. 1, 265.

151 Zanoni is filled with temptations for the mythopoeically-minded, such as Blavatsky:

Every desire in human hearts is but a glimpse of things that exist, alike distant and divine (in ibid., 287).
Rosicrucian novel, had reached something of a culmination in *Zanoni* where, instead of the Rosicrucian fraternity operating in ‘metaphysical space’, it had now moved into ontological territory, and thus cast an entirely new - and exciting - light on the manifestoes and their continuators. Concomitant with Bulwer-Lytton’s presentation of the Brotherhood as *fact* was the altered hermeneutic which such a shift encouraged; namely, that the ‘real’ Rosicrucians could henceforth be brought to bear upon the specific discourses of nineteenth century modernity. So it was that, in Blavatsky’s hands, her redaction of Bulwer-Lytton’s ‘August Fraternity’ - the trans-Himalayan Brotherhood - could become the agents of evolutionism and the vocal opponents of
Positivism, materialism, and ‘scientism’.

From Bulwer-Lytton, Blavatsky learned that age-old esoteric motifs could be harnessed quite comfortably with such mandatory paradigms of her own century as progressivism. Yet she was also fully aware that the very notion of progressivism was itself born of the skeptical rationalism of the Enlightenment, and thus if she intended to portray a class of initiates as possessors of supranormal powers and wisdom she would likely have to produce them at some point. To this end she studied Zanoni.

Bulwer-Lytton’s employment of esoteric motifs which, when situated on the cusp of the factual, become useful agents to counter modern discourse is evident also in the last of his novels published during his lifetime, The Coming Race (1871). Evidently, the author’s desire was to satirise the Darwinian proposition and to counter the likelihood that ‘a coming race is destined to supplant our own’ (F. J. H. Darton, ‘Introduction’ in E. Bulwer-Lytton, The Coming Race and The Haunted and the Haunters, Oxford University Press, London, 1928, xii; it is no coincidence that Bulwer-Lytton dedicated the book to Max Müller). The novel centres upon the ‘Vril-Ya’, a technologically-advanced subterranean super-race, possessed of a powerful electromagnetic force called ‘Vril’. The ‘Vril-Ya’ intend ultimately to ‘return to the upper world, and supplant all the inferior races now existing therein’; E. Bulwer-Lytton, VRIL: The Power of the Coming Race, Rudolf Steiner Publications, Blauvelt, New York, 1972, 106.

Although a humorous tone can be detected throughout (‘Humble yourselves my descendants; the father of your race was a ... tadpole’: ibid., 4), the work was taken as something approaching a factual treatise by occultists. Blavatsky considered ‘Vril’ to be ‘a true definition’ of (Levi’s?) ‘kabbalistic astral light’: Blavatsky, Isis Unveiled, vol. 1, 126. Indeed, Blavatsky incorporated the novel into her macrohistory:

Allow to ever-progressing nature, to the great law of the ‘survival of the fittest’, one step beyond Mr. Wallace’s deductions, and we have in future the possibility - nay, the assurance of a race, which, like the Vril-ya of Bulwer-Lytton’s Coming Race, will be but one remove from the primitive ‘Sons of God’ (in ibid., 296).

The remarkable currency of Bulwer-Lytton’s occult vernacular can be inferred from the inordinate space given to the putated existence of a Nazi occult movement, the Wahrheitgesellschaft (otherwise ‘The Vril Society’), in mostly unscholarly occult historiographies. Cf., eg., Gerald Suster, Hitler and the Age of Horus, Sphere, London, 1981 (in which an entire chapter is devoted to the ‘Triumph of the Vril’); Toyne Newton, The Demonic Connection: An Investigation into Satanism in England and the International Black Magic Conspiracy, Blandford Press, Poole, 1987, 122ff; J. H. Brennan, Occult Reich, Futura, Aylesbury, Bucks., 1974; Jean-Michel Angebert [Michel Bertrand & Jean Angelini], The Occult and the Third Reich, Macmillan, New York, 1974, passim. Typical is Dusty Sklar, Gods and Beasts: The Nazis and the Occult, Crowell Co., New York, 1977 in which the author states that Bulwer-Lytton was a Theosophist (in fact, he died two years prior to the inception of the Society). See also infra Appendix D. It should be stressed that such occult speculation, though undoubtedly in evidence in Nazi Germany, has provided far more fodder for latter-day conspiracy theorists than it ever did for the hierarchy of the Third Reich. For more intelligent accounts see Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and Their Influence on Nazi Ideology, I. B. Tauris & Co., London, 1992; Ellic Howe, Astrology and Psychological Warfare during World War II, Rider, London, 1972; Godwi, Arkos.

As a final comment on the breadth of Bulwer-Lytton’s influence, it is interesting that the popular beef extract ‘Bovril’, invented by John Lawson Johnston in 1887, was coined from a combination of bovis (Latin: ‘oxen’) and ‘Vril’: Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase & Fable, 15th ed., revised by Adrian Room, Cassell, London, 1996, 144-145.
closely because Bulwer-Lytton had been the first to have faced this particular dilemma, and had craftily overcome it by conducting playful Hermesian games. Zanoni was a Rosicrucian, but also pre-Rosicrucian; the book is a novel, but also a memoir; the author appears to have first-hand knowledge of the Rosicrucians, but is frustratingly vague about details; several real persons are presented as 'fiction' (Condorcet, inter alia), and some fictional characters are presented as 'real' (Zanoni, Mejnour, and Glyndon). This play of deliberate ambiguity was Bulwer-Lytton’s gift to Blavatsky, and she was to employ it very confidently indeed.

A Short Note concerning ‘Jack the Ripper’

As one final point of intersection between Bulwer-Lytton and Blavatsky, it might surprise some to learn that both have become somewhat important in the currently popular pastime of ‘Ripperology’. Blavatsky was apparently earmarked as a candidate by Aleister Crowley - a typically preposterous claim, but one which has entered the literature. Bulwer-Lytton has recently emerged as a seminal influence upon one of the major suspects, Robert Donston Stephenson (1841-?). Stephenson, better known under his pseudonym Roslyn D’Onston, was a sometime soldier, adventurer, and entrepreneur, who also professed a profound fascination with diabolism. Melvin Harris has presented as feasible a case for Stephenson’s guilt as any other, supported by biographical evidence, the opinions of those intimately involved with Stephenson, and a presumed diabolical motive.

153 ‘Ripperology’, while an unattractive neologism, is eminently preferable to its oft-quoted alternative: ‘Ripper Enthusiast’.

154 Cf., eg., Paul Begg, Martin Fido & Keith Skinner, The Jack the Ripper A to Z, Headline, London, 1992, 43. It might also be noted that the Queen’s Coroner for central London, William Wynn Westcott - perhaps better known for his Theosophical and Masonic pursuits - remains in the standard selection of suspects for no better reason than the infelicitous combination of his mundane occupation and his occult preoccupations: see in ibid., 475-477.

155 Melvin Harris, Jack the Ripper: The Bloody Truth, Columbus, London, 1987, 171-186. In an article on ‘African Magic’ in Lucifer, Stephenson (writing as ‘Tau-Triadelta’) noted that: [T]he necromancer must outrage and degrade human nature in every way possible. The very least of the crimes necessary for him (or her) to commit, to attain the powers sought, is actual magic, by which the human victim essential to the sacrifice is provided ... though the price is awful, horrible, unutterable, the power is real (‘Tau-Triadelta’ [Robert Donston Stephenson], ‘African Magic’ in Lucifer, VII:39, 15 November,1890, 232).

As with so many aspiring occultists, Stephenson's adulation for Bulwer-Lytton knew no bounds:

I read Lytton's *Zanoni* ... with great zest, but I am afraid with very little understanding, and longed excessively to know its author; little dreaming that I should one day be the pupil of the great Magist, Bulwer Lytton - the one man in modern times for whom all systems of ancient and modern magism and magic, white or black, held back no secrets.157

Stephenson claimed to have been introduced to Bulwer-Lytton by the novelist's son sometime around 1860, and to have gained an immediate rapport:

I suppose Sir Edward was attracted to me partly by my irrepressible hero-worship of which he was the object, and partly because he saw that I possessed a cool, logical brain, had iron nerve, and above all, was genuinely, terribly in earnest.158

In an article for the Spiritualist magazine *Borderland*, of April 1896, Stephenson (employing the cryptic pseudonym 'Tau-Triadelta') wrote of his initiation into Bulwer-Lytton's fraternity:

I entered, he was standing in the middle of the sacred pentagon [sic], which he had drawn on the floor with red chalk, and holding in his extended right arm the baguette, which was pointed towards me. Standing thus, he asked me if I had duly considered the matter and had decided to enter upon the course. I replied that my mind was made up. He then and there administered to me the oaths of the neophyte of the Hermetic lodge of Alexandria - the oaths of obedience and secrecy.159

Such a claim could easily be dismissed as yet another example of *ex post facto* romanticising except for a couple of salient details. In the first place, according to W. I

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157 Quoted in ibid., 93.
158 Harris, *Jack the Ripper: The Bloody Truth*, 171. It might be noted that Harris gives alternative dates for the meeting between Stephenson and Lytton junior (later the first Earl Lytton): in *The True Face* he suggests 1859 (p. 93), in *Jack the Ripper: The Bloody Truth* he states 1862 (p. 171).
159 'Tau-Triadelta' [Robert Donston Stephenson], 'A Modern Magician' in *Borderland*, April, 1896: quoted in Harris, *The True Face*, 93.
T. Stead, the editor of *Borderland*, the police suspected Stephenson of involvement (though such was also the case with countless others), and he was detained for questioning on more than one occasion. Stead himself - an important figure for Theosophical historiography - for a time considered Stephenson responsible. The sentiment was also shared by two highly-placed Theosophists, Mabel Collins Cook and Vittoria Cremers, who had at one time shared accommodation and a business partnership with Stephenson. Collins Cook, it might be remembered, was the author of several hugely popular Theosophical works including *The Idyll of the White Lotus* (1884) and *Light on the Path* (1885), both of which she originally claimed to have been dictated to her by the Master Hilarion. She was also at one time co-editor of Blavatsky's journal, *Lucifer*. Vittoria Cremers' subsequent account of her dealings with Stephenson - upon which much of Harris's conjecture is based - indicates that Collins Cook (with whom Cremers' claimed she and Stephenson were both sexually involved) became so scared of Stephenson that she had to flee from London:

‘Vittoria, I am terrified of him’ she declared. ‘I know he is Jack the Ripper and I want to get away from him, but I am afraid. He has such powers - I wish he would leave me alone - go away - do anything - only leave me alone. I would give him money - anything - if only I could be free of him.

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161 Ibid. It might be noted that it was Stead who gave the volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* to Annie Besant for her to review. The effect on her (and, of course, the later history of the Society) was immediate: see Besant, *An Autobiography*, 340.
162 For details see *supra* p. 118n22; also Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. II, 306-330.
163 Cremers also claimed to have discovered several bloodied shirt collars in a black chest in Stephenson's room: Harris, *The True Face*, 78.
164 Quoted in ibid., 73.
At this distance it is impossible to determine Stephenson’s involvement in the crimes (or, indeed, the veracity of Cremers’ account). What is of more concern for the present work is that in this case - as in many others - there is a distinct confluence of several factors. First, Bulwer-Lytton is evoked as the occult \textit{paterfamilias}, capable of energising talismans and proffering initiation (interestingly, into ‘the Hermetic lodge of Alexandria’). Second, Theosophy is shown to be the cardinal occult beacon for the esoterically-minded of the late nineteenth century. Third, it might be observed that occultism - as a \textit{tertium quid vis-à-vis} secularism and traditional theology - was becoming increasingly marginalised in the establishment culture toward the end of the Victorian era, and was entering the discourse of conspiratology as dangerous evidence of an anti-social, irrational, and inimical reaction to the new epistemologies. (In this

\footnote{Cremers is a somewhat shadowy figure in the occult \textit{milieu} of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. She was involved in a managerial capacity overseeing the production of \textit{Lucifer}, but, following Blavatsky’s expulsion of Collins Cook from the Society, left herself. Yeats wrote to Katharine Tynan that:

Madame Blavatsky expelled Mrs. Cook (Miss Mabel Collins) and the president of the lodge for flirtation, and Mrs. Alicia [sic] Cremers, an American, for gossiping about it (quoted in Meade, \textit{Madame Blavatsky}, 421).

Later in life, Cremers came to work for Aleister Crowley as the business manager for his occult organisations, but - according to Crowley - she departed following the exposure of her embezzlement: see Crowley, \textit{The Confessions}, 690-692.

Stephenson had claimed to have overcome a ‘female witch doctor’ called ‘Sube’ by the use of a talisman given to him by Bulwer-Lytton: ‘Roslyn D’Onston’ [Robert Donston Stephenson], ‘What I know of Obeeyahism, by the Author of the Original of “She”’ in \textit{Pall Mall Gazette}, 15 February, 1889: see also Wilson & Odell, \textit{Jack the Ripper}, 218. The reference to ‘the Hermetic lodge of Alexandria’ is interesting in so far as it has a certain \textit{air de famille} (cf., eg., ‘the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor’: see supra chs. 4, 5). Stephenson’s account is also faintly reminiscent of Emma Hardinge Britten’s claims: see supra ch. 7.

It is significant that this response is identical in many respects to the ‘Sociology of the Occult’ methodological hermeneutic to be found in the works of Tiryakian, Truzzi, and Webb: see supra ch. 1. The interest of conspiracy theorists in esotericism is of long-standing, and requires scholarly attention. Nevertheless, it could be argued that occultism - as a specific branch of esotericism engaged in dialogue with secularism - is particularly prone to such attacks. Indeed, it is not uncommon to discover that proponents of conspiracy were once occultists: cf., eg., the works of ‘Inquire Within’ [Christina M. Stoddard], a sometime Chief of the Stella Matutina (a descendant of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn): ‘Inquire Within’ [Christina M. Stoddard], \textit{The Trail of the Serpent}, Boswell Publishing co., London, 1936; id., \textit{Light-bearers of Darkness}, The Christian Book Club of America, Hawthorne, California, 1969 (originally published in 1930). For other examples of the trend to ‘demonise’ occultism see Lady Queenborough [Edith Starr Miller], \textit{Occult Theocracy}, The Christian Book Club of America, Hawthorne, California, 1980 (originally published in 1933); Nesta H. Webster, \textit{Secret Societies and Subversive Movements}, 4th ed., Boswell Printing & Publishing co., London, 1928; Warren Weston, \textit{Father of Lies: The Secret Occult History, Symbolism, Ceremonies And Practices of the Jews Exposed}, n. p., n. pl., n. d. This last is testament to the degree of anti-semitism which underpins many such works; it is no coincidence that much of the conspiracy literature has entered into neo-fascistic discourse, and is a mainstay of Holocaust denial and revisionism: see Deborah Lipstadt, \textit{Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory}, Penguin, London, 1994, esp. ch. 2.}
context it might be noted that the first claim that ‘Jack the Ripper’ was a black magician was made more or less contemporaneously with the murders: in December, 1888.168

*Fourth*, the occultist hallowing of perfectibilism - achieved primarily via Blavatsky - opened something of a Pandora’s Box and led to occasionally obtuse, and later highly problematical, developments. Certain occultists began to view late mediaeval grimoire magic, for instance, through the prism of nineteenth century humanistic and developmentalist epistemologies. Thus it was that occultists could revise their reading of Lévi:

> The end of procedure in black magic was to disturb reason [!] and produce the feverish excitement which emboldens to great crimes. The grimoires, formerly seized and burnt by authority everywhere, are certainly not harmless books. Sacrilege, murder, theft, are indicated or hinted *as means to realisation* in almost all these works.169

The degree to which Stephenson’s interest in diabolism was predicated on perfectibilist principles is impossible to ascertain. What can be stated with certainty is that he - and many more like him in the years to come - bypassed the anagogical and allegorical valencies of the Zanoni/Master figure (which had been, ironically, the *raison d’être* of the Rosicrucian fiction genre in the first place), and chose instead an easier and more comfortingly reassuring path: literalism. Thus it was that Stephenson came to believe not only that the divinely perfected man (the Master) could be generated through (diabolical) occultism, but that he himself might be the one to achieve it:

> I became obsessed by the idea that the revelation of the [occult] phenomena would make me an instrument of the Gods; henceforth, on occasion, I would destroy to save; I would become a Hermes, son of God.170

Stephenson’s reference to Hermes brings the typological discussion of the *Theosophical Masters* to a fitting close. The play of seeming - so fundamental to the

58 The claim was made in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in December, 1888, by the Earl of Crawford, who lists Lévi as a source. For details see Wilson and Odell, *Jack the Ripper*, 216-217. Interestingly, Cremers recalled that Blavatsky read the details keenly: Harris, *The True Face*, 46-47.


Hermesian enterprise of Theosophy - is often misunderstood, nowhere more pitiably than in the scholarly literature which should surely encourage the proliferation of hermeneutical avenues rather than the reduction of them. To this end one can only lament statements such as Stoddard Martin's - and wish he had transposed the final two words:

[T]o maintain that [the Masters] actually exist(ed) somewhere in Kashmir or Ladakh is surely the last bastion of baffled religious wish-fulfilment; and any doctrine built on such imaginative flights must end by seeming fantastic.171

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171 Martin, *Orthodox Heresy*, 96.
CONCLUSION

A study of the Masters is a study of religious belief. As such, the data may be examined phenomenologically, but the meta-empirical truth claims which inhere in such belief are beyond enquiry. To this degree, the Masters are no less elusive at the end of the present work than they were at the beginning. Yet the nostrum that religious belief can be dispelled by the glare of science, philosophy, or even phenomenology persists to some degree in the Academy, and to those who were awaiting definitive conclusions about the ontic reality of the Masters this study cannot but have been a disappointment.

Claims such as those made by Blavatsky and Leadbeater (and their numerous disciples and continuators) have almost without exception been dismissed on the basis of evidential facticity. Unless the doubting Didymuses can put their ‘hands in the side’ of the Masters, then the latter ipso facto cannot be considered to exist. Such an epistemological position tends to establish opposing camps of those who believe and those who do not, with any ground in between considered a ‘No Man’s Land’.

This work has been an attempt to chart a portion of the ‘No Man’s Land’. It is by no means comprehensive, and there remains a large terrain to be explored. Nevertheless, it is hoped that at the very least the empirical methodology adopted herein has indicated the fruitfulness of approaching such religious phenomena as the Masters from a perspective of informed agnosticism. After all, the ‘reality’ of the Masters and their function within the discourse of Theosophy remain separate concerns, and the latter question (in the opinion of the present author) is by far the more interesting enquiry.

The Masters are a prime phenomenon of the occult. This latter has tended to be dismissed by scholars as a function of the sociology of deviance or, at best, a reactionary revolt against modernity. Yet close observation reveals that occultism is by no means a retreat from modernist paradigms, but a close engagement with the new epistemologies. Occultism, it seems, is a special form of critique in which the motifs of esotericism are deliberately refracted through the prism of secularism. Both
Blavatsky and Leadbeater provide paradigmatic examples of the rhetoric of occultism; in their individual ways they each enthusiastically adopted the discourses of modernity in order to argue against what they perceived to be its more pernicious qualities.

Blavatsky attempted to remythify a universe she believed had been denuded of its numinosity. Neither Church nor Academy offered sustenance to a world whose protective divinities were being undermined by materialist science and Positivist philosophy. Indeed, Blavatsky felt that the Churches and secularist philosophers more or less cancelled each other out: Biblical criticism and comparative mythology had dispelled Christianity’s assertion of uniqueness and dogmatic truth, while the mute and mechanistic cosmos, as proposed by materialism and naturalistic evolutionism, left the world bereft of purpose, design, and contingency. In order to reconsecrate the cosmos - for that was her intention - Blavatsky required a new mythos, but one which would be acceptable to a society grown wary of deity. The aspirational figure she sought would not be able to occupy the undifferentiated mesocosm of myth, but would be required to tread the ground of fact.

The Theosophical Master was Blavatsky’s riposte to the successive philosophical and scientific exorcisms which had removed divinity from its hallows and, as an unexpected if ironical consequence, led to the ‘deanthropomorphisation’ of the world. The Master as a living man could indicate that human life - even human evolution - need not be under the authority of a blind determinism. The possibility of attaining physical, spiritual, moral, and sapiential perfection - which had grown dim in the years since the Enlightenment - was literally newly incarnated in the person of the Master, whose position of evolutionary preeminence was entirely won through individual effort. The anthropos, in danger of being relegated to accidental status in the universal processus, became in Blavatsky’s vision the centrepiece of the great cosmic telos; indeed, he was installed once more as the spiritual axis mundi.

From esotericism Blavatsky absorbed the idea of an hierarchised cosmos leading from the mundane sphere to the supracelestial. As part of her occult dynamic, she reconstrued this hierarchy as a schematised progressivist evolutionism. Thus it was
that she could co-opt much of the evolutionist idiom of her day, and reconfigure an otherwise teleologically bereft material dynamic as a divine cosmic process. Such progressivism also underscored the gnosticism of her system, for the trajectory of evolution was deemed to ascend from the material to the spiritual, with absorption into Absolute Spirit (whence the human Monad came in the first place) as the ultimate eschatological objective.

The Master enfleshes Theosophical cosmology in so far as he stands on the cusp of reintegration with Spirit. Indeed, he occupies a unique position within the system as he alone inhabits the space which is situated at the end of human ontology and at the beginning of the infinite unknowable. Consequently, he is the ideal figure to enact a dialectical interchange between the discourses of transcendence and immanence. For the Theosophist, then, the Master is proof of the penetration of the divine into the human sphere, and an augury of the possibility of humanity transcending its physical limitations and communing fully with the divine presence. Thus it is that the Master stands at the interstices of the ascent/descent figuration which resides at the centre of the Blavatskian vision.

Blavatsky presented her Theosophical synthesis not as mythology, but as fact. This approach has caused even sympathetic scholars to suspect that her esotericism was diminished by contact with rationalist paradigms. Yet in an era characterised by an emphasis on facticity, Blavatsky was simply playing Hermesian games by exploring the transformative potential of mythic facts and factual myths. For in order to attract the attentions of a physical Master, the aspiring *chela* needed to be prepared by achieving a comprehensive knowledge of Theosophy via the Theosophical canon (*Isis Unveiled*, the Mahatma letters, and *The Secret Doctrine*). Yet in a classical artifice, such preparation itself enacted a form of initiatory transformation which would obviate the necessity for a Master. Thus it was that fact bred mythology, and mythology bred fact.

Based on the Masters' teachings, Blavatsky posited an endless reticulating process of human Monads engaging in matter and then becoming progressively more spiritualised.
until they reintegrated with the Absolute. Such a cyclic process, although presented in
the vocabulary of Hindu *kalpa* theory, is in fact an instantiation of a classic gnostic
telos of a fall into matter and a concomitant ascent to Spirit. The adoption of this
favourite *leitmotif* of esotericism allowed Blavatsky to incorporate into her
macrohistorical programme sufficient of the world’s mythologems to present her
Theosophy as both a pansophic synthesis and as the undiluted *prisca theologia*. Of
prime importance, it also enabled her to absorb the new temporalities sponsored by
paleoanthropology and geology. Thus it was that she could suggest not only that
there had been ‘chapters’ before *Genesis* (as Darwin’s theory so challengingly
implied), but that there were whole ‘bibles’ with self-contained eschatons and
regenerations. Blavatsky’s cosmology - apparently unlike that of her nemesis, the
Churches - could thus comfortably contend with the immensity of prehistory, and the
apparent fact that primordial *homo* was more simian than *sapiens*.

Following Blavatsky’s death, access to the Masters - and the charismatic authority
such access implied - caused the Theosophical Society to fracture into competing
factions. With Blavatsky gone, the revelatory and oracular power guaranteed by her
position as mediator of the Masters’ teachings disappeared. Soon, however,
Leadbeater rose to prominence in the Adyar Society, in part because the confidence of
his assertions of contact with the Masters, and the clairvoyant method by which such
communication was vouchsafed, seemed unassailable. His claims of being in constant
psychic association with the Brotherhood calmed the collective fear that the Masters
had abandoned the Society or, worse, that they had never been present in the first
place.

Leadbeater’s clairvoyant revelations remained for the most part within the pre-mapped
Theosophical cosmos, thus bolstering the edifice from the inside. Yet he soon set
about superimposing his own structure upon the Blavatskian model. He drastically
truncated her cosmo-historical vision and, in so doing, exaggerated the incline of its
progressivist dynamic. Thus it was that rather than taking many lifetimes of labour,
Mastership was attainable in a very few. To further speed the process he introduced
various forms of theurgy which he considered to be evolutionary accelerants. Masonic
initiation and Christian sacrament were reconstrued as conduits of perfecting power, able to advance the Monad closer to the ultimate goal: *transformation into a Master*. Emphasis shifted from Blavatsky's gnostic 'respiritualisation' to Leadbeater's concentration on paranormal endowments. His vision of the Coming of the Lord Maitreya (or Christ) upon Krishnamurti should therefore be interpreted not as a peculiarly Theosophical adventism, but rather as an exercise in god-making - an entirely predictable phenomenon for an occultist with his own laboratory (The Manor), his own physics (theurgic ritual), and his own medium (Theosophical youth). It was, after all, simply an applied version of his favourite pastime: 'Occult Chemistry'.

For Leadbeater - even more so than Blavatsky - all universal processes, natural and supernatural, were explicable in discursive terms. His appeal to scientific causality to explain the dynamics of the suprasensible world is the apotheosis (perhaps literally) of occultism. In so doing, he consciously subjugated the meta-empirical to the dictates of the empirical, and closed the gap that Blavatsky had assiduously, though with difficulty, maintained between humanity and the divine alterity. In breaching this divide, one fact announced itself clearly: the inhabitants of this mesocosmic space immediately ceased to have any further rôle to play in the Theosophical macrodrama. Leadbeater had thus circumvented the Masters, and created himself the only Master necessary. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the Theosophical Society has hardly heard from them since.

A significant proportion of the present work has been devoted to analysing the *personae* of the Masters. The semiotic potential of the Master *topos* is vast and rich - due in major part to the myriad associations which Blavatsky consciously invested in the form. Consequently, the Master operates on several hermeneutical levels simultaneously, and as such creates of Blavatskian Theosophy something akin to a grand polyphony. The Master is the Oriental sage who brings revelatory authority in his wake; he is also the monastic elder whose austerities and 'prayerfulness' have earned him God's ear. He is the personification of Enlightenment perfectibilism, and the ideal of human progress and evolution; he is also the inspired ï¿½dagogue who encourages his charges to penetrate through the text and thereby ascend to divinity. He
is the Rosicrucian hero, the embodiment of the Ideal and the Real; he is also Enoch-Metatron, God’s angelic lieutenant who once was human, and Melchizedek, ‘having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto a Son of God’. Perhaps most clearly - and yet characteristically elusively - he is Hermes, the daimon of both antithesis and synthesis. It was as Hermes that the Master visited the Theosophical Society and presided over its triumphs and tribulations, and it was as Hermes that he played his game of seeming and never quite being.
PART FIVE

APPENDICES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY
APPENDIX A

PORTRAITS OF THE MASTERS

LIST OF FIGURES


(9) *The Ascended Master Jesus Christ*, artist unknown, n.d (provenance unknown). Reproduced from devotional images distributed by the Church Universal and Triumphant.


(12) *Ascended Master Paul The Venetian*, artist unknown, n.d (provenance unknown). Reproduced from devotional images distributed by the Church Universal and Triumphant.

(13) *Ascended Lady Master Portia, Goddess Of Justice*, artist unknown, n.d (provenance unknown). Reproduced from devotional images distributed by the Church Universal and Triumphant.
(14) **The Ascended Master Afra**, artist unknown, n.d (provenance unknown). Reproduced from devotional images distributed by the Church Universal and Triumphant.


(18) The altar of St. Francis’ Liberal Catholic Church, Chatswood, Sydney, photographed circa 1975. Author’s collection.

(19) **The Lord Maitreya** by Maria Kirby, circa 1911 (provenance unknown [The Manor?]). Reproduced from a negative in the possession of the Revd. Laurence Langley.

(20) **The World Mother** [by Florence Fuller?], n.d (provenance unknown [The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras?]). Reproduced from a copy in the possession of Dr. Gregory Tillett.

(21) **Lord Buddha** by Florence Fuller, n.d (provenance unknown). Reproduced from *Supplement to 'Theosophy in Australia'*, April-May, 1949.


MAHATMA "M..." (MORYA)
From a Drawing presented to my father.

The original bears the following — To Rama B. Yog, my brother
(word underlined) in commemoration of the event of 34th, 66th, and 74th
October, 1885, in the jungles of Adilshah.
APPENDIX A

PORTRAITS OF THE MASTERS

Until recently, the influence of esoteric philosophies and motifs on the modernist art movements of the latter nineteenth century and the early twentieth century has remained obscured. Typically, such influences were deemed symptomatic of fin-de-siècle decadence and creative torpor; at best they were interpreted as a quixotic response to the exhaustion of traditional themes and the impoverishment of the academic canon. During the past three decades, an emergent literature has begun to chart the conceptual parallelism between the modernist enterprise and various occult paradigms, and the resultant interchange between the two endeavours. The literature, although vastly uneven, must be considered part of the rehabilitation of esotericism as a responsible field of enquiry.

The centrality of Theosophy, in both its Blavatskian and Leadbeaterian recensions, to the discussion of 'esoteric art' was first demonstrated by an exhibition, 'The Art of the Invisible', held at the Bede Gallery, Jarrow, England, from 3 April to 6 May, 1977. Since that time, much attention has been focussed upon the influence of Theosophical paradigms on the colour symbolism of Franz Marc (1880-1916), the Neo-Plasticism of Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), and the abstract expressionist harmonics of Wassily


Kandinsky (1866-1944).

Aside from the Symbolists, the Fauves, and the Abstract Expressionists, the influence of Theosophy and Anthroposophy upon such movements as Russian Constructivism, Cubo-Futurism, and Suprematism remains to be examined.

It is interesting that the tracing of the occult lineaments in modern art has not resulted in an analysis of the arts created by, sponsored by, or favoured by the occultists themselves. Such an enquiry falls outside the purview of the present work, but might well produce an enlightening insight into the aesthetics of late modern esotericism. For the present purposes, it is sufficient to note that from the earliest days of Theosophy, portraits of the Masters were produced, and have maintained a popular currency to the present day.

The first attempt to capture the likeness of one of the Masters was sponsored by Olcott, who, having then not met his Master (Morya), desired to ‘have in my room at least the likeness of my revered teacher, if I might not see him in life’.

Blavatsky and Olcott approached a New York associate of theirs, M. Harisse (d. 1939), who ‘was a bit of an artist’ and asked him to complete the task: ‘to draw us the head of a Hindu chieftain, as he should conceive one might look’. The resultant black and white crayon sketch was obviously deemed successful by its prototype:

[T]he cryptograph signature of my Guru came upon the paper; thus affixing, as it were, his imprimatur upon, and largely enhancing the

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2. One suspects that the influence of esotericism on modernists in many branches of the fine arts has led to an erroneous supposition that, ipso facto, the occultists themselves favour modernism. The present author maintains, rather, that a majority of occultists are highly conservative, if not reactionary, in their aesthetic predilections. Observation and anecdotal evidence suggests that a great many contemporary occultists favour sentimental and romantic imagery, and entirely disavow nonobjectivism or the artistic avant-garde. It might be noted, e.g., that the present author has examined much of the artistic production of modern Neopagan groups, and has concluded that the primary influences include Pre-Raphaelitism, popular culture cartoonistry and animation, pre-World War II children’s book illustration; Hollywood teen films; the iconography of fantasy role-playing games such as ‘Dungeons and Dragons’; and soft pornography of the 1950s/1960s. It is arguable that such influences support an unacknowledged dissonance between the rhetoric of such movements and their artistic propaganda; e.g., it might be wondered why the great majority of the publications of self-designated feminist Goddess worshippers are decorated with images which reflect a highly masculocentric conception of feminine beauty.
3. Olcott, Old Diary Leaves, 370.
value of his gift.10

Apparently unsatisfied with possessing only a sketch, Olcott desired a painted portrait, and produced photographs of the Harisse image to aid in its production.11 In February 1878, he encouraged an unidentified amateur artist to paint a picture of the Master Morya in profile.12 Olcott later consulted 'several artists to try to obtain a better one'.13 One of these is mentioned in his will:

The Rosicrucian jewel and Master M.’s portrait (painted by Mrs. Jibhart) now loaned to Annie Besant, are to be returned to the curios at headquarters after her death.14

It must be presumed that ‘Mrs. Jibhart’ was, in fact, Mary Gebhard (d. 1892), an eminent Theosophist in the German Section, who had been a pupil of Eliphas Lévi, and later hosted Blavatsky and Olcott in her home in Elberfeld during 1884.15

Blavatsky had herself desired portraits of her Masters, and, as a rather skilled amateur draughtswoman, appears to have attempted the task a solc.16 She appears subsequently to have invited Isabelle de Steiger (1836-1927) to paint the Master Morya, using as a model a photograph of a black-and-white sketch which Blavatsky

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10 Ibid., 371. Olcott also discovered that his fee for the materials was miraculously refunded.
12 Ransom, A Short History, 201.
13 Ibid. Olcott noted that he ‘had instituted a friendly competition between certain of our London associates’, ‘three professionals and two amateurs’: Olcott, Old Diary Leaves: Third Series, 162-163.
15 See Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VI, 434-436; vol. I, 494-495. It was from Frau Gebhard that Lévi’s manuscript of Les Paradoxes de la Haute Science came into the possession of the Theosophical Society: see supra ch. 14.
16 Cf., eg., The Mahatma Letters, 1993 ed., (Letter No. 85B: mid-September, 1882) 260-261. During this time (c. 1878), Blavatsky produced an ink cartoon of Olcott dressed as a ‘Swamee’, entitled ‘Another Apocalyptic Vision’ (Fig.6): see supra p. 125n14. (The self-deprecating wit of the image and its accompanying text puts paid to the idea that Blavatsky’s presentation of the Masters was always steeped in solemnity). Two Masters-figures appear in the sketch, though neither image can contribute significantly to any iconographical analysis. It is clear, however, that the small figure of ‘Saib Morya’ is dressed in head covering of similar proportions to the later standardised image by Schmiechen. The identification of the other Master figure, ‘Saib Kashmere’, has been the subject of some dispute - though Olcott later believed it to have been Koot Hoomi: Olcott, Old Diary Leaves, 416. See also Caldwell contra Johnson in Caldwell, K. Paul Johnson’s House of Cards, 34-36. Blavatsky’s drawing is reproduced in Neff, Personal Memories, 221.
was said to have precipitated. Madame de Steiger, whose talents as an artist of the occult made her work popular in such circles, completed the task and sent the portrait to Adyar. Satisfied with the quality of her work, she took some umbrage at having received no acknowledgement for her labours, and heard no more about the painting’s subsequent fate.

A drawing of the Master Morya was said to have been given to S. Ramabhadra Ramaswamier (d. 1893) by the Master himself in October, 1882 (Fig. 5). Ramaswamier, a young Tamil and devoted Theosophist, had become so earnest in his desire to become a chela that he journeyed to Sikkim in order to discover a ‘Himalayan Brother’. Encountering his Master near the Tibetan border, the ‘revered Guru’ appears to have given his devoted disciple a sketch of himself, signed thus:

To Rama B. Yogi, my faithful [word indecipherable] in commemoration of the events of the 5th, 6th, and 7th October, 1882, in the jungles of Sikkhim.

The sketch appears to have been first published by Ramaswamier’s son, K. R. Sitaraman, who repudiated Theosophy, and published details of his father’s correspondence with the Masters in a caustic pamphlet, *Isis Further Unveiled*, in 1894. The whereabouts of the original remain unknown.

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17 Isabelle de Steiger was involved in a number of the esoteric organisations of Victorian England. A friend of Anna Bonus Kingsford and the author Mary Atwood (1817-1910), she was less than impressed by her time spent with Blavatsky and Besant: see Isabelle de Steiger, *Memorabilia: Reminiscences of a Woman Artist and Writer*, Rider & Co., London, 1927, 176-179. For a time de Steiger was involved in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, achieving the rank of 5°=6°, Adeptus Minor, in 1896 at the Amen-Ra Temple (Edinburgh). In fact she was responsible for having painted the [Rosicrucian] ‘Vault of the Adepti’ for the Edinburgh Temple: R. A. Gilbert, comp., *The Golden Dawn Companion*, 141; Howe, *The Magicians*, 190n1; Ithell Colquhoun, *Sword of Wisdom*, 244. In time, de Steiger came to be attracted to Steiner’s Anthroposophy.


The various attempts to capture the likenesses of the Masters reached a culmination in the Schmiechen portraits. Hermann Schmiechen, a German portrait painter, visited London in 1884 and agreed to attempt a version of the Master Koot Hoomi (Fig. 2). The finished work was deemed by Blavatsky to be an excellent likeness, and she immediately asked him to work on an equivalent portrait of the Master Morya (Fig. 1). (Madame de Steiger, who was working on her portrait of the Master at the same time, considered the Schmiechen’s efforts unworthy of attention).

There are various accounts of the production of the Schmiechen portraits, yet all agree that the works are the result of inspiration. Olcott’s praise was effusive: ‘It was as clear a work of genius and proof of the fact of thought-transference as I can imagine’. It appears the Masters were closely involved in the project, as attested by a Mahatma letter to Sinnett:

I believe you are now satisfied with my portrait made by Herr Schmiechen and as dissatisfied with the one you have? Yet all are like in their way. Only while the others are the productions of chelas, the last one was painted with M.’s hand on the artist’s head, and often on his arm.

Laura Holloway claimed to have witnessed the Master Koot Hoomi appear (in silhouette) to assist Schmiechen with his labours:

[T]he figure of a man outlined itself beside the easel and, while the artist with head bent over his work continued his outlining, it stood by him without a sign or motion ... How many of the number of those in the studio on that first occasion recognised the Master’s presence was not known. There were psychics in the room, several of them, and the artist, Mr. Schmiechen, was a psychic, or he could not have worked out so successfully the picture that was outlined by

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23 There is some confusion over the order of the portraits: see in ibid., xxxii.
him on that eventful day."

Leadbeater believed the portraits of the Masters were impressed upon Schmiechen's mind by Blavatsky herself:

At first she used to put her hand upon his [Schmiechen's] forehead, casting the image which was in her mind into his. In a few days however she found this unnecessary, as she could by sitting near him do the work just as well. It took about three weeks to finish the pictures; the picture of the Master M. is much the better of the two, because, He being her Master, she concentrated upon Him so much that His image was clearer in her mind, and therefore clearer in the mind of the painter.

It appears that Schmiechen, a Theosophist, was much given to semi-trance induction. On one occasion the Australian novelist, Rosa Campbell Praed (1851-1935), visited the artist in the company of the Countess Wachtmeister. The latter darkened the room, lit incense, and 'made passes over' Schmiechen, who then produced a 'rough sketch' of 'the interior of a temple. Below were two heads, one of an old man with a white beard, the other of an Indian wearing a turban with a jewel in it'.

The Schmiechen portraits immediately became the standard by which all others were to be judged. Olcott, who found significance in the fact that Schmiechen's painting of Morya was 'the seventh attempt to get a worthy reflection of his image', based the success of the work on its iconic qualities. His description repeats a justly-celebrated cliché:

[T]he feeling of awe is enhanced by the way in which the two pairs of eyes follow one about the room, still seemingly reading one, no


28 Schmiechen began on 19 June, 1884, and finished on 9 July: there is some confusion as to whether these dates reflect both portraits, or just the first.

29 C. W. Leadbeater, 'A Meeting in 1901' in *The Link*, August, 1910, 58.


31 Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: Third Series*, 165.
matter where he may take his stand.\textsuperscript{32}

Olcott carried the Schmiechen originals to Adyar, where they were placed in the Library.\textsuperscript{33} (Only later was access to the portraits restricted). Apparently they were not the first portraits of the Masters to hang in the headquarters; an earlier image of Koot Hoomi had impressed Major-General H. R. Morgan in 1883:

I visited the Head Quarters of the Theosophical Society to see a wonderful painting of the Mahatma K. H. kept there in a shrine and daily attended to by the chelas ... The picture of the Mahatma that I came to see, lately given to the Founders of the Society, is a most marvellous work of art. Not all the R[oyal]. A[cademician].’s put together could equal such a production. The colouring is simply indescribable. Whether it has been produced by a brush or photographed, entirely passes my comprehension. It is simply superb.\textsuperscript{34}

At one time Edward Carpenter visited the Adyar Headquarters and was shown the Schmiechen portraits. Carpenter was unimpressed by the works, describing them as pictures of ‘fine looking men, apparently between 40 and 50 years of age, with shortish hair ... both with large eyes and what might be called a spiritual glow in their eyes’; he felt some distaste for the ‘decidedly mawkish expressions of both faces as well as for the considerable likeness to each other’.\textsuperscript{35}

By the time of the pictures’ arrival in India, the Coulomb scandal was in full sail. Blavatsky valiantly employed Schmiechen’s works as argument against Mme. Coulomb’s allegations of fraud:

I come to the chief charges brought against me, the first being that the Mahatmas were fraudulent arrangements of bladders and muslin concocted by Madame Coulomb to swindle the public. No one who has seen a Mahatma could believe such an absurdity, and a well-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 164.
  \item \textsuperscript{33} Olcott, \textit{Old Diary Leaves}, 372-373.
  \item \textsuperscript{34} H. R. Morgan, ‘Testimony to Phenomena’ in (Supplement to) \textit{The Theosophist}, 5:3 (No. 51), December, 1883, 31. Morgan’s account has often been taken to be a comment upon the Schmiechen portrait of K. H. Yet the dates indicate his comments to have been published prior to Schmiechen’s work. The identity of the K. H. portrait in question remains unknown.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Edward Carpenter, \textit{From Adam’s Peak to Elephanta: Sketches in Ceylon and India}, Swan Sonnenschein and Co., London, 1903, 229.
\end{itemize}
known painter at South Kensington has painted in London the portraits of the Mahatmas without having seen them, producing a likeness which was identified immediately by Englishmen and natives who have seen them in India. He will show you two portraits which not even the wildest imagination could mistake for an arrangement of bladders and muslin.36

Schmiechen made a number of copies of his original, though they were deemed not as successful as the originals: Olcott believed the copies ‘lack the life-like character of the original; [the artist] evidently lacking the stress of inspiration under which the latter were produced’.37 Blavatsky kept one of the copies near her working desk in London (Fig.16); it is likely this image which the young Yeats noted in Blavatsky’s suite, and which he ascribed to ‘some most incompetent artist’.38 It should be noted that Schmiechen also painted a number of portraits of Christ (or the Master Jesus). Of these, the version most stylistically reminiscent of the Theosophical portraits is ‘A Christ Head’ (Fig.3).39 Although the painting is apparently undated, it is not unlikely that it was painted for Rudolf Steiner’s German Theosophists who tended to be more Christocentric than the rest of the Society.40

In time, access to the Schmiechen images became restricted to members of the ES who were granted permission to retain small printed reproductions. Leadbeater stated that the small devotional pictures distributed among the ES were photographic reprints of

36 Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VI, 310-311.
37 Olcott, Old Diary Leaves: Third Series, 164. The fate of the various copies remains somewhat unclear. One, a portrait of Morya, was given by Blavatsky to Arthur Gebhard, and passed into the hands of his descendants. W. Q. Judge possessed a set of copies; after his death Julia Knightley (c.1855-1915) selected the portrait of Morya (as a bequest), while the portrait of Koot Hoomi passed to Emil Neresheimer - from whom it eventually came into the possession of the Point Loma Theosophical Society. See Eek, Dâmobar, 338.
38 Yeats, Autobiographies, 176; this is likely the ‘small panel in oils’ seen by Charles Johnston in the Spring of 1887: Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VIII, 399. A photograph of Blavatsky’s room at 17 Lansdowne Road, London, appears in the Collected Writings series: id., Collected Writings, vol. VII, opp. p. 256. One of Schmiechen’s portraits appears in the photograph; interestingly, the face is entirely blackened out, although it is impossible to determine if this is an accident of printing or an editorial decision (Fig.16).
39 The painting is reproduced as a frontispiece in Whyte, Is Theosophy Anti-Christian?
40 For Schmiechen’s work for the German Section see infra p. 723.
the Schmiechen copies, and that the originals had never been photographed. Besant confused matters further by declaring that the black-and-white ES pictures were photographs of either the original paintings or of copies by Schmiechen, but that the coloured ES pictures were from a copy of the Schmiechen originals painted by an Australian artist, Florence Fuller, then resident at Adyar. (Besant also claimed that she had been given a 'precipitated miniature' of the Master Jesus by Blavatsky in early 1890. She noted that the ES devotional pictures of the Master Jesus were from a large copy of the miniature - also painted by Fuller).

Besant claimed that the Schmiechen portrait of the Master Koot Hoomi was defective in that, although the likeness was correct, 'the colouring is entirely wrong, the Master being a fair-skinned Kashmiri Brahmana'. Besant evidently preferred a miniature painted by Isabella Varley, which she regarded as an excellent likeness and accurate as to colour. Varley's portrait depicted the Master 'at Shigatze, in His house there, whither the member went astrally; it was brought over to London also astrally'. According to Adyar Theosophical tradition, Mrs Varley was asked to undertake the portrait by the Master himself:

Then night after night she was helped to materialize at the Master's home, where similarly by materialization there were provided for her two ivory ovals, the paints and brushes necessary for the work. Of course, Mrs Varley could only do the work while her body was

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41 Leadbeater, 'A Meeting in 1901', 58. His opinion is reinforced by reference to Olcott:

As for the photographs which were - against my passionate protest - permitted to be made from the copies, they are as inferior to the originals at Adyar, as a tallow candle to the electric light (Olcott, Old Diary leaves: Third Series, 164).

42 Annie Besant, 'The way in which the Masters' Pictures were obtained' in The Link, February, 1911, 224-226. Florence Fuller painted portraits of Besant and Olcott for the Australian Section of the Society in 1906, and of Blavatsky and Olcott for the Adyar headquarters in 1909, when she was further described as having painted portraits of the 'great Teachers': [The Theosophical Society], The International Theosophical Year Book 1937, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1937, 205.

43 Besant, 'The way', 225.

44 Ibid., 224.

45 Isabella Varley was a trained portrait painter and the wife of the English landscapist, John Varley. Both had joined the Society as a result of having met Blavatsky in 1884. John Varley was later to be the subject of Leadbeater's The Soul's Growth Through Reincarnation: Lives of Erato and Spica, for which see supra ch. 17. It might be noted that Isabella Varley née Pollexfen was the aunt of W. B. Yeats, and it was she who in 1884 gave him a copy of Sinnett's Esoteric Buddhism - the beginning of a lifelong interest in matters esoteric.

46 Ibid.
asleep, painting, without disturbing the Master, the two Miniatures
‘from life’. The Miniatures were to be replicas, one of the other, and
the Master sat in His chair, attending to His usual work.47

Varley’s miniatures were said to have been materialised into the London Theosophical
Society Headquarters at 19 Avenue Road, where Leadbeater and one of his young
pupils, Basil Hodgson-Smith (1887-1929), were living during February, 1897. One
of the miniatures was to be a present for Hodgson-Smith, and the other for
Jinarajadasa, who was then studying at Cambridge University.48 The latter obtained
leave to return to London to collect his copy.49 Jinarajadasa was later to claim that,
although the black-and-white ES pictures were reproductions of one of Schmiechen’s
painted copies, the coloured ES images were taken from Florence Fuller’s painted
enlargement of Jinarajadasa’s miniature and not (contra Besant) from her copy of
Schmiechen’s originals (or copies!).50

It appears clear that, by 1920, the number of portraits of the Masters within the Adyar
Society had increased considerably. Under Leadbeater’s tutelage, the industrious Miss
Fuller had broadened the synoptic range of subjects to include portraits of the Master
the Count, the World Mother (fig.20), and others (fig.21).51 What Jinarajadasa
described as the ‘E. S. Pictures of the Masters’ consisted of portraits of the Manu and
the Bodhisattva Maitreya, the Masters Morya, Koot Hoomi, Jesus, and Ragoczi (the
Master the Count); within the Australian Section - over which Leadbeater exerted
individual authority - there were an additional two: a further image of the Master
Ragoczi, and one of the Master Hilarion.52 Jinarajadasa noted that even though ‘these
have been drawn at Mr. Leadbeater’s suggestion ... one of them is not satisfactory for

48 Basil Hodgson-Smith was injured badly during the First World War, and a few years prior to his
death passed his miniature to Jinarajadasa, who subsequently placed it in a safe at The Manor (the
home of the ES in Sydney): in ibid., 5.
49 Ibid., 3-4.
50 Ibid., 5.
51 Besant, ‘The way’, 225. It is not certain that the portrait of the World Mother included herein
(fig.20) is Fuller’s, although it seems highly likely.
52 The Sydney Theosophists appear to have created something of an industry of Masters-portraiture.
Mary Lutyens recalled being shown images of the Masters M. and K. H. at The Manor in Sydney
which had been painted by Theodora St. John, the mother of one of Leadbeater’s favoured young
disciples, Theodore St. John: Lutyens, To Be Young, 156.
purposes of meditation’. Jinarajadasa also observed that, although five additional portraits of the Master the Count [de Saint-Germain] were known to exist, they were held in public galleries and as such were not appropriate for the ES.

During the tenure of Besant (and Leadbeater), strict rules applied to the availability of the portraits for public consumption; only the ES were guaranteed access, and the devotional reproductions given to members remained ostensibly the possession of the Outer Head. Besant relaxed these rules to a certain degree in the preparation for the Coming, allowing the images to be unveiled for certain corporate events: the portrait of the Lord Maitreya (fig.19) was displayed at meetings of the Order of the Star in the East, above the altar in Liberal Catholic Churches (fig.18), and at closed meetings of the Order of the Round Table; the portrait of the Master the Count could be displayed in lodge meetings of Co-Freemasonry.

Another picture in which two of the Masters are said to appear is that described as ‘A Ravine in Tibet’ (fig.22); it was published as the frontispiece to Leadbeater’s 1925 book, *The Masters and the Path*, where it was described thus:

> The illustration is a photographic reproduction of the original at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras. It is precipitated by the Master Djwal Kul on silk. Its principal colours are green, blue and India ink. It is signed by the Master with His pseudonym ‘Gai Ben-Jamin’. On the left of the picture, the Master Morya is seen riding on a horse. The individual in the water is the

![Image](image-url)

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32 Nevertheless, a number of Adyar Theosophists refused to return their copies of the ES portraits upon leaving the Society. Jinarajadasa noted that after the 1922 scandal (in which Leadbeater’s predeastry again became ‘front-page’ news - at least in Sydney), a number of Sydney Theosophists left the Society and subsequently offered their ES portraits for sale. Regardless, he noted that all copies and reproductions were inferior:

Since each copyist retouched the portraits, and since each lens is apt to distort a little, the final result is some of the copies are repellent to those of us who know what the original portraits are like (Jinarajadasa, ‘The Pictures’, 183).

Access to the portraits, and the publication thereof, is still a vexed issue in some Theosophical arenas. In a recent apologetic work on Theosophy in Vietnam, the authors were prohibited from publishing the portraits by their ‘Superior in India’: Mrs. and Mr. Nguyễn Văn Luông, *Mysterious History of the Theosophical Society in Vietnam*, n. p., n. pl., 1985, 136.
33 The portrait of the Lord Maitreya was painted by ES member, Maria Kirby, and was based on a 1911 sketch by Leadbeater.
34 Ibid., 166.
Master Djwal Kul Himself. He shows purposely only His back, as He considered that His Mongolian features were not worth putting on record.  

A further painted portrait of a seated Blavatsky surrounded by three Masters - Morya, Koot Hoomi and (the Master the Count de) St.-Germain - was reproduced in Paul Kagan's *New World Utopias* of 1975 and Paul Johnson's *The Masters Revealed* of 1994 (fig.17). The image is described in Johnson’s book as being by an unknown artist, and is said to be ‘[u]sed by permission of Eleanor Shumway, Guardian, Temple of the People’ in Halcyon, California, which suggests the original may be held there. 

Following the death of Judge, the Theosophical Society in America produced an additional portrait of a Master who was not specifically named, but was referred to variously as ‘The Luminous Youth’ or ‘Rajah’; this acquired some considerable significance in later claims that Judge had himself been a Master, or, at least, was periodically overshadowed by a Master.

As the portraits of the Masters were rarely published in the Adyar Society, descriptions of the Masters’ appearance and demeanour were seized upon by the popular membership. Leadbeater initially restricted his discussions of the physical attributes of the Masters to ES gatherings, then later to ES publications. In 1925, Leadbeater published much of his ES instruction as *The Masters and the Path*, choosing to do so, as Besant noted in her Foreword, due to the ‘rapid changes in the world of

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37 Leadbeater, *The Masters and the Path*, (1925), frontispiece. This picture, in reality a pastorale rather than a portrait, was reproduced in Fuller, *Blavatsky and her Teachers*, between pp. 136 & 137. The image was the subject of insightful comment by Caldwell: Daniel Caldwell, ‘Review of *Blavatsky and her Teachers*’ [rev. art.], in *Theosophical History* 3:3, July, 1590, 90-95.


39 Although Johnson considered the ‘artist unknown’, the painting is signed in the lower left corner by J. A. Knapp, an illustrator of occult books who worked for Manly Palmer Hall among others: cf., eg., Manly Palmer Hall, *The Ways of the Lonely Ones: A Collection of Mystical Allegories*, Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles, 1945. Albeit difficult to decipher, the date appears to be either 1920, 1930 or 1950. An examination of the original would likely allow for more exact attribution.

40 [Issued by the Council of the EST in America], *EST Circular*, 9 December, 1896.
thought, arising from the nearness of the Coming of the World-Teacher'. It is useful to quote at length from this text and from Leadbeater's ES teachings as they accurately reflect the Leadbeaterian recension of Masters-based Theosophy. The following are descriptions of a selection of Masters.

*The Master Morya*

He is a Rajput King by birth, and has a dark beard divided into two parts, dark, almost black hair falling to his shoulders, and dark and piercing eyes, full of power. He is six feet six inches in height, and bears Himself like a soldier, speaking in short terse sentences as if He were accustomed to being instantly obeyed.

The Master Morya ... appears to be a man absolutely in the prime of life - possibly thirty-five or forty years of age; yet many of the stories which His pupils tell of Him assign Him to an age four of five times greater than that, and Madame Blavatsky herself told us that, when she first saw Him in her childhood, He appeared to her exactly the same as at the present time.

*The Master Koot Hoomi*

[The Master Koot Hoomi] is of fair complexion with deep blue eyes and golden-brown hair. He is a reincarnation of Pythagoras, and is a fine English scholar, having passed through an English University.

[The Master Koot Hoomi] wears the body of a Kashmiri Brahman, and is as fair in complexion as the average Englishman. He, too, has flowing hair, and His eyes are blue and full of joy and life.
hair and beard are brown, which as the sunlight catches it, becomes ruddy and glints of gold. His face is somewhat hard to describe, for His expression is ever changing as He smiles; the nose is finely chiselled, and the eyes are large and of a wonderful liquid blue. He generally wears white clothes, but I do not ever remember having seen Him wearing a head-dress of any kind, except on the rare occasions when He assumes the yellow robe of the Gelugpa sect or clan, which includes a hood somewhat of the shape of a Roman helmet.

_The Master the Count_

Though He is not especially tall, he is very upright and military in His bearing, and He has the exquisite courtesy and dignity of a grand seigneur of the eighteenth century; we feel at once that He belongs to a very old and noble family. His eyes are large and brown, and are filled with tenderness and humour though there is in them a glint of power; and the splendour of His presence impels men to make obeisance. His face is olive-tanned; His close-cut brown hair is parted in the centre and brushed back from the fore-head, and He has a short and pointed beard. Often He wears a dark uniform with facings of gold lace - often also a magnificent red military cloak - and these accentuate His soldier-like appearance.

_The Master Djwal Kul_

[The Master Djwal Kul] is still wearing the same body in which He attained Adeptship only a few years ago. Perhaps for that reason it has not been possible to make that body a perfect reproduction of the Augoeides. His face is distinctly Tibetan in character with high cheek bones and is somewhat rugged in appearance, showing signs

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66 Leadbeater, _The Masters and the Path_, 37.
68 For the ‘Augoeides’ see _supra_ ch. 29.
The Master Jesus

[The Master Jesus] is now wearing a Syrian body. He has the dark skin, dark eyes and a black beard of the Arab, and generally wears white robes and a turban ... He lives amongst the Druse [sic] of Mount Lebanon.70

The Master Serapis

[The Master Serapis] is tall and fair in complexion. He is Greek by birth, though all His work has been done in Egypt and in connection with the Egyptian Lodge. He is very distinguished and ascetic in face, somewhat resembling the late Cardinal Newman.71

The Master Hilarion

[The Master Hilarion] is a Greek, and, except that He has a slightly aquiline nose, is of the ancient Greek type. His forehead is low and broad, and resembles that of the Hermes of Praxiteles. He, too, is wonderfully handsome, and looks rather younger than most of the Adepts.72

The Venetian Master

Perhaps [the Venetian Master] ... is the handsomest of all the Members of the Brotherhood. He is very tall - about six feet five inches, and has a flowing beard and golden hair somewhat like those of the Manu; and His eyes are blue. Although He was born in Venice His family undoubtedly has Gothic blood in its veins, for He is a man distinctly of that type.73

69 Leadbeater, 'The Physical Appearance', 216.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., 215.
72 Ibid., 216.
73 Ibid.
The Manu

[The Manu is] the tallest of all the Adepts, being six feet eight inches in height, and perfectly proportioned. He is the Representative Man of our Race, its prototype, and every member of that Race is directly descended from Him. The Manu has a very striking face of great power, with an aquiline nose, a full and flowing brown beard, and brown eyes, and a magnificent head of leonine pose.74

The Bodhisattva Maitreya

[The Bodhisattva Maitreya] is wearing a body of the Keltic race at the present time, though when He comes forth to the world to teach His people, as He intends to do very shortly, He will make use of a body prepared for Him by one of His disciples. His is a face of wondrous beauty, strong and yet most tender, with rich hair flowing like red gold about his shoulders. His beard is pointed, as in some of the old pictures, and His eyes, of a wonderful violet, are like twin flowers, like stars, like deep and holy pools filled with the waters of everlasting peace. His smile is dazzling beyond words.75

The Mahachohan

[The Mahachohan] wears an Indian body, and is tall and thin, with a sharp profile, very fine and clear-cut, and no hair on the face. His face is rather stern, with a strong, square chin; His eyes are deep and penetrating, and He speaks somewhat abruptly as a soldier speaks. He generally wears Indian robes and a white turban.76

Dissemination of the Portraits

The dissemination of the images of the Masters follows exactly the historiographic process whereby Theosophy became factionalised and disparate. Following the schism between the Adyar and American Societies in 1895, Franz Hartmann, who was

74 Ibid., 213.
75 Ibid., 214.
76 Ibid., 215.
for a time in Judge’s camp, published the Schmiechen portraits and copies were offered for sale in America. Later, Judge’s successor, Katherine Tingley, used the portrait of Koot Hoomi as the frontispiece for her 1902 book, *The Mysteries of the Heart Doctrine*, labelling the image, ‘A Helper of Humanity’. Interestingly, upon his return to his homeland, Schmiechen became an active member of the German Section, and painted copies of his portraits for the then head, Rudolf Steiner. The German portraits became the focus of devotion for Steiner’s later Anthroposophical movement, and were believed to emit powerful radiations. Marie Steiner recalled in 1948:

I have myself experienced that many a one lost his speech on looking at them and was absent-minded and confused. But these pictures were shown only in strict secrecy or during esoteric meetings.

A picture of Koot Hoomi, evidently based on the Schmiechen portrait, was included in Harvey Spencer Lewis’ *Rosicrucian Manual* of 1918, published by Lewis’ Theosophically-oriented Rosicrucian sodality, AMORC (fig.23). The image is described as being that of ‘Master Kut-Hu-Mi, the Illustrious D[eputy?]... G[rand?]... M[aster?]... of Tibet (Bod-Yul) Beloved Hierophant of the R. C.’. A version of the ES portraits and a later image of the Master the Count were printed in John R. Sinclair’s hagiographical *The Alice Bailey Inheritance* of 1984. Described as ‘[t]he Blavatsky-approved artist’s impressions of three teachers interested in the theosophical movement’, Sinclair suggests the ‘pictures are of hologram-type projections’. The Schmiechen portraits were also reproduced in William and Harold

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78 H. J. Spierenburg, ‘Dr. Rudolf Steiner on the Mahatmas, Part 1’ in *Theosophical History*, 1:8, October, 1986, 217. It is interesting that Steiner included ‘a picture of the Risen Christ’ above the altar during the Act of Consecration of Man, the communion service of Steiner’s Christian Community, though it is likely the interpretation of the image was more normative than the equivalent in the Liberal Catholic Church: see Marta Heimeran, *The Act of Consecration of Man*, Christian Community Press, London, 1975, 10.
79 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
Hare's highly critical *Who Wrote the Mahatma Letters?* of 1936, and in Manly Palmer Hall's *The Phoenix* of 1960.  

In 1932, 'David Anrias' (Brian Ross) published a volume of graphite pencil portraits of the Masters (fig.24,25).  

The work was introduced by Anrias' associate, the composer and occultist Cyril Scott (1879-1970), who noted the following:

Hitherto the Theosophical Society has jealously guarded such few portraits of [the Masters] as it possessed; and although this policy is excusable because actuated by motives of reverence, the Masters themselves now wish it to be discontinued; hence this book.  

Scott argued that there were about 60 Masters 'at the present time who are incarnate in bodies of various nationalities', but that only those who lived in the 'inaccessible fastness of Thibet' have consented to the publication of their portraits; the others must necessarily remain undetectable.  

Anrias, who had travelled to India following his service in the First World War, became acquainted with Theosophy through the person of Annie Besant. During an extended period of meditation in the Nilgiri Hills, he claimed to have come into contact with the 'Rishi of the Nilgiri', a Master particularly devoted to astrology. Anrias contributed several articles on astrology to *The Theosophist* before returning to England in 1927.  

Scott contended that 'the Masters mentally impressed their portraits on David Anrias for reproduction in this book', and that the images were designed as a 'focus for meditation on the part of those who are struggling in the waters of spiritual uncertainty'.  

Anrias included virtually all of the Masters from the Leadbeaterian

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[Hare & Hare, *Who Wrote*, 51, 63; Manly Palmer Hall, *The Phoenix*, Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles, 1960, 116-117.](9)


["'By the Author of *The Initiate in the Dark Cycle*, etc. etc.' [Cyril Scott], 'Introduction' in David Anrias (Brian Ross), *Through the Eyes of the Masters: Meditations and Portraits*, 3rd ed., George Routledge & Sons, London, 1947, 19.](9)  

[66] Ibid., 17-22.  

[67] Interestingly, Blavatsky had herself discussed the 'Todas' of the 'Neilgherry Hills'. According to Blavatsky, the Todas are 'giants in stature, white as Europeans'; their 'secrets are inviolable'. In fact the Blavatskian Todas appear very much as do such groups as the Coptic solitaries, i.e., as proto-Masters. See Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. II, 613-615.](9)  

[68] Ibid., 18.
pantheon: RakoczilRagoczi (the Master the Count), Morya, Koot Hoomi Lal Singh, Jesus, Hilarion, the Venetian Master, Serapis, the Mahachohan, and the Lord Maitreya.90

Guy and Edna Ballard's 'I AM' movement, founded in the early 1930s, incorporated all of the Masters of the Leadbeaterian recension and introduced several more, including some female Masters (Mary, Diana, Cassiopeia, inter alia).99 Not surprisingly, all of the previous portraits of the Masters were grist to Guy Ballard's rather baroque occult mill, and the number of pictures multiplied. Another latter-day messenger of the Masters, Mark Prophet, continued this trend with the Summit Lighthouse which he led until his death in 1973 (figs.7-15). Now managed by Mark's widow, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Summit Lighthouse (or the Church Universal and Triumphant, as it is more properly known) has broadened the pantheon to include a black-skinned Master (the Ascended Master Afra) (fig.14), more female Masters (such as the Ascended Lady Master Portia, Goddess of Justice) (fig.13), and Mark Prophet himself, who, since his death, has become the Ascended Master Lanello, the Ever Present Guru (fig.15). With the inclusion of Mark Prophet into the pantheon of Theosophical and para-Theosophical Masters, Masters portraiture entered a new domain entirely: the Master Lanello is surely the first Master to have been photographed.

Some Stylistic Remarks

It is an interesting fact that Schmiechen's portraits of Morya and Koot Hoomi have enjoyed a far greater currency than any other examples of his œuvre. Not only did they become the standard Theosophical portraits, but they have engendered something of an industry in the depiction of Masters and Guides in the contemporary New Age milieu.91 Latter-day variants of his portraits - which still bear remarkable similarities to their prototypes - are available for sale in many stores which deal in 'esoterica', and

90 The portrait of the Master Ragoczi was included as a frontispiece for the second edition of 1936, and was not in the first edition of 1932.

99 It is interesting that the female Masters are most often referred to as 'Lady Master'; one suspects there is some difficulty with the term 'Mistress'.

91 The present author has attended a number of gatherings at which artists advertise their ability to depict an individual's personal 'Master' or 'Guide'. The drawings and paintings which result are often not dissimilar to early Theosophical models; certainly posture, chromatic scale, perspective, and dress are highly reminiscent of the Schmiechen portraits.
are distributed by a large percentage of those contemporary esotericists who
(knowingly or otherwise) have their roots in Theosophy.

An examination of a portrait of Jesus (fig.4) by Schmiechen indicates his own artistic
debts; certainly, the work shows distinct traces of Schmiechen’s academic and art-
historical training. He appears to have been significantly influenced by the Venetian
cinquecento, in particular by the deceptive tranquillity of Titian’s portraiture; equally,
he seems to be enamoured of Rembrandt’s psychologically-pregnant portraits. It is
interesting, then, to compare Schmiechen’s portrait of Jesus (fig.4) with his picture
of Koot Hoomi (fig.2). Immediately the viewer is struck by the similarity of pose,
features, and attitude. An identical observation could be made of his images of ‘A
Christ Head’ (fig.3) and Morya (fig.1).

That the Masters’ portraits should resonate with Christological overtones is hardly
surprising. Schmiechen, like most Western artists concerned to invest their images
with qualities of transcendence, turned for inspiration to the foundational
iconographical type of divine-human hypostasis, the Biblical Christ. The iconic
potentialities of a Christ portrait were imported by Schmiechen into his own depiction
of semi-divinised men, the Masters. Indeed, he employed several standard devices: an
undifferentiated background; over-large, staring eyes; a frontal composition designed
to focus attention directly upon the subject’s confronting gaze; a sense of sagacity
heightened by indications of the sitter’s self-possession; no distracting detail in
vestment or jewellery; and a framing of the features by long hair and a beard.

92 The portrait in question has been chosen because it is a favourite of Theosophists and was often
distributed in reproduction to ES members. It has not been possible to determine details of the work:
date, title, and provenance remain something of a mystery.
93 Various other iconographical assessments could be made. It might be noted, for example, that
certain Masters (such as Florence Fuller’s depiction of the Lord Buddha) (fig.21) have reduced sex
characteristics, and thus appear androgynous. It would not be difficult to argue that such approaches
are founded in Renaissance angelology. In this context see also (Florence Fuller’s?) depiction of the
World Mother (fig.20) which, although modelled upon a contemporary Theosophist from The
Manor, Ruth Roberts, is evidently akin to traditional angelic iconographies (notably Archangel
Michael). Such an observation explains the overtly European features of the World Mother who was,
after all, intended to select a dark-skinned Indian woman, Rukmini Arundale, as her manifest
'spokesperson'.
As a consequence of the origins of the works in Western Christological iconography, Schmiechen's portraits of the Masters are ostensibly those of European men. For all of their dark colouring, the Masters appear demonstrably un-Indian (or Kashmiri or Tibetan), and, denuded of their headgear, long hair, and beards, they would seem comprehensively Western. Yet to vilify Theosophy on the basis of this observation is to forget that portraiture has always revealed more about the viewer than the sitter.
When a body reputed to be that of Dāmodar K. Māvalankar was found naked and frozen in the snows of Chumboi, Sikkim, in 1885, many could have been forgiven for believing Blavatsky to be at least indirectly culpable. The ardent young Theosophist, who desired above all else to be accepted as a chela, and who had been encouraged in his ambition by Blavatsky, had journeyed northwards in search of the home of the Masters, and appears likely to have perished on the way. Steadfast Theosophists did not (and do not) believe the corpse to have been that of Dāmodar; it was, rather, māyā - an illusion, designed to test their faith.¹ For believers, the real Dāmodar was the first fruit of the Theosophical harvest - having successfully penetrated the stronghold of the Masters, he was patiently undergoing his apprenticeship and thus evolving at a rate far beyond the ken of the general membership. As Blavatsky herself noted:

Happy Damodar! He went to the land of Bliss, to Tibet and must now be far away in the regions of our Masters. No one will ever see him now, I expect.²

Dāmodar’s quest has about it an air of pathos. Although many would interpret his quixotic zeal in disparaging terms (that is, as mythology incorrectly construed as historicity), the fact cannot be ignored that Blavatsky claimed her Masters to be men of flesh and blood, and located them in a terrestrial domain. Dāmodar was thus simply the first of a stream of Theosophical pilgrims who believed, not illogically, that if the Master would not come to the chela, then the chela would go to the Master.

The home of the Masters is described by Blavatsky and Leadbeater in strikingly utopian terms. Yet, unlike the imaginary island of Thomas More and his continuators, the Theosophical utopia existed coevally with mundane society, and was thus tantalisingly within reach. Such a situation elevates the home of the Masters into the

¹ See supra p. 15n29.
realm of sacred geography, and suggests a Biblical Edenic template.

The *topos* of the encircled garden paradise enjoyed near ubiquity in the mythologies of the ancient near East. As Delumeau has noted, 'inside a favored area, the generosity of nature was joined to water, pleasant fragrances, an unvarying springtime climate, an absence of suffering, and peace between human beings and animals'. Significantly, the garden idyll functioned not only as a retrospective longing for an untarnished Arcady, but also as an immanentist eschatological expectation. Paradise was not merely a lost state, but a promised destination.

The promise of an imminent Paradise was underscored within the Christian ambit by a literalist exegesis of Edenic Genesis. The 'garden eastward in Eden' (*Gen.* 2:8), though shielded by fire and sword-wielding cherubim, remained emphatically a mundane entity: a reminder of perdition, but also of salvation. The geographical location of Eden quite literally *oriented* Western thought and aspiration for millennia, and significantly underscored global exploration by the Christian Occident. No sooner had cartographers found a locus for Eden in the far distant East, than nautical explorers returned with stories of having discovered traces of the glorious enclosed garden. Mythology bred mythology and homespun Edens soon appeared under such guises as Camelot and Avalon, and 'continuing Edens' arose in such diverse forms as the Kingdom of Prester John.

It is deemed axiomatic by many that the theological Garden of Delights disappeared under the weight of certitude which arose in the wake of the ascendancy of empirical science. Such a view maintains that for the post-Enlightenment educated secularist, Eden, like most of its Biblical fellows, was soon relegated to the shadow life of myth, legend, and pious symbol. Literalist assumptions about the facticity of Genesis geography were to be found only in the most conservative of churches, it was believed, and there only until secularisation forced such 'theological reactionaries' to

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accept the prevailing scientific Zeitgeist.

Such rationalist historiographies (which presuppose an inexorable ongoing secularisation) have been proven unfounded and unempirical. The march to secularisation, even under the guise of Positivism, has not dislodged traditionalist convictions; though fewer people may affirm the earthly existence of Biblical Eden, many still search for its equivalent - albeit under other names. In this context it is somewhat ironic to consider that, as part of her project to re-enchant a dispirited cosmos, Blavatsky - a defiant critic of Christianity and a proud heretic - rescued Eden from its uncertain fate under the auspices of an increasingly materialist age, and re-articulated earthly Paradise as the new Eden: Shamballah. The wall of fire became the (more or less) impassable Himalayas, and the sword-wielding cherubim were reconstrued as the personified rigours of chelaship, through which few indeed might pass to the domain of the Masters.

Blavatsky was by no means the first within the esoteric ambit to propose an idealised earthly paradise. The mediæval Arabic magical text, Picatrix, ascribed to Hermes the construction of a city:

It was [Hermes], too, who in the east of Egypt constructed a City twelve miles (miliaria) long within which he constructed a castle which had four gates in each of its four parts. On the eastern gate he placed the form of an Eagle; on the western gate, the form of a Bull; on the southern gate the form of a Lion, and on the northern gate he constructed the form of a Dog. Into these images he introduced spirits which spoke with voices, nor could anyone enter the gates of the City except by their permission. There he planted trees in the

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5 One need look no further than the debate in certain American states about the teaching of evolutionism versus 'creation science' in schools. Certainly, the advances of Biblical criticism have in no way superseded a popular reliance on, and preference for, traditionalist exegesis. One is reminded of the refrain from the 1960 film, Inherit the Wind (dir. Stanley Kramer), based on the famed Scopes 'monkey trial' of 1925: 'Gimme that ol' time religion - it's good enough for me!'.

6 Here and throughout, the spelling 'Shamballah' is employed, being Blavatsky's preference. She did, however, employ alternate spellings. See supra p. 199n34.

7 That Hermes (the god of crossroads) should be associated with a city is not at all surprising. Faivre has examined some modern Hermesian cities: Faivre, The Eternal Hermes, ch. 4 ('Hermes's Presence in the city').
midst of which was a great tree which bore the fruit of all generation...

... Around the circumference of the City he placed engraved images and ordered them in such a manner that by their virtue the inhabitants were made virtuous and withdrawn from all wickedness and harm.

The name of the City was Adocentyn.8

It is interesting that in the apocalyptic discourse of Asclepius (Ascl.27), there is an eschatological culmination in a city:

The gods who rule the earth will [withdraw], and they will be stationed in a city founded at Egypt’s farthest border toward the setting sun, where the whole race of mortals will hasten by land and sea.9

The Hermetic literature, then, incorporates the topos of the city as both an idealised past and as a future beacon which attracts all to its promise of renovation. Blavatsky was to attempt a similar dual function in her depiction of the home of the Masters.

Geography and the Masters

As can be seen from the example of Theosophy’s young Galahad, Dâmmodar, the idea of a sacred utopia cannot really be separated from the search for it. Of course, such quests were predicated historically on the basis of geographical ignorance; an unchartered globe held tremendous promise for the utopic vision. By the end of the Enlightenment, however, dreams of a terrestrial continental paradise required thorough re-articulation in the wake of highly successful nautical exploration. In fact, the last mass geographical expanse deemed a likely candidate, terra australis incognita, was lost to utopians with the exploration of the Antarctic latitudes by James Cook in 1772-1775.10


9 Copenhagen, Hermetica, 83.

10 As David Fausett has noted, the chartering of the globe also ensured the end of ‘utopian writing in its original (geospatial) sense’: David Fausett, Writing the New World: Imaginary Voyages and Utopias of the Great Southern Land, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, 1993, 2.
Although the notion of a continental Edenic utopia had been overturned by Blavatsky’s day, certain geographically-remote areas still occasioned a similar discourse. Primary among these, perhaps, was the closed fastness of Tibet.\footnote{Lopez, _Prisoners of Shangri-La_, 50. It might be recalled that (when forced by public outcry) Arthur Conan Doyle had Sherlock Holmes ‘reborn’ in Tibet.} Lopez has noted that ‘[d]uring the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries India was increasingly displaced by Tibet, especially by occult movements, as the source and preserve of secret knowledge and as the abode of lost races’.\footnote{Bishop has noted that Tibet had replaced Egypt as the locus for ‘the exemplary home of the archaic mystery’: Bishop, _The Myth of Shangri-La_, 110.} Blavatsky was central to this endeavour of romanticising Tibet such that it would become the model for a hermetically-sealed reservoir of Ancient Wisdom - a position it still maintains in the popular imagination. Not only did she claim several years of personal pupilage in Tibet, but she clearly located the Brotherhood of the Masters in that country, though she was more reticent in providing exact locations.\footnote{As has been noted _supra_, there appears significant evidence to support the assertion that in Blavatsky’s time, Shigatse was deemed the home of Morya, Koot Hoomi, and Djual Kul, though the position of their domicile is not clear. The chief residence of the Masters (Shamballah?) remains geographically indeterminate.}

Blavatsky’s ‘Tibet’ was a peculiarly occultistic Orientalism - and like all Orientalisms its primary engagement was, somewhat paradoxically, with creating a privileged space from which to view the West. Crucially, the Ancient Wisdom tradition which the Theosophical ‘Tibet’ came to personify seems hardly to have involved the Tibetans, who appeared as peripheral ciphers in Blavatskian accounts. The ‘trans-Himalayan Brotherhood’ of Masters possessed little in the way of indigenous Tibetan attributes; indeed, neither Morya nor Koot Hoomi were native Tibetans. It seems, then, that Blavatsky’s Tibet was highly idealised and constructed, yet again, on a Western need for a ‘garden eastward’.

Peter Bishop’s acute observations of Western ‘Tibets’ are apposite for a discussion of Blavatsky’s attitudes. Bishop has identified several causative factors which combined in encouraging Tibet ‘to glow with the aura of otherworldliness’: its maintenance of a position ‘outside history’ by closing its borders; its absence on the map; its position above the clouds, and thus its geographical liminality; the sense of an ‘initiatory’ experience upon crossing the passes into the country; its ‘topsy-turviness’ (‘Where
else could one get sunburnt on one side of the body whilst being frostbitten on the other?); its apparent timelessness; its prehistoric qualities, including the assumed primitive physiognomy of the indigenous peoples; its ‘childlike pre-moral mentality’ in such matters as human sexuality; its seeming boundlessness and luminosity; and the sense of atemporal sanctuary which it evoked.¹⁴

The process whereby Tibet was selected by Western esotericists as the *fons et origo* of the Ancient Wisdom is a complicated one, involving such disparate studies as nineteenth century fantasy literature (incorporating both utopian and dystopian themes), ‘travel writing’, and geopolitics.¹⁵ Suffice to say for the present purposes that Tibet’s peculiar alien remoteness was no less felt by Theosophists in Adyar than in London or New York, as Dâmodar’s quest amply demonstrates. Consequently, Fausett’s description of the great austral utopia is no less appropriate for Blavatsky’s Tibet:

> Utopia was ... a this-worldly reality, yet one that could not be found (nor, like its cousin the colony, founded) in the world. Existing between the ideal and the real, it embodied formal rather than empirical truths and inspired doubt rather than certitude.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Bishop, The Myth of Shangri-La*, 149-165.

¹⁵ One pivotal moment for Tibetologists was the publication in 1933 of *Lost Horizon* by the English novelist James Hilton (1900-1954). Hilton’s novel described an Arcadian retreat within Tibet, entitled Shangri-La, headed (significantly) by an ancient Capuchin monk, Fr. Perrault. Its themes of psycho-physical renovation captured a large post-WWI and Depression readership. According to Allen, the novel was later republished as the world’s first paperback: Charles Allen, *The Search for Shangri-La: A Journey into Tibetan History*, Little, Brown and Co., London, 1999, 37. *Lost Horizon* has proved an enduring work: in 1937 it sponsored a hugely successful eponymous film directed by Frank Capra; one critic (Robert Stebbins) wryly noted that ‘the inaccuracies must have involved tremendous research’. The Theosophical undertones of the novel (direct or indirect) are self-evident. Two other works which shaped the public perception of Tibet are Rider Haggard’s *She* (1887) and Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1898). Among the travel writers who have influenced Western attitudes to Tibet, perhaps none is more celebrated (or enduring an influence) than Alexandra David-Neel (1868-1969), herself a Theosophist. Her *My Journey to Lhasa* (Harper & Row, New York) of 1927 and *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* (Dover Publications, New York, 1971) of 1929 have remained Theosophical favourites. Under the rubric of ‘travel writing’ one is forced to include the works of T. Lobsang Rampa (Cyril Henry Hoskin) whose books about Tibet have outsold all other authors on the topic. Lobsang Rampa, it should be recalled, had never left the British Isles prior to writing his best-selling *The Third Eye* (Secker & Warburg, London) in 1956. For Rampa see *infra* Appendix E.

¹⁶ *Fausett, Writing the New World*, 174.
Although Blavatsky left unnamed the contemporary dwelling of the Masters in Tibet, she was unequivocal that for a time the ‘hierarchy of the “Elect”’ occupied Shamballah in the Gobi desert. (As noted supra, an identification of the Masters’ chief residence during Blavatsky’s time with Shamballah is implicit. Thus it seems that the Masters have occupied the same hidden domicile at least since the Lemurian age). Due to Blavatsky’s influence, Shamballah has since become a locus communis of contemporary esoteric conceptualising.

Shamballah first came to notice in the West with the pioneering evangelical expeditions of the Portuguese Jesuits, João Cabral and Estevão Cacella, whose 1627 letters make note of a ‘Xembala’. The first English reference seems to be that of Alexander Csoma de Korös in 1833, who noted its relationship to the texts of the Tibetan Kālacakra Tantra. Csoma de Korös placed Shamballah north of the Syr Daria river and north-east of the Aral Sea, in what is now Kazakstan; other commentators have located it in Belovoye in the Kun Lun mountains, and in Tebu Land between Szechwan and Tibet. The Italian Tibetologist, Giuseppe Tucci, suggested a position near the River Tarim in western China; Geoffrey Ashe thought it lay in the Atlai Mountains. Yet such conceptual malleability and geographical ambiguity, rather than confounding Blavatsky, recommended Shamballah as an ideal vehicle for

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18 Cf. supra ch. 13.
19 Lopez, Prisoners of Shangri-La, 267n1.
20 Ibid., 181.
22 Ibid.
Theosophical utopian idealism.23

Blavatsky, eager as ever to incorporate diverse mythologies into her synthetic macrohistory, 'trumped' her fellow dilettante Tibetologists by providing for Shamballah a history of sanctified occupation extending well into the Third Root Race.24 If Tibet was an esoteric centre of great antiquity, then Shamballah, it appeared, was far more venerable still. The Master Koot Hoomi wrote at length about the wonders of his home in Tibet:

For centuries we have had in Tibet a moral, pure hearted, simple people, unblest with civilisation, hence - untainted by its vices. For ages has been Tibet the last corner of the globe not so entirely corrupted as to preclude the mingling together of the two atmospheres - the physical and the spiritual.25

Shamballah, when the home of the Lemurians and the early Atlanteans, had been a 'sacred Island'.26 Following the cataclysm, it seems, it 'exists to the present hour ... as an oasis surrounded by the dreadful wilderness of the great Desert, the Gobi - whose sands "no foot hath crossed in the memory of man"'.27 This last comment is crucial to understanding Blavatsky's intentions regarding Shamballah. Even after she had been ensconced in the East - that is, in India - the systematics of her Theosophy

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23 Blavatsky was well aware of the competing geographical claims:
According to the general belief [Shamballah] is situated in the North-West of Tibet. Some place it within the unexplored central regions, inaccessible even to the fearless nomadic tribes; others hem it in between the range of the Gobi Desert, South and North, and the more populated regions of Kunduz and Kashmir, of the Gya-Pheling (British India), and China, West and East, which affords to the curious mind a pretty large latitude to locate it in. Others still place it between Namur-Nor and the Kuen-Lun Mountains - but one and all firmly believe in Sambhala, and speak of it as a fertile, fairylike land, once an island, now an oasis of incomparable beauty, the place of meeting of the inheritors of the esoteric wisdom of the godlike inhabitants of the legendary island (Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. III, 421-422).

24 The Mahatma Letters, 1993 ed., (Letter No. 93b: October, 1882) 313). Koot Hoomi suggests that the 'triumph of ... the inhabitants of 'Shamballah' (when yet an island in the Central Asian Sea) over the selfish but not entirely wicked magicians of Poseidonis occurred just 11,446 ago [sic]'.

25 Ibid., (Letter No. 9: 1 December, 1880 or later) 23.

26 Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, vol. II, 319. The parallel to the Indian notion of the 'Sweta-Dvipa' (the 'White Island') is obvious.

required a locus for the Masters further ‘eastward’. Even the inaccessible Tibet—possessed as it was of profound Otherness—could be breached by earnest chelas manqué (as Dāmodar and S. Ramabadra Ramaswamier had indicated). Koot Hoomi was clearly unimpressed by the notion that such fervent disciples would attempt to seek out the Brotherhood. In an important letter he made his sentiment plain:

If you care anything about our future relations, then, you better try to make your friend and colleague Mr. Hume give up his insane idea of going to Tibet. Does he really think that unless we allow it, he, or an army ... will be enabled to hunt us out ... Those whom we desire to know us will find us at the very frontiers. Those who have set against themselves the Chohans as he has—would not find us were they to go [to] L’hasa with an army. His carrying out the plan will be the signal for an absolute separation between your world and ours ... Last night a letter was to be carried to him as well as to Mrs. Gordon. The Chohan forbid it [sic]. You are warned, good friend—act accordingly.

Fabled Shamballah seemed the ideal alternative: ‘a this-worldly reality, yet one that could not be found’. It appears that although, as with so many of Blavatsky’s motifs, she was required for pedagogical purposes to claim absolute facticity for Shamballah, she intended it to function primarily as an Edenic topos: proof of a ‘prelapsarian’ Golden Age, as well as an eschatological inducement. Morya underscored this latter point by emphasising the idea that Blavatsky’s martyrdom will ultimately be rewarded:

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31 Fausett, Writing the New World, 174.
I must say she suffers acutely and I am unable to help her, for all this is effect from causes which cannot be undone - occultism in theosophy. She has now to either conquer or die. When the hour comes she will be taken back to Tibet.32

In this context, the similarity of the Masters' dwelling to other esoteric formulations is obvious. For instance, just as a tropological discourse is central to the Picatrix account (the 'virtue' of the Hermesian 'engraved images' elevated the moral climate of Adocentyn), so too, Blavatsky's Hermesian entities, the Masters, created of their domain a vice-free haven. Indeed, just as the Egyptian gods had retreated from the turpitude and irreligion of the world in the Hermetic Asclepius, so, too, the Masters were abandoning the materialism of the mundane world for the spiritual fortitude of the secluded Shamballah:

From time immemorial there had been a certain secret region in Tibet, which to this day is quite unknown to and unapproachable by any but initiated persons, and inaccessible to the ordinary people of the country as to any others, in which adepts have always congregated ... Much more than they are at present, were the Mahatmas in former times distributed around the world. The progress of civilisation, engendering the magnetism they find so trying, had ... given rise to a very general movement towards Tibet on the part of the previously dissociated occultists.33

It is clear that Blavatsky found in Indian and Tibetan accounts of Shamballah a useful paradigm of a 'garden eastward'. Her interest in the residence of the Brotherhood was not geospatial or architectural, nor was she concerned to elaborate on physical details which she no doubt believed to be insignificant (and, perhaps, inconvenient). For her, Shamballah, while necessarily a physical entity in terms of Theosophy's logistical systematics, was the spiritual axis mundi.34 Understood as a macrohistorical motif, Shamballah operates as an Oriental Arcady - a universalist mythological melding,

33 Sinnett, Esoteric Buddhism, 181-182.
34 For discussions of the axis mundi motif, and its national applications, see John Michell, At the Center of the World: Polar Symbolism Discovered in Celtic, Norse and other Ritualized Landscapes, Thames and Hudson, London, 1994.
which creates a Theosophical navel in an otherwise disenchanted, materialistic world. Ultimately, of course, it is the locus of regeneration, the place from which salvation will come - and to which all the saved will go:

The simple secret is this: There are cycles within greater cycles, which are all contained in the one Kalpa of 4,320,000 years. It is at the end of this cycle that the Kalki-Avatāra is expected - the Avatāra whose name and characteristics are secret, who will come forth from Sambhala, the 'City of Gods', which is in the West for some nations, in the East for others, in the North or South for yet others. And this is the reason why, from the Indian Rishi to Virgil, and from Zoroaster down to the latest Sibyl, all have, since the beginning of the Fifth Race, prophesied, sung, and promised the cyclic return of the Virgin - Virgo, the constellation - and the birth of a divine child who should bring back to our earth the Golden Age.\(^{35}\)

As with much else of the Blavatsky idiom, her successors removed the dynamism of her paradox; Shamballah was comprehensively grounded. Leadbeater, in customary fashion, condensed the Blavatskian chronology and macrocyclicism, and turned Shamballah into something approaching a eugenics laboratory. The fabled kingdom became the place in which the Manu settled in about 70,000 B.C.E. in order to conduct his breeding programme designed to beget the Fifth (Aryan) Root Race, and its various sub-races. The descriptions of the Manu's techniques are occasionally rather harrowing:

[The Manu] was to plant certain selected families in these valleys, and develop therein four separate sub-races, which then were subsequently to be sent to different parts of the world. Also He was to send some of His own people to be born elsewhere, and then bring them back, and thus form new admixtures - for they would have to marry into His family; and when the type was ready, He would have again to incarnate in it and to fix it. For the Root Race also some admixture was needed, as the type was not quite satisfactory ... It is interesting to notice that after refining His people

\(^{35}\) Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XIV, 354.
for generations and forbidding marriage with those outside themselves, He yet found it necessary, later, to introduce a little foreign blood, and then to separate off the posterity of that foreign ancestor.36

In the Leadbeaterian recension, then, Shamballah (now a city opposite the sacred Island)37 retains its purpose as an ancestral home for humanity, but is presented less as Blavatsky's Edenic paradigm, and more in typically Leadbeaterian occultistic terms as the crucible of esoteric 'scientific' ethnography. Indeed, Shamballah became the capital of 'an immense empire' which included East and Central Asia, and 'all the islands from Japan to Australia':

Traces of its domination are still to be seen in some of these countries; the ineffaceable stamp of the Aryan blood is set upon races so primitive as the Hairy Ainus of Japan and the Australian so-called aborigines.38

Typically, where Blavatsky's gaze tended to the macroscopic, Leadbeater's devolved upon the microscopic; his clairvoyant eye for design detail was never better employed:

Some of the buildings being very effective with the grey and red [stone] intermixed. Pink and green was another favourite combination, and here and there the purple porphyry was introduced, with striking success.39

As with all of Leadbeater's clairvoyant journeys back in time, his contemporary Theosophists were much in evidence; at the time of the Manu's inculcation of the Aryan race(s) in Shamballah, for instance, Besant was the Manu's nephew.40 Naturally, Krishnamurti was also present and 'lived in a pleasant house, surrounded by a large garden and fine trees'.41

It is worthwhile to make brief reference to a couple of other Theosophical redactions of Blavatsky's Shamballah which appeared in the 1920s. In the first place, Djhwal Khul

36 Besant & Leadbeater, Man: Whence, How and Whither, 250.
37 Ibid., 249 et passim.
38 Ibid., 263.
39 Ibid., 261.
40 Ibid., 253. Besant's 'star name' was Herakles.
41 Ibid., 250-251. Krishnamurti appears under his celebrated 'star name', Alcyone.
[sic], through his amanuensis Alice Bailey, noted that the reason Shamballah remained occulted was that humanity had not yet evolved the requisite psychic faculties:

The central home of this Hierarchy is at Shamballa, a centre in the Gobi desert, called in the ancient books the 'White Island'. It exists in etheric matter, and when the race of men on earth have developed etheric vision its location will be recognised and its reality admitted.42

Other Theosophists were not so reticent. Of those who searched, one way or another, for the fabled kingdom, none has been so celebrated as the Latvian/Russian artist and pacifist, Nicholas [Nicholai] Konstantinovich Roerich (1874-1947). Nicholas, accompanied by his wife Helena [Elena] (1879-1955) - a professed 'channel' for the Master Morya43 - and son George, undertook a Central Asian expedition covering the years 1924 to 1928. Roerich's view of Shamballah was much fashioned by a story told to him by a Tibetan lama which concerned the 1923 flight of the Panchêna Lama:

For centuries and centuries it was predicted that before the time of Shambhala, many astonishing events would occur. Many savage wars would devastate countries. Many kingdoms would be destroyed. Subterranean fire would shake the earth. And Panchen Rinpoche would leave Tibet. Verily, the time of Shambala has already come. The great war devastated countries, many thrones perished. The earthquake in Japan destroyed old temples. And now our revered ruler has left his country.44

Shamballah, then, was intimately associated with pre-millennial omens. To usher in the wondrous reign of peace, to bring about an 'Era of Shamballah', would require the fostering of accord in both the individual and collective spheres. To this end Roerich devoted himself, founding the justly-famed Roerich Peace Pact and Banner of Peace, and earning himself great international laurels, including a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize.45 (It might be noted that Roerich's promotion of an engaged Pax

42 Bailey, Initiation, 33; also quoted in Godwin, Arktos, 98.
43 Elena Ivanovna Shaposhnikova-Roerich deserves a Theosophical study in her own right. It is not widely known that she undertook the daunting task of translating The Secret Doctrine into Russian: Tainaia doktina: sintez nauki, religii i filosofii, trans. Elena Rerikh, Uguns, Riga, 1937. For details see Carlson, 'No Religion Higher Than Truth', 245n7.
45 Carlson, 'No Religion Higher Than Truth', 196.
Cultura, founded on discernible Theosophical principles, has meant that he remains one of the few Theosophists to have espoused a Theosophical social activism.\textsuperscript{46}

As Godwin has noted, 'Nicholas Roerich saw in Shambhala the symbol of the coming age of world peace and enlightenment, and it is only just to say that he adapted what he learned at first hand in Mongolia to his own world-view'.\textsuperscript{47} Under Roerich’s attentions Shamballah became a post-WWI literary and artistic trope, designed to foster social and spiritual cohesion, and to bolster the ideals of unity and brotherhood.\textsuperscript{48}

Thus it is that, unlike other Theosophical recensions, Roerich’s concern for the imminence of the \textit{eschaton} tended to announce itself in sociopolitical terms, and to embrace Theosophists and non-Theosophists alike:

\begin{quote}
Man must dedicate himself entirely to creative labor. Those who work with Shambhala, the initiates and the messengers of Shambhala, do not sit in seclusion - they travel everywhere. Very often they perform their works not for themselves but for the great Shambhala; and they are without possessions. Everything is for them but they take nothing for themselves. Thus, when you dedicate yourselves to Shambhala, everything is taken and everything is given to you. If you have regrets, you yourself become the loser; if you give joyously, you are enriched. Essentially, the Teaching of Shambhala lies in this - that we do not speak of something distant and secreted. Therefore, if you know that everything may be achieved here on earth, then everything must be rewarded on earth.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

Space disallows further treatment of the Shamballah theme as it appears in contemporary esoteric formulations. Suffice to say it has garnered a massive literature,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} Besant, of course, is the other individual most commonly associated with social activism (though Olcott should not be forgotten in this context either). Leadbeater rejected Theosophists engaged in social protest utterly, and thoroughly resented Besant’s interest.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Godwin, \textit{Arktos}, 99.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Nicholas Roerich, \textit{Himalayas: Abode of Light}, Nalanda Publications, Bombay, 1947, 100; reprinted at length in Decter, \textit{Nicholas Roerich}, 202-203.
\end{itemize}
and has become a mainstay of New Age geographical speculation. It should be remembered that it took little effort to press Shamballah into service for Western esotericism: it possessed an attractive and ancient native Tibetan tradition; it could be grafted agreeably into preexisting Western mythologems; it had added lustre as belonging to a tradition presently under the sway of state-enforced ideological (indeed, 'Communard') atheism; and it offered an attractive alternative to traditionalist Western confessional eschatologies. Blavatsky, ever swift to discern mythic potentialities, intuited the facility with which Shamballah could become an Eastern Avalon for her Masters, and others have followed her example. That she would not recognise the progeny of her efforts is certain; as Peter Bishop has noted: 'Claims made by Blavatsky ... evolved a hundred years later into the kitsch absurdities and occult extravaganzas of Lobsang Rampa'.

Europe and the Middle East

While it is true that Blavatsky posited the existence of several adept Brotherhoods, there can be little doubt that the 'Trans-Himalayan' Fraternity was the linchpin of her

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50 For some populist and/or religionist approaches see Thomas, Shambala: Oasis of Light; Childress, Lost Cities of China, Central Asia and India; Maclellan, The Last World of Agharti. The post-Blavatskian recensions of the Shamballah tradition are described in Ashe, The Ancient Wisdom. The Shamballah topos is also present (though often unnamed) in a number of novels inspired by Theosophy: cf., eg., Talboi Mundy's 1924 novel, Om. Mundy (William L. Gribbons [1879-1940]) was a member of Tingley's Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society, commonly called the Point Loma Theosophists.

The lineaments of the tradition are very broad indeed: a 1993 recording (label: 'Knitting Factory Works') by the jazz drummer, William Hooker, and guitarists Thurston More and Elliot Sharp, is entitled 'Shamballa' and includes liner notes declaring: 'Shamballa is dedicated to the leaders of Humanity, the Masters of Wisdom'. Shambhala was also the name of a song by the band Three Dog Night. It might be noted that it further serves as the name for a publisher devoted to the dissemination of Oriental and esoteric texts. For these and other details see Lopez, Prisoners of Shangri-La, 267n3.

Much recent interest (very little of it sufficiently scholarly) has been aroused by purported conceptual links between Theosophy and such precursors of National Socialism as the Lebensreform and Volkisch movements. Accordingly, such motifs as that of Shamballah have been examined in reference to Nazi cosmologies. The most recent effort - of better standing than most - is Alan Baker, Invisible Eagle: The History of Nazi Occultism, Virgin, London, 2000. Inevitably much of this writing becomes self-fulfilling prophecy as contemporary fascistic ideologues mine these works for appropriate leitmotifs (often to aid in the project of constructing a revisionist history). The standard scholarly work remains Goodrick-Clarke, The Occult Roots of Nazism; see also Godwin, Arktos. For the idea of the 'Malign Master' see infra Appendix D.

51 Such was Blavatsky's term for communists: see supra p. 72n56.

52 Bishop, The Myth of Shangri-La, 234. One could make the same assertion for many another romantic Tibetologist: cf., eg., Theodore Illion's claim to have encountered an occult fraternity in Tibet (unsurprisingly in a monastery) and to have been invited to visit a magnificent huge underground city. Illion published a number of books on the theme: eg., T. Illion, Darkness over Tibet, Eastern School Press, Talent, Oregon, 1983.
design. Other sodalities were mentioned - notably the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor and the Ellora Brotherhood - but, as her gaze moved incrementally eastward, references to such groups diminished and were ultimately discontinued. Clever enough not to disavow other proto- and crypto-Master esotericisms (indeed, she often boldly incorporated them into her teleology), Blavatsky nevertheless clearly averred that the Masters overseeing the Theosophical Society were more or less exclusively based in Tibet, and were senior to other adepts.

Leadbeater’s Theosophy was clearly more ahistorical and acultural than Blavatsky’s. Extra Masters were inducted into the Theosophical pantheon, thus, perhaps, broadening its appeal and reducing its (deceptively) Oriental appearance. The Master Jesus no doubt attracted those of a more orthodox religious disposition and allowed for a more inclusionist Theosophy, while the Master the Count (de Saint-Germain/Ragoczi) appealed to many on the basis of his reputation as a demonstrably Western esotericist, and to others because of his aristocratic pedigree. Clearly, such Masters would never have settled comfortably into the mould of a Tibetan Brotherhood, so Leadbeater ‘internationalised’ the Fraternity, and made of it something akin to a pan-national directorate.

53 For the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor see supra chs. 4, 5; for the Ellora Brotherhood see supra chs. 6, 7.
54 Cf., eg., supra ch. 7.
55 Charles Johnston’s account of a meeting with Blavatsky is salient on this point: Then she told me something about other Masters and adepts she had known, - for she made a difference, as though adepts were the captains of the occult world, and the Masters were the generals. She had known adepts of many races, from Northern and Southern India, Tibet, Persia, China, Egypt; of various European nations, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, English; of certain races in South America ... [Blavatsky:] ‘Adepts are a necessity in nature and in supernature. They are the links between men and the gods; these “gods” being the souls of the great adepts and Masters’ (Charles Johnston, ‘Helena Petrovna Blavatsky’ in Theosophical Forum, V:12, April, 1900: reprinted in Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. VIII, 400-401).

56 Unsurprisingly, Leadbeater’s inclusionist approach to the Masters has proved the more malleable model, and has endured as the preferred option for most contemporary Masters-groups. The Summit Lighthouse organisation (otherwise known as the Church Universal and Triumphant) has introduced such Masters as the black-skinned Ascended Master Afra (see supra Appendix A). The contemporary Shamballah mythos has a distinct international flavour: [S]omewhere beyond Tibet, among the icy peaks and secluded valleys of Central Asia, there lies an inaccessible paradise, a place of universal wisdom and ineffable peace called Shambhala ... It is inhabited by adepts from every race and culture who form an inner circle of humanity secretly guiding its evolution (Victoria Le Page, Shambhala: The Fascinating Truth Behind the Myth of Shangri-La, Quest, Wheaton, Illinois, 1996, 4).
According to Leadbeater, there was a minimum of four Masters living outside of Tibet.\textsuperscript{37} As noted \textit{supra}, the Master Jesus ‘lives among the Druses [sic] of Mount Lebanon’;\textsuperscript{28} the Venetian Master’s residence is unknown, although ‘He was born in Venice [and] His family undoubtedly has Gothic blood in its veins’, so a European location is likely;\textsuperscript{39} the Master Serapis was normally occupied in Egypt and presumably lived there;\textsuperscript{40} and the Master the Count ‘usually resides in an ancient castle in Eastern Europe, that has belonged to his family for many centuries’.\textsuperscript{41}

Leadbeater’s ascription of ‘an ancient castle in Eastern Europe’ to the Master the Count is an interesting example of the influence of Gothic literature on Theosophy. Although Leadbeater was careful not to name the location of the Master the Count’s estate, the melding of two personalities - the French Comte de Saint-Germain and an unidentified scion of the Transylvanian princely House of Rákóczy\textsuperscript{42} - insinuates that the castle was in all probability held to be in Transylvania. That such an inference was widely drawn is proved by an aborted journey which Besant and Arundale had planned in order to visit the Master the Count at his ancestral home. Although, as Emily Lutyens noted, ‘[t]he actual locality of the Castle was a secret’,\textsuperscript{43} and Arundale had ‘brought through’ a message from the Master that he (Arundale) should simply open a \textit{Continental Bradshaw} at random and take his party to the place where his finger had fallen, there was an accepted belief that the castle was to be found ‘somewhere in Hungary’.\textsuperscript{44} (It should not be forgotten that, although Transylvania had been acquired by Romania in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference which had parcelled out the old Austro-Hungarian empire, at this time - only five years later - Transylvania was still popularly believed to be found in Hungary). The idea of a wealthy land-owning scion of an aristocratic Transylvanian family, who happens also to possess extraordinary prolongevity, is an

\begin{itemize}
\item In Leadbeater’s systematics there could, in fact, be any number of Masters. The four mentioned are those with especial responsibility for Theosophy, and who are allocated a Ray.
\item Leadbeater, \textit{The Masters and the Path}, 45.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., 44.
\item Ibid.
\item For details see \textit{supra} chs., 19, 21.
\item Emily Lutyens, \textit{Candles in the Sun}, 132.
\item Ibid.; Nethercott, \textit{The Last Four Lives}, 367-368.
\end{itemize}
obvious parallel to Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* of 1897.65 Such identifications were inherited, perhaps unconsciously, by Leadbeater’s continuators: Cyril Scott, for example, stated categorically that the Master the Count lived in the Carpathians.66

*The United States of America*

As has happened in a number of other religious formulations, para-Theosophical groups which had their genesis in the United States of America tended to develop along strongly nationalistic lines. Thus it is that the ‘I AM’ movement, and those formulations which derive from it, tend to emphasise a special compact shared between the Masters and America:

America’s very freedom in the beginning of her existence was due largely to [The Great Ascended Master, Saint Germain’s] tireless efforts in protecting and encouraging those responsible for her inception. The drafting of the Declaration of Independence was also a direct result of his help and influence, and it was his love, protection, and guidance which sustained Washington and Lincoln during the darkest hours of their lives.67

Aside from Saint Germain, several Masters have been identified as living in America, whether *ab origine* or having moved from other locations. One particular site, Mount Shasta in California, might almost be considered as an American answer to Tibet - and has become something of a pilgrimage destination for contemporary New Age devotees.

Guy Ballard, the founder of the ‘I AM’ movement, has written that he began his quest for contact with the Masters not in the more normative Tibet, but in California, because he had been told of an American site associated with the Brotherhood:

Rumor said, there was a group of men - Divine Men in fact - called the Brotherhood of Mount Shasta, who formed a branch of the Great

65 Stoker himself had woven myth, legend, and accepted history into his tale by melding the notorious Vlad IV (‘the Impaler’) with the Transylvanian legend of the Nosferatu.
66 Cyril Scott also noted that ‘[l]here are two English Masters, but where They live may not be revealed’: Scott, *Bone of Contention*, 234. One suspects he is referring to ‘Vulcan’ (‘known in His last earth-life as Sir Thomas More’) and ‘Athena’ (‘known on earth as Thomas Vaughan, “Eugenius Philalethes”’), two Masters from Besant’s & Leadbeater’s, *Man: Whence, How and Whither*, 7.
White Lodge, and that this Focus from very ancient times had continued unbroken down to the present day. Ballard - and all of his various continuators - claimed that his 1930 pilgrimage to Mount Shasta was successful; while hiking around the mountain, Ballard made contact with the ‘Divine Men’.

Interestingly, the first appearance of this location in an esoteric context appears to have been in a once influential, but now largely forgotten, ‘channelled’ text known as *A Dweller on Two Planets*, published in 1894. The ‘amanuensis’ of the work, Frederick Spencer Oliver (1866-1899), claimed to have clairaudiently received the work at the behest of his occult teacher, the real author, ‘Phylos the Thibetan’. *A Dweller on Two Planets* relates the story of Walter Pierson’s (that is, Phylos’) introduction to the mysterious Lothinian Brotherhood through the mediation of a Chinese adept named Quong, and his subsequent initiation into the fraternity in the year 1866:

"A high caste Thibetan, two Hindoo pundits and Egyptian were, excepting Quong, the only foreign brethren, the remaining persons being American and English. The Egyptian was to the Sakaza [temple] what the Grand Master is to a Masonic fraternity ... he

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68 Ibid., 1.
69 Ibid., 1-32. Ballard’s meeting with Saint Germain has distinct Christological and Biblical overtones (cf. Jn. IV):

"[Saint Germain:] ‘My Brother, if you will hand me your cup, I will give you a much more refreshing drink than spring water’ (in ibid., 3).

70 ‘Phylos the Thibetan’ ['through’ Frederick Spencer Oliver], *A Dweller on Two Planets or The Dividing of the Way*, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1974: see also Jon Klimo, *Channeling: Investigations on Receiving Information from Paranormal Sources*, The Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1988,104. Phylos described himself thus:

Today, my brother, the masses of humanity on this planet are awakened to the fact that their knowledge of life - the Great Mystery - is insufficient for the needs of the soul. Hence a school of advanced thought has arisen [Theosophy?], whose members, ignorant of the mysterious truth, yet know their ignorance and ask for light. I make no pretenses when I say that I - Theochristian student and Occult Adept - am one of a class of men who do know, and can explain these mysteries. I, with other Christian adepts, influence the inspirational writers and speakers through an ability to exert the control of our trained, and therefore more powerful, minds over theirs, which are enormously less so (in ibid., 19).

71 Although it might at first appear that the introduction of a Chinese adept would indicate a certain pan-ethnicism for the Lothinian Brotherhood, such is not the case. In fact, *A Dweller on Two Planets* is an overtly racist work, with Quong engaging in repeated tirades against his fellow Chinese.
stood before the rest as a pinnacle each might study, and rise to.  
In an account which resonates closely with Ballard's later claims, Pierson is shown his previous incarnations, most notably in Atlantis, and is encouraged to visit Venus in his astral body. Most of these experiences take place on and around Mount Shasta ('Shasta, O, Mt. Shasta'), and it is there that in 1883 and 1884 Pierson - now the great occultist Phylos - imparted his tale to Oliver 'in sight of the peak of Mount Shasta'.

A Dweller on Two Planets contributed substantially to the idea that Mount Shasta was home to some sort of mysterious adept brotherhood. Edgar Lucien Larkin (d. 1924) was much influenced by Oliver, and claimed that he was able to observe Lemurians on Mount Shasta through his telescope at the Mount Lowe Observatory. According to Larkin, a thousand Lemurians occupied a 'mystic village' which surrounded a rather Mayan-looking temple, and would conduct midnight rituals to celebrate their escape from Lemuria. On those occasions when they required supplies, the Lemurians would visit nearby towns and purchase provisions such as sulphur, salt, and lard with gold nuggets.

The idea of the presence of Lemurians on Mount Shasta was further popularised by the founder of the Theosophico-Rosicrucian body AMORC, Harvey Spencer Lewis. In his 1931 text, Lemuria: The Lost Continent of the Pacific, Spencer Lewis (employing the anagrammatical pseudonym, Wishar S. Cervé) developed Oliver's theme that the Shasta Lemurians were a highly technologically-advanced civilisation, possessed of such machinery as sophisticated aeroplanes. Spencer Lewis' configurations are a rather baroque development of Blavatskian ethnography and

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72 Ibid., 276.
73 Ibid., 244.
74 F. S. Oliver, 'Amanuensis Preface' in 'Phylos', A Dweller, 15.
75 L. Sprague de Camp, Lost Continents: The Atlantis Theme, Ballantine Books, New York, 1975, 74. Sprague de Camp noted that while the Mt. Lowe Observatory is near to the justly-famed Mt. Wilson Observatory, the former was 'a tourist attraction by the Pacific Electric Railway in connection with the Mount Lowe Inn' (in ibid.).
76 Ibid., 75
77 Ibid.
78 Wishar S. Cervé [Harvey Spencer Lewis], Lemuria: The Lost Continent of the Pacific, The Rosicrucian Press, San Jose, California, 1931.
geography. Sprague de Camp considered the book an amalgam of occultism and pseudo-science:

Cervó's book ... combines Lemuria and Atlantis with the Jewish-Indian theory and Wegener's hypothesis of continental drift. The Mayas, it seems, were all descendants of Atlanteans and Lemurians, whereas all the other Amerinds were derived from the Lost Ten Tribes.79

South America

In more recent times, Tibet has ceased to be the focus for Masters-groups. It is not unlikely that as monastic exiles have brought to the West an increasingly accessible and more authoritative representation of Tibetan Buddhism, the focus has turned away from previous Western constructs of Tibetan religion. In response, conceptualisers have searched farther afield for Masters and Masters-cognates. An exhaustive analysis of the results of this renewed Orientalism would require volumes: for the present purposes, one example will suffice.

In 1961 'Brother Philip' published The Brotherhood of the Seven Rays which located the Great White Brotherhood beside lake Titicaca, whence the adepts had retreated following the sinking of Lemuria.80 'Brother Philip' was perhaps better known as a prolific author of books devoted to flying saucers, unorthodox archaeology, and Theosophy - published under his birth name, George Hunt Williamson (1926-1986).81 Williamson's American esoteric credentials were extensive; he had been involved, in one way or another, with a number of Theosophy's successors, and had been one of the six witnesses present at the famed occasion when George Adamski (1891-1965) made 'contact' with a Venusian in the desert of California on 20 November, 1952.82 Williamson's outlook was ostensibly
Theosophical;\textsuperscript{83} he believed he was in contact with many of the Masters from the Theosophical pantheon, as well as the Ascended Masters of Guy Ballard. Further, he claimed to represent planetary Masters, notably Kadar Laqu, the head of the Interplanetary Council-Circle.\textsuperscript{84}

In 1956, Williamson and his followers journeyed to Peruvian Titicaca to establish an Abbey of the Seven Rays, under the guidance of the Ascended Master Araru-Muru. As Melton noted, "[t]he ruins of the area were viewed as partially the result of contact and cooperation between the Great White Brotherhood and the space masters".\textsuperscript{85} The monastery was established in the early 1960s and continued as a communal enterprise until the 1970s. During this period he maintained his Theosophical activities, and was ordained under the name Michel Djorde Milan d’Obrenovic\textsuperscript{86} in the Liberal Catholic Church by Bishop Gerrit Munnik on 19 December, 1971.\textsuperscript{87} His latter years were occupied with various \textit{episcopi vagantes} efforts, and, as ever, with UFO movements.\textsuperscript{88} Crucially, with Williamson’s efforts the Theosophical Masters had become more or less synonymous with ‘Space Masters’, a not unexpected development, but one which merged Victorian-era Theosophy, Twentieth century space travel (and the fiction thereof), and florid conspiracy theory into a new configuration: what might be termed ‘Star Trek’ Theosophy. Never again would geographical Masters-Utopias be undermined by exploration and mapping: in ‘Star Trek’ Theosophy, the sky’s the limit.

\textsuperscript{83} For a time he lectured at the (Theosophical) Krotona Institute in Ojai, California. See Ward, Persson & Bain, \textit{Independent Bishops}, 119.

\textsuperscript{84} Melton, \textit{The Encyclopedia of American Religions}, 678.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{86} Williamson claimed that he was a scion of the Yugoslavian royal family of d’Obrenovic - the last representative of which was believed to have been assassinated in 1903. He had chosen ‘Williamson’ because ‘d’Obrenovic’ was too hard for Americans to pronounce. He also occasionally referred to himself as Marziano II Francesco Giuseppe Maria Lavarello Obrenovitch, King of Serbia; also sometimes as Bosnia, Count of Takovo: in ibid., 148; Ward, Persson & Bain, \textit{Independent Bishops}, 119.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 118.

\textsuperscript{88} Williamson was consecrated to the episcopate on 10 April, 1974, by John Marion Stanley of the Orthodox Church of the East, and also on 2 February, 1977, by Albert Ronald (Elijah) Coady, of the Eastern Catholic Syro-Chaldean Archdiocese of North America. Williamson went on to found the Holy Apostolic Catholic Church, Syro-Chaldean Diocese of Santa Barbara and Central California (which appears not to have survived him). See Melton, \textit{The Encyclopedia of American Religions}, 148, 679; Ward, Persson & Bain, \textit{Independent Bishops}, 118-119.
APPENDIX C

THE MASTERS AND FICTIONAL LITERATURE

That 'the occult' has come to be a sinister and pejorative term in the popular imagination has much to do with the way in which modern esotericism - in its occultist variety - has been appropriated as a literary (and, latterly, cinematic) motif. More often than not, occultism in fiction serves as an antitype of goodness, wholesomeness, and grace. Rarely is it accorded a sympathetic hearing, and rarer still has the author bothered to 'place' occultism within the broader context of the history of ideas. Part of the reason, it seems, is that the occult sells; it possesses remarkable sway with editors and producers who are aware that the introduction of occult paraphernalia into a story will almost inevitably boost sales.

Although this is not the place to examine the sociological basis for such a phenomenon, one small observation might be appropriate. It has been noted supra that the domain of esotericism appears to be a highly fluid one (which thus requires a certain transdisciplinaryism in the scholar). A similar phenomenon might be observed in the field of occult, or 'supernatural', fiction; it adheres to no strict boundaries, and tends to be readily assimilable with such other genres as the neo-Gothic schauerromantik, science fiction, science fantasy, the modern bildungsroman, detective fiction, and the suspense thriller. The occult is no less obvious, though problematically so, in such emergent fields as 'true crime' and what can only be termed
'conversion fiction'.

There can be little doubt that Theosophy contributed greatly to the profusion of occultism in fiction. Not only did many Theosophists write such novels, but many esoterically-inclined professional authors subsequently joined the Society. In fact, Blavatsky's and Leadbeater's works provided rather fecund territory for novelists, and have been systematically mined since the time they were first published. No significant study of the influence of Theosophy on modern fiction or cinema has yet been attempted; indeed, esotericism has itself only recently become of interest to literary theorists and critics.

Just as the Masters were central to Theosophy, they became so to occult novelists. The range of works which contain a Master-like character is immense, and the following survey makes no claim to comprehensiveness, let alone exhaustiveness. The present work aims to do little more that to offer a brief overview of a small handful

1 A fixation on populist occult iconography is a mainstay of the 'true crime' genre. Such motifs as black candles, magic circles, and so forth, are granted disproportionate treatment by many authors. One suspects that this becomes something of a self-reinforcing tendency when one considers the media fixation of the so-called 'Zodiac Killer', and the claims made in self-defence and mitigation by David Berkowitz ('Son of Sam'). For one example, see Robert Graysmith, *Zodiac*, Berkley Books, New York, 1987.

2 See John Cooper, 'Theosophists and Others In Fiction' in *Theosophical History*, V:2, April, 1994, 46-47.


of works that seem to furnish significant or interesting approaches to the literary use of
the Master motif, and which were published subsequent to 1875. The isolation of
such instances is not as simple as may at first be thought. In the first place, some
‘novels’ imply or explicitly aver that the events recorded are factual; others,
conversely, are fictionalised accounts of factual events (at least as far as the author was
concerned). For the present purposes, it has proven simplest to divide the works into
categories:

1) Fictional works which include characters who are
presented as Masters (or Masters cognates).
2) Fictional works which include characters who appear
to be ‘chelas’ of Masters (or at least trained occultists
who believe in the Masters, who make reference to the
Masters, or who claim to gain the assistance of
Masters).
3) Fictional works which involve a quest to find the
Masters, or devolve upon the occult attainment of
Mastership.
4) Fictional works which include characters who are
‘Black Masters’.

1) Fictional works which include characters who are presented as Masters (or Masters cognates)

Writing in *Lucifer* in 1887, Blavatsky referred an increasing influence of Theosophy
in literature. She listed some of the works of fiction which could be classified as
‘mystic and theosophic literature’, including F. Marion Crawford’s *Mr Isaacs* and

Zoroaster; Marie Corelli’s *The Romance of Two Worlds*; Robert Louis Stevenson’s

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5 The *topos* of the hidden Brotherhood, directing human affairs predates Blavatsky by at least a century: cf., eg., Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* of 1796.


The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde; F. Anstey's A Fallen Idol; H. Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines and She; Rosa Campbell Praed's Affinities and The Brother of the Shadow; Edmund Downey's House of Tears; Florence Marryat's A Daughter of the Tropics; and F.C. Philips' The Strange Adventure of Lucy Smith. Of these, however, only a few specifically included a Master figure; a selection of such works from the 1880s follows.

Francis Marion Crawford (1854-1909)

Francis Marion Crawford, an American author, spent most of his working life in Italy, where he became noted for his ghost stories and supernaturalism. His tales were embellished with cultural detail - likely a result of the author's wide travels (with several years spent in India as a newspaper editor). Mr. Isaacs (1882) was his first novel. It was followed by With the Immortals (1888) in which a necromantic scientist evokes the ghosts of famous men, and Khaled: A Tale of Arabia (1891), in which a spirit seeks to win the love of a mortal woman. Crawford is probably best remembered for The Witch of Prague (1891), which details the adventures of a medium and a hypnotist in search of immortality. Crawford completed a small number of highly regarded ghost stories which were posthumously collected in Wandering Ghosts (1911).6

Crawford's Mr. Isaacs devolves upon the relationship between Abdul Hafiz-ben-Izak ('Mr. Isaacs') and Ram Lal, a Master figure who travels between India and Tibet. Blavatsky was especially enamoured of Crawford's Ram Lal, whom she suspected of being a composite of her descriptions of Koot Hoomi and Bulwer-Lytton's 'Majnoor' (Mejnour) from his Zanoni of 1842. She was particularly impressed by the fact that Crawford presented Ram Lal in human terms, and not as one of the 'impossible creatures of the imagination':

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6 One element of Haggard's thought which may well have impressed Blavatsky was his engagement with evolutionism: see Alan Sandison, The Wheel of Empire: A Study of the Imperial Idea in Some Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Fiction, Macmillan, London, 1967, 25-47 et passim.
Ram Lal walks, talks, eats, and - gracious heavens! - rolls and smokes cigarettes. And this Ram Lal is therefore a far more natural being than Zanoni, who lived on air and got about on the crupper of the lightning flash. Only a sensible writer could have made his adept say: 'I am not omnipotent. I have very little more power than you. Given certain conditions and I can produce certain results, palpable, visible, and appreciable by all; but my power, as you know, is itself merely the knowledge of the laws of nature, which Western scientists, in their ignorance, ignore'. And it was genuine appreciation of a noble human ideal which prompted him to call our revered teachers 'that small band of high priests who in all ages and nations and religions and societies have been the mediators between time and eternity, to cheer and comfort the brokenhearted, to rebuke him who would lose his own soul, to speed the awakening spirit in its heavenward flight'.

The Theosophical foundations of Mr. Isaacs are evident and were obvious to contemporaries. Blavatsky, who termed the work to be 'the key-note for mystic and theosophic literature', wrote a long review of the novel for The Theosophist, and was obviously flattered by being singled out by the author for special note: 'the names of three members of our Society - Mr Sinnett, Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky - figure in it, and adepts and the rules and aspirations of their fraternity have a large share of the author's attention'.

Rosa Campbell Praed (1851-1935)

Rosa Campbell Praed was born in Queensland, Australia, and raised on remote pastoral properties before her marriage in 1872 to Arthur Campbell Praed. In 1876 the couple moved to England, where Rosa established herself as a popular novelist and dramatist, and became a prominent member of London literary society. She became

12 There are two scholarly biographies of Praed: Roderick, In Mortal Bondage, ('the first full-length biography of an Australian woman writer': flyleaf) and Clarke, Rosa! Rosa!. See also William H. Wilde, Jay Hooton & Barry Andrews, The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1999, 628-629.
interested in, indeed fascinated by, Spiritualism, Occultism, and Theosophy in the last twenty years of the century, cultivating such figures as William Crookes, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Oliver Lodge. She made the acquaintance of A. P. Sinnett and began to attend regular meetings at his home, associating with Mabel Collins, Anna Bonus Kingsford, Edward Maitland, the painter Hermann Schmiechen, and Countess Wachtmeister. The Theosophists she met inevitably became characters in her novels, as is apparent in *The Soul of Countess Adrian* (1891), *The Brother of the Shadow* (1886), and *Affinities: A Romance of Today* (1885), the last-mentioned containing a brief appearance by a character obviously based upon Blavatsky.

Praed was especially influenced by her meeting in 1885 with Mohini Chatterji (who became the model for Ananda in *The Brother of the Shadow*). Mohini told her of the 'Dugpas' - black magicians or 'Black Masters' - one of whom, an Egyptian, was said to be in London at the time. These stories formed the basis for *The Brother of the Shadow* in which the hero - if a 'Brother of the Shadow' may be so described - is a demonstrable Master figure, Murghab. Praed was also personally inspired by Countess Wachtmeister, who occasionally served as a medium through whom messages from the Masters were obtained, and who almost certainly provided the basis for *The Soul of Countess Adrian*, a story of the use of occult technologies to reverse the theft of a soul. Praed wrote other novels with esoteric themes, including *The Insane Root: A Romance of a Strange Country* (1902) in which Sir Richard Burton, whom Praed had met in Algeria, serves as the model for Isadas Pacha. Her *As a Watch in the Night: A Drama of Waking and Dream, in Five Acts* (1900) was influenced by séances Praed had attended at the Sinnetts’ home in London in the 1890s, and, like Sinnett’s novel, *Karma* (1885), is an account of the operations of karma on the lives of the main protagonists.

Praed separated from her husband in 1899 to live with Nancy Harward (1864-1927), whom she believed to be the reincarnation of a Roman slave girl, Nyria, with whom

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13 For Praed and Schmiechen see supra Appendix A.
14 Patricia Clarke has suggested that the character of Maddox Challis was based on Olcott: Clarke, *Rosal Rosal*, 125.
she had shared several former lives, including time spent in Atlantis. Harward had first come to Praed's attention on the basis of the apparently successful experiments into past-life regression which Sinnett had undertaken on her; Praed, fascinated, encouraged Harward further. Between 1902 and 1913, the latter acted as a medium through whom two Masters known as 'F.' and 'K.' (or 'Kahlmah') communicated. The Spiritualistic experiments of Praed and Harward remained a mainstay of their long lives together, and provided grist to Praed’s literary mill; she completed over forty novels, several with obvious Master figures. The relationship with Nancy was the most passionate of Rosa’s life, so all-consuming, in fact, that Praed’s biographer, Roderick, (perhaps unkindly) suggested that it ‘became for Nancy spiritual bondage, and for Mrs Praed the final act in a karma that reached back to Plato’s Atlantis’.  

Alfred Percy Sinnett (1840-1921) Sinnett’s pivotal rôle in Theosophical historiography is assured for several reasons, most notably due to the fact that he was the major recipient of the Mahatma letters. Sinnett was a significant player in Theosophical politics in the years subsequent to Blavatsky’s demise, and only ceased his activities in the wake of Besant’s successful bid for the Presidency of the Society in 1907. It should be remembered that Sinnett was a professional newspaper editor, and brought journalistic talents to his Theosophical endeavour; he wanted, emphatically, to expose Theosophy to as broad an audience as possible, and was prepared to popularise its tenets if need be. To this end, Sinnett also published fictional works such as *Karma: A Novel* (1885).

*Karma: A Novel* is essentially Sinnett’s account of the Theosophical doctrines of karma and reincarnation presented in the form of a work of fiction, using the past lives and present karma of the leading characters: George Annerly, Miriam Seaford, Lucy Vaughan, Claude Merland, and various of their associates. The figure approximating a

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13 Ibid., 169ff. Praed believed that she and Harward had begun as one entity, ‘twin souls’. Two of Praed’s most celebrated novels, *Nyria* (1904) and *The Soul of Nyria* (1931) give accounts of Praed’s and Harward’s previous lives together, and develop the notion of ‘twin souls’. The latter was written by a disconsolate Praed following Harward’s death in 1927.
14 For details of the communications with ‘F.’ and ‘K.’ see in ibid., 173, 180-188, 195-197.
16 Although he resigned in protest, Sinnett did eventually rejoin the Society.
Master is Baron Friedrich von Monstern, who not only instructs authoritatively on esoteric matters and explains the karmic relationships between the main figures, but facilitates the development of various occult powers in those around him, including the ability to remember previous lives. To a large extent, the novel concerns the conflict Annerly and Merland each have in deciding whether (in the words of another character) 'to be an occult monk or to lead an ordinary life in the world'. In the end, both men determine to marry the women they love, having been assured by the Baron that being prepared to relinquish their partners for the sake of occult training was sufficient to fulfil their karmic debts. The novel concludes with Merland and Lucy Vaughan becoming engaged, and 'by some wonderful play of the forces that were all around them there', a sprig of stephanotis manifested miraculously. Upon examination, the sprig contained a curl of paper around it bearing a note of blessing from the Baron. The parallels with the Mahatmic correspondence are immediate and obvious.

Marie Corelli (1855?-1924)

According to Brian Masters, Marie Corelli was 'unique in the history of literature. Before the era of broadcasting, no one person had secured such a vast audience'. Her books were extraordinarily popular, and, indeed, it is arguable that her novels created the very concept of a 'best seller'; her works often had first print-runs of 50 000 copies, and regularly sold out on the first day. Indeed, her novel Temporal Power (1902) had a first printing of 120 000, with a second printing of 30 000 the same week. At the time of her death in 1924, The Sorrows of Satan (1895) was in its 60th edition, Thelma (1887) in its 56th, and Barabbas (1893) in its 54th; the majority of her works were translated into virtually all of the European languages.

20 Ibid., vol. 2, 333.
21 It might be noted that in responding to a question about a possible conflict between the teachings of Sinnett's Esoteric Buddhism and his Karma: A Novel, Blavatsky noted: Finally it must always be remembered that a romance, even though written by an Occultist, is a romance still, designed to suggest broad conceptions rather than to expound scientific and doctrinal details (H. P. Blavatsky, 'Esoteric Buddhism' in Lucifer. I:3, 15 November, 1887, 230).
23 Corelli's The Sorrows of Satan (1895) sold more copies than any other English novel published to that date. Indeed, Corelli was the best-selling author in the world for 30 years (as well as being Queen Victoria's favourite): in ibid., 3.
24 Ibid., 7.
Although Marie Corelli is presently considered unfashionable (and rarely rates a mention in academic histories of English literature), a number of her novels are currently undergoing something of a revival, and are popular items—significantly—in occult book stores.

All of Corelli’s self-referential claims remain moot. Her assertion of exalted parentage, and the accounts of her early years cannot be verified at this time—even her name seems to be an invention.\(^2\) Regardless, she certainly captured the public imagination, as did her works, and it is fascinating to consider the extraordinary currency thus generated by the occultism which permeated her Victorian romances and social satires. Intriguingly, clear Masters figures appear in several of her most popular novels.\(^2\)

Her first novel, *The Romance of Two Worlds* (1886) centres upon a pianist in search of a miraculous cure for ‘nervous exhaustion’. Eventually she finds herself in Paris and discovers one of the ‘wise men of the East’, Heliobas, in whose company she undergoes all manner of magical and mystical experiences.\(^2\) Heliobas reappears in *Ardath* (1889); the hero, an agnostic, meets him in a ‘Caucasian monastery’, and is transported by him to ancient Babylonia. Heliobas again figures in *The South of Lilith* (1892), a novel set in ancient Egypt, in which the heroine, Lilith, dies soon after her own birth and is restored to life by the occult powers of a scientist, El-Rami. Having ‘created’ Lilith, El-Rami—somewhat predictably—eventually falls in love with her, and cannot accept that he may not control her soul, even as he controlled her body. The benevolent Heliobas intervenes in an attempt to assist El-Rami, but is incapable of preventing the latter’s ruin. Although many of Corelli’s novels treat esoteric themes (her *The Life Everlasting* [1911], for example, is devoted to the successful search for the ‘elixir’), the preponderance of discernibly Theosophical

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\(^{2}\) Corelli claimed to have been born about 1869; however, as Masters demonstrates, she was probably born on or about 1 May, 1885: in ibid., 5.


\(^{2}\) Unsurprisingly, this work has been reprinted in recent years by a number of occult and esoteric publishers.
Masters such as Heliobas suggests a probable familiarity with the Society and its teachings.  

F. Anstey [Thomas Anstey Guthrie] (1856-1934)

F. Anstey (the *nom de plume* of Thomas Anstey Guthrie) wrote of Masters in his novel, *A Fallen Idol* (1886), which Blavatsky described in *The Theosophist* as 'the latest *theosophical* novel', declaring it to be 'based on some very occult truths of Esoteric Philosophy'.  

Guthrie's novel was explicitly Theosophical and indicative of Blavatsky's influence, though its employment of Indian vernacular (and 'accents'!) leaves much to be desired:

'About my guru or Mahatma? Yes', said the Chela, 'he is a wonderful man, who has evolved himself into what we call a 'sixth rounder' by developing his higher principles - never can I his name without reverence pronounce, that wise and well-educated adept whose title is Shang Gasba ... From him I learn all I know of the existence in Akaska, the shells, and lost and earth-bound souls which infest the atmosphere; his instruction has taught me how to leave my body, and with thought-like quickness through unlimited space to wander, to materialize objects out of the gosmic dust-bin, or to resolve matter again into its constituent elements, to transport things in one instant many thousand miles. And with the counsels of my revered master, I am able the tremendous nature forces by simple will-bower to control.'  

Franz Hartmann (1838-1912)

Like Sinnett, Franz Hartmann was intimately involved with the Society in its early years in Europe and at Adyar. His relationship with Blavatsky, always tentative, soured in the wake of the 'Hodgson Report', and he later turned to rather

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28 It is known that Corelli lectured at the Theosophical Lodge in Leeds: Masters, *Now Barabbas was a Rotter*, 12.


entrepreneurial Freemasonic pursuits, notably the \textit{Ordo Templi Orientis}.\footnote{For details see Ellic Howe, \textit{Urania's Children: The Strange World of the Astrologers}, William Kimber, London, 1967, ch. 6.} Hartmann's grasp of esotericism was more profound than that of many of his fellow Society members, and his views are often illuminating.

Aside from Hartmann's \textit{An Adventure Among the Rosicrucians} (1887), which features Masters in a Theosophical monastery (discussed \textit{supra}), his other most explicitly Theosophical novel is \textit{The Talking Image of Urur} (1890). The latter is a sharp satire of the entire Masters phenomenon, and is unusual for its humour, wit, and salutary warnings.\footnote{There have been several works published which parody Blavatsky and her Masters. Mabel Collins Cook issued (anonymously) a novel ridiculing Blavatsky's Masters: \textit{Morial the Mahatma; or, The Black Master of Tibet} (Lovell, Gestefield and Co., New York, 1892) which was reprinted as \textit{The Mahatma: A Tale of Modern Theosophy} (Downey and Co., London, 1895). It is also possible to include Collins' \textit{Idyll of the White Lotus} (1885) in the category of fiction referring to Masters, although she considered it to be more of an allegory of the spiritual quest: for the latter (and its provenance) see \textit{supra} p. 118n22.}

\textit{The Talking Image of Urur} concerns a teacher (usually identified with Blavatsky) who employed a magician's cabinet to transmit fraudulent messages from Mahatmas. Originally serialised in \textit{Lucifer}, it was there, as Hartmann later claimed, 'entirely disfigured by the editors of that journal', with the last chapter, aside from the closing paragraph, being omitted entirely.\footnote{For details see Blavatsky, \textit{Collected Writings}, vol. XI, 45ff. One respondent stated that the story was 'designed to satirise the false prophets of Theosophy in order that the true prophets may be justified' (in ibid., 46). For her part, Blavatsky considered that as she did 'not object to finding herself represented as a kind of mediumistic poll parrot, why should other "theosophists" object?' (in ibid., 47). It might be noted, however, that the most explicit warnings (from the last chapter) were not printed.} Hartmann described the work thus:

\begin{quote}
[\textit{The Talking Image of Urur} details] the adventures of a 'theosophical Don Quixote' who seeks for wisdom everywhere except in the right place. He joins a 'Society for Distribution of Wisdom' in the East; but finds nothing but folly. Finally, in the last chapter, he discovers that true wisdom cannot be found anywhere except by the attainment of the knowledge of the self.\footnote{Franz Hartmann, \textit{The Talking Image of Urur}, J. W. Lovell and Co., New York, 1890, xii.}
\end{quote}
Hartmann claimed that the events described in the novel 'or their equivalents have actually taken place, and the characters of the story are, so to say, composite photographs of living people' and that the book 'was written with the sole object of showing to what absurdities a merely intellectual research after spiritual truths will lead'.

The story details the searches of Pancho and Conchita for the fabled adeptic brotherhood, the Rosicrucians, believed to be 'in possession of the secret of the Philosopher’s Stone and the true Elixir of Life'. They hear of a man named Joachim Puffer, deemed to be 'a genuine Chela, that is to say, a disciple of a Mysterious Brotherhood of Adepts, living in the most inaccessible regions of a desert in the Interior of Africa'. The African Adepts are, according to Mr Puffer, far in advance of those in India, and work through the Society for Distribution of Wisdom, of which their great Hierophant, Captain Bumpkins, is the head. The latter part of the novel recounts the adventures of Pancho and others, as they experience life at the Society’s headquarters. ‘The Talking Image’ is a statue through which the Masters communicate. Mr Bottler, a representative of the Society for the Discovery of Unknown Sciences in London, has been sent out to investigate the Image and its alleged powers. Having been comprehensively disillusioned by his experiences with the Brotherhood of Adepts, Pancho departed from the headquarters - only to meet a mysterious stranger, Heliodorus, who appears to be a Christian esotericist and alchemist. Heliodorus revivifies Pancho’s flagging esoteric heart, and advises him to study the Bible in conjunction with the works of Paracelsus and Boehme. Finally, then, Pancho recognises the futility of searching for an exterior gnosis:

He now knew that it is impossible for man by merely intellectual efforts to bore a hole through the curtain that veils the sanctuary of Isis, so that he may peep through it and gratify his curiosity; but that he must first go through the slow process of attaining spirituality before the mysteries of the spirit can be revealed to him by the spirit itself.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., viii.

\textsuperscript{36} The parallels to Hartmann's time at Adyar are instructive. It should be remembered that he was present during the Coulomb affair and during Hodgson's stay.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 299.
2) Fictional works which include characters who appear to be 'chelas' of Masters (or at least trained occultists who believe in the Masters, who make reference to the Masters, or who claim to gain the assistance of Masters).

This category can be divided between those works of fiction which are based on the factual history of Theosophy, and those significantly influenced by the motif of chelaship (whether mediated directly via Theosophy or not). In the former category it is worthwhile noting, for example, that Leadbeater and the activities associated with the Coming have furnished material for several authors. Of these, three have been selected. In the latter category, a favourite motif is the 'soul doctor' or 'occult detective' who battles sinister forces at the same time as instructing 'chelas' in a 'wisdom tradition'. Such novels often appear to espouse an initiatory meta-narrative.

In the novel, *Ride on Stranger* (1943) by Australian writer, Kylie Tennant (1912-1988), the activities of Leadbeater and Wedgwood, and life at The Manor (here located - as in reality - on the edge of Sydney Harbour) form a central part of one stage of the life of the main character, Shannon Hicks. Hicks becomes secretary to Abbott Southwell Vaughan Quilter (clearly modelled on James Ingall Wedgwood), and lives within the residential community of the 'Order of Human Brotherhood', led by Bishop Bulfram (an obvious parody of Leadbeater). The Order also has a 'city church, small, rich and dim, where the bishops and their flock assembled on Sundays', and various lecture halls. The Masters are implied rather than specifically mentioned in the novel, and the Order, although concerned with spiritual advancement and the coming of a new civilisation, appears to be more oriented toward New Thought than to Theosophy.

Another novel by an Australian author, Sumner Locke Elliott (1917-1991), also deals with Theosophy and the anticipated Coming in Sydney in the 1920s. *Careful, He*...

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The categories of 'soul doctors' and 'occult detectives' were coined by Michael Parry and include such figures as Dion Fortune's Dr. Taverner and Algernon Blackwood's Dr. John Silence. See Michael Parry, *The Supernatural Solution: Stories of Spooks and Sleuths*, Panther, Frogmore, 1976, 10.

The novel was made into an Australian Broadcasting Commission television series with the screenplay written by Peter Yeldham.
*Might Hear You* (1963) includes a peripheral character, Agnes, who is the aunt of the novel's hero, P. S., and who serves as a sort of caretaker for the now-abandoned Amphitheatre constructed at Balmoral as a centre for the movement focussed on the Coming.⁴⁹

In *The Saviors* (1987), by the American novelist Helen Yglesias, the main character, Maddy Brewster, becomes involved with the 'Universal Society of Brotherhood', falls in love with the Indian 'messiah', Vidha, and is advanced through occult training by Bishop Nysmith, thereby becoming a pupil of 'the Elders'. The novel appears to be much influenced by the works of Emily, Mary, and Elizabeth Lutyens, and includes accounts of life at The Manor (relocated to Hampstead in London) that bear a striking resemblance to the Lutyens' autobiographical works. The Leadbeaterian parody is acute:

> Within a month [Maddy] was elevated to Level Seven in a ceremony that bewildered and scared her. As she understood it, she had been the heroine of an out-of-body adventure, which took place without her normal awareness but with her full participation on the Astral Plane. Bishop Nysmith had transported her. The Elders welcomed her. She had sworn fidelity to the Society, vowed adherence toward perfection, and promised to perform the duties and services that would lift her to the next highest rung, Level Six. In Bishop Nysmith's report, the Elders had been pleased by Maddy's age, health, and enthusiasm and had encouraged her to take up the study of stenography and typing.⁴¹

The idea of the 'soul doctor' or the 'occult detective' may at first appear entirely out of the ambit of Masters-based Theosophy. Certainly, neither notion can be said to have originated with Blavatsky, and the 'soul doctor' has something of a literary tradition as is obvious from the character of Dr. Martin Hesselius, 'doctor of metaphysical

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⁴⁹ *Careful, He Might Hear You* was made into an internationally-acclaimed Australian film - though with all of the references to Theosophy excised.

medicine’, created by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873). Nevertheless, it is an interesting phenomenon that many of the early proponents of these genres were Theosophists, or members of related organs such as the various recensions of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. An examination of the functions, attributes, and descriptions of the ‘soul doctors’ and the ‘occult detectives’ (beyond the parameters of the present work) indicates that there are often startling associations with the Theosophical Masters. Of the many examples, the following is but a small selection:


William Hope Hodgson (1877-1918): Carnacki the Ghost Finder (1913).


Dion Fortune (Violet Mary Firth, 1890-1946): The Secrets of Dr. Taverner (1926).

Interestingly, the models of the ‘soul doctor’ and the ‘occult detective’ have been enthusiastically taken up by a swathe of contemporary authors, with the two motifs merging into a composite category of ‘psychic-’ or ‘occult thrillers’. Into this category falls The Magicians (1954), by John Boynton Priestley (1894-1984), which relates the encounter of an ‘ordinary man’ with three mysterious figures who exhibit extraordinary powers and who engage in a battle against the combined ‘Powers of Evil’.

Also included in this category would be Frank Laura’s ‘Dr. Orient’ novels:

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44 T. E. D. Klein, ‘Hodgson, William Hope’ in ibid., 203-204.
45 The main character, Oliver Haddo, is based upon the author’s experience of Aleister Crowley.
46 Dion Fortune, one of the most popular and widely-read English occultists of the twentieth century, wrote a number of occult novels which treat quasi-Theosophical themes: The Winged Bull (1935), The Goat-Foot God (1936), The Sea Priestess (1938); Moon Magic (1939). For an account of Fortune’s Theosophical background, and of her claim to contact with ‘inner plane Adepti’, see Alan Richardson, Priestess: The Life and Magic of Dion Fortune, The Aquarian Press, Welmingborough, Northamptonshire, 1987, esp. ch. 6; Charles Fielding & Carr Collins, The Story of Dion Fortune, Star & Cross, Dallas, 1985; Janine Chapman, Quest for Dion Fortune, Samuel Weiser, York Beach, Maine, 1993. See also infra Appendix E.

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Dr. Orient (1970), Raga Six (1972), and Baron Orgaz (1974). In his Qhe! The Prophets of Evil (1976), William Bloom, writing under the pseudonym ‘W.: W.:’, created a ‘warrior of light’ known as Qhe, ruler of the ‘remote paradisal kingdom of Pashman, deep in the Himalayas’. Qhe, assisted by his colleague (and chela) Willard, fights evil on behalf of the ‘Powers of Light’.

The ‘occult thriller’ appears a mainstay of the contemporary publishing market. Interestingly, a significant percentage of such works involve a Master figure, often attended by a chela whom he instructs. Of the myriad works included under this rubric, typical are those of Peter Saxon: Dark Ways to Death (1968), Through the Dark Curtain (1968), The Killing Bone (1968), and The Haunting of Alan Mais (1968). Saxon’s novels introduce a band of psychic detectives, The Guardians, who are, according to the publisher’s description to the rear of the books, ‘dedicated to fighting and overcoming those forces of evil which have plagued and beset mankind since the beginning of time’. The Guardians were brought together by a mysterious Master figure, Gideon Cross, who regularly invokes the assistance of benevolent occult powers.

3) Fictional works which involve a quest to find the Masters, or devolve upon the occult attainment of Mastership.

The topos of the quest has often been employed by esoterically-inclined authors, but with the added occult motif of the Brotherhood of Masters as the object of the journey. Clearly, such novels are a romanticised version of the traditional initiatic genre, the bildungsroman. Among the legion of such works, it is not uncommon to find discernibly Theosophical themes and imagery. One early example will suffice to illustrate the degree to which the Blavatskian depiction of the Masters figures prominently in such literature.

*Brother of the Third Degree* (1894), by Will L. Garver (b.1867), introduces Alphonso Colono, a young man dissatisfied with his life, who yearns for knowledge
about 'the essential nature of things'. Colono is convinced of the existence of 'a Brotherhood' of which he is sure both his parents are initiates:

I have an inner consciousness which tells me this Brotherhood exists; and that among its members are exalted men and women who possess wondrous knowledge, powers and God-like wisdom.

Ultimately, Colono discovers 'the White Brotherhood' and is duly initiated into the 'Third Degree'. In the process he becomes acquainted with the 'Theosophical Society' and meets the mysterious Madame Petrovna. He soon comes to understand how necessity for evolution and 'perfectionism' it is that beings such as the Masters exist:

Do you think that human evolution has no guidance, or that it is ruled direct by God? If the latter, you are in error. God, the Infinite Spirit, while pervading all, is far beyond all earth affairs. But between us and the Supreme are many grades of beings - superior men, heroes, demi-gods and gods - and each host of these works through those below.

A more commonplace trope of occult initiatic literature is that of the inquisitive neophyte, who, determined to scale the heights of metaphysics, will encounter his

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49 Colona begins his quest for the Brotherhood as a sort of mission to find his mother. His father had told him:

Whenever I broached the subject to father he persisted that she still lived, and so far entered into an explanation as to say that she had been initiated into the 'Third Degree' whose members were superior to death and lived immortal ... 'Those of the “Third Degree” know not the ties of husband, wife, or parent. No individuals, as such, can claim their love, for it is boundless and universal, and belongs to all mankind' (in ibid., 39).

That Colono's mother, and not his father, should have been so elevated is highly unusual for Theosophically-inspired works of the period. It is likely that Garver is consciously reworking a theme from Zanoni, where the heroine, Viola, has only a father alive.
50 Ibid.
51 In a classic artifice, Colona returns to consciousness after his initiation and wonders whether it was all a dream - only to have a subsequent vision which assured him that he was responsible for his own spiritual advancement and could rely no exterior agency (Brotherhood or otherwise).
52 Garver's portrait of Madame Petrovna is a clear literary replica of Blavatsky. His knowledge of Theosophy must have been extensive; even his descriptions of the seals on the (Tuitit Bey) Masters' correspondence is extensively accurate.
53 Ibid., 50.
desideratum in the form of a mystical book. This volume, often penned in an alien script or emblazoned with baroque sigils, and inevitably to be found in the dusty stalls of an antiquarian bookstore, will set the young aspirant on the path of occult self-discovery. It is integral to this particular literary construct that the book will lead the youth to a spiritual adept, a Master, who will then replace the book as the revealer of a hidden and hitherto unavailable wisdom. The book provides the necessary propædeutical overture; the Master then takes over as the supreme pedagogue. Often the young adept will eventually join his Master as an initiate of the Brotherhood.

Typical of this sub-genre is The Sorcery Club (1912) by Elliott O'Donell (1872-1966). O'Donell relates the tale of three unemployed clerks in San Francisco in the early 1930s who acquire a book on 'Atlantean magic', and, by applying the knowledge in the book, acquire the powers of occult Masters. Significantly, the book had been initially purchased by one of the clerks, who, having taken refuge from the rain in a dusty second-hand book store, had accidentally damaged the tome and was therefore obliged to buy it.

The theme of an enigmatic book found under strange circumstances, and with the potential to lead to the Masters, has remained highly popular in contemporary fiction. Robert Silverberg's The Book of Skulls (1972), recounts a story of four American college students who encounter a manuscript which, when translated (apparently from Hebrew), tells of a 'cult of exiled Babylonian or Egyptian or whatever immortals living in the desert'. The text states that four people must journey to find the Brotherhood; two will find immortality, two will die. The young men find 'The House of the Skulls' in the desert, and are accepted as candidates to undergo the 'Trial' to become 'Receptacles', to which end they are subjected to special training: '[t]he rituals, the diet, the gymnastics, the spiritual exercises, and the rest'. Two of them do indeed die - one murdered by another, one ending his own life - and the remaining two attain to membership of the Brotherhood. Such trials and compromises are common to this form. Indeed, it might be said that although the Theosophical roots are evident, the new growth is barely recognisable.

54 The obvious direct progenitor for this device is Bulwer-Lytton's Zanoni of 1842. Unlike many of his continuators, however, Bulwer-Lytton was well aware of the origins of this topos in Islamic esotericism and, latterly, in alchemy and Rosicrucianism: see supra ch. 29.
4) Fictional works which include characters who are ‘Black Masters’.55

In Blavatskian terms, the Black Masters are those who consciously employ their powers to inhibit evolution and re-spiritualisation. Although (technically) an opposing fraternity to the Great White Lodge and comprised, significantly, of ‘black magicians’, Blavatsky rarely personified its members, and chose instead to speak of devolutionary tendencies and forces. For her, the Black Masters were primarily employed as a salutary warning to those who actively worked to undermine the Theosophical cause; in Society parlance, those who promoted the ascendency of materialism and ecclesiasticism were either synonymous with, or ignorantly working for, the Black Masters. In later Theosophical and para-Theosophical formulations, the rôle of the Black Brotherhood increased in scope and power, even to the degree of occasionally supporting a cosmic dualism (anathema to Blavatsky of course).66

The fact that the Black Brotherhood was something of an amorphous and undeveloped entity in Blavatskian conceptualising has meant that it is often difficult to discern its presence in fictional literature, and thence to demarcate between Black Masters and supernaturally-endowed villains. As just one example, it is difficult to determine the status of a character such as Dr. Nikola, the anti-hero of several novels by Guy Boothby (1867-1905), who certainly possesses many characteristics reminiscent of Blavatsky’s Black Masters.57 John Sutherland has noted that Dr. Nikola is suggestive of Conan Doyle’s Dr. Moriarty, du Maurier’s Svengali, Corelli’s Prince Luci Rimanez (who turns out to be Satan), Stoker’s Dracula, and Wells’ Dr. Moreau.58 Sutherland also suspects that he shares the characteristics of the ‘mad scientist’ with such other notables as Shelley’s Dr. Frankenstein and Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll.59 Nevertheless, Boothby was well aware of Theosophy,60 and some of his descriptions of a Tibetan

55 For the ‘Malign Masters’ see infra Appendix D.
56 See infra Appendix E.
57 Boothby wrote five Dr. Nikola novels: A Bid for Fortune, or Dr. Nikola’s Vendetta (1895); Dr. Nikola (1896); The Lust of Hate (1899); Dr. Nikola’s Experiment (1899); and Farewell Nikola (1901).
59 Ibid., xix-xx.
60 Cf., eg., Guy Boothby, Dr. Nikola, Master of Occult Mystery 2: Dr. Nikola Returns, Newcastle Publishing Co., Van Nuys, California, 1976, 42. Dr. Nikola, Master of Occult Mystery 2: Dr. Nikola Returns was originally published as Dr. Nikola.
Brotherhood have a familiar Theosophical cachet:

They were of all ages, and apparently all nations. Some were Chinese, some were Cingalese [sic], some were Tibetans, while one or two were certainly Aryans, and for all I knew to the contrary, might have been English. The room was filled with them, but there was something plainly unsubstantial about them. They moved to and fro without sound, yet with regular movements. I watched them, and as I watched, a terror such as I had never known in my life before came over me.  

A similar observation could be made of Dr. Fu Manchu, the occult villain of more than a dozen novels by Sax Rohmer (Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward [1886-1959]). Fu Manchu, for all of the blatant racism brought to bear on him by his creator, is evidently far superior in power, wisdom, and intellect to all of those Rohmer set against him, and has obvious characteristics which align him to the Theosophical template.

If Blavatsky described the Black Masters as those committed to combating her optimistically-inclined progressivist evolutionism, it was not long thereafter that individuals began - subtly at first - to redefine the Black Masters in entirely opposite terms. No longer did the Black Brotherhood attempt to inhibit evolution, they became the aggressive agents of the cosmic impetus. Thus it was that several authors began to present the Black Masters as something akin to a perverse Nietzschean Übermensch collective - a proto-fascistic extermination squad devoted to the forced 'weeding-out'

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61 Ibid., publisher's excerpt from the back of the volume.
62 The Fu Manchu corpus is huge: The Mask of Fu Manchu; The Daughter of Fu Manchu; The Bride of Fu Manchu; The Trail of Fu Manchu; President Fu Manchu; The Drums of Fu Manchu; The Island of Fu Manchu; The Shadow of Fu Manchu; Emperor Fu Manchu; Re-Enter Dr Fu Manchu; The Devil Doctor, etc. The first novel in the series, The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu was published in 1913.
63 Rohmer's description of Manchu should suffice to indicate the overt racism:
Imagine a person, tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan, a close-shaven skull, and long, magnetic eyes of the true cat-green. Invest him with all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race, accumulated in one giant intellect, with all the resources of sciences past and present. Imagine that awful being, and you have a mental picture of Dr Fu Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man (quoted in D. J. Enright, 'Introduction' in Sax Rohmer, The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu, J. M. Dent & Sons, London, 1985, vii).

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of those individuals deemed ill-adapted, unfit for procreation, or surplus to requirement. One startlingly prophetic example of this sort is an early short story by the English science fiction author, Matthew Phipps Shiel (1865-1947). The S. S. (1895) combines many of Shiel’s preoccupations, including evolutionism, Nietzschean, supernaturalism, and the concept of world conquest. It documents, in vivid terms, a band of ‘Supermen’ who have as their task the refining of the human evolutionary stream. To this end they travel the world, murdering those whose physical and intellectual shortcomings might adversely affect the evolutionary outcomes they seek.

It is axiomatic that most fictional works which treat the theme of the Black Masters present them as being vanquished by the triumphant forces of goodness (whether the Great White Lodge or another configuration). In an unusual inversion, James Blish (1921-) recounts the victory of Darkness in the first novel of his theologically-infused science fiction trilogy, entitled Black Easter of Faust Aleph-Null (1968). In describing the activities of his Black Masters to the novel’s hero, Father Domenico, the chief of the Brotherhood, the Sabbath Goat, declares: ‘Even the best efforts of your white college also have failed - and as the heavenly hosts also will fail we are abroad and loose, and will not be put back’. The traditional privileges of the righteous continually fail; even Father Domenico’s elevated crucifix explodes into dust. The novel concludes with the distraught cleric demanding how, when ‘it is written’ that Satan would be conquered and chained, such a thing could happen. Amused, Satan declares:

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66 M. P. Shiel (Matthew Phipps Shiell) is an intriguing figure whose work demands considerably more attention than it currently receives. An influence on Arthur Machen (1863-1947, a sometime member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn), H. G. Wells (1866-1946), and H. P. Lovecraft (1890-1937), Shiel’s novels has been described (by R. D. Mullen) as the epitome of existential horror: see John Squires, ‘Shiel, Matthew Phipps’ in Sullivan, ed., The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural, 382-384. Shiel’s esotericism and religious writing (he attempted a new translation of the Gospel of Luke, and instigated a ‘religion of science’) await further research - as does his claim to the hereditary Kingship of Rodonda, one of the Leeward Islands near Antigua. For Shiel see Albert Reynolds Morse, ed., Shiel in Diverse Hands, The Reynolds Morse Foundation, Cleveland, Ohio, 1983.

67 M. P. Shiel, Prince Zalewski, John Lane, London, 1895. The work is a collection of three short stories: The Race of Orven; The Stone of the Edmundsbury Monks; and The S. S. Shiel must be one of the earliest English-language fiction writers to incorporate Nietzschean themes, given that Also sprach Zarathustra (1883-1885) was published only a decade prior to The S. S.; it might be noted that Shiel was multilingual.

68 James Blish, Black Easter or Faust Aleph-Null, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, 126.
Each of the opposing sides in any war always predicts victory. They cannot both be right. It is the final battle that counts, not the propaganda.67

When the priest asks where his side had failed, the answer is but three words: 'God is dead'.68

As has been demonstrated, Blavatsky's depiction of the Theosophical Masters was in itself much influenced by literature, notably the Rosicrucian novel. It is hardly surprising, then, that her own avowedly factual works would later become a rich resource of motifs and ideas for subsequent writers of fiction. After all, the manifold themes and influences which coalesced in Blavatsky's portrayal of the Masters still reside immediately behind the printed word, and insightful authors have since been able to invoke them for their own projects. The rich semiotic potentialities of the Brotherhood of Masters have ensured that the new works of fiction thus created cover a broad spectrum of the available genres, and have allowed Theosophical esotericism to enter entirely new domains. In the end, of course, the attraction of writers to the Masters motif is attributable to the same cause as its attraction for readers, for at its heart the Masters phenomenon was an instantiation of yearning and a companion desire for fulfilment - the very stuff of literature.

67 Ibid., 126-127.
68 Ibid., 127.
APPENDIX D

MALIGN MASTERS

In April of 2000, an Austrian book dealer and owner of the store ‘OM-Esoterik’ was charged with having violated the anti-racism law by offering The Secret Doctrine for sale. It appears that the state authorities objected to certain portions of Blavatsky’s esoteric ethnography, notably those which described the ‘lower specimens of humanity’ (such as the ‘savage South-Sea Islander, the African, the Australian’). Although the case is as yet undecided, it has profound ramifications for Theosophy.

Defenders of The Secret Doctrine have rallied to the book dealer’s defence, not, it seems, on the basis of freedom of speech, but to counter the ‘materialistic insanity’ of the Austrian authorities’ interpretation of Blavatskian ethnography. The editor of one Theosophical journal, FOHAT, pointed to the cyclic nature of attacks on Theosophy, and likened the experience to that of the German Theosophists under the Nazi regime.

Further, it was noted, certain ‘Theosophical foes’ had simply misunderstood the

1 The portions of The Secret Doctrine to which the authorities objected were:

1) Vol. II, p. 162: (b) ‘here the inferior Races, of which there are still some analogues left...’.
2) Vol. II, p. 168: ‘This explains the otherwise unaccountable degrees of intellectuality... (through to p. 193, line 5)’.
3) Vol. II, p. 195: ‘For there are, or rather still were a few years ago, descendants of these half-animal tribes...’.
5) Vol. II, p. 780: ‘As Lefevre remarks ... is able to account for these’.

Details taken from Anonymous, Theos-World Cycles: A Return to the 1930s?, posted on <theostalk@theosophy.com>, 30 June, 2000.

1 Ibid., 2.

doctrine of the ‘various family races: the more evolved, the less evolved, and the degenerate’:

Europe is particularly vulnerable and North America increasingly so, with their centralized trade zones and the governing bureaucracies growing up around them. Extreme Jewish organizations are lobbying and having laws passed all over Europe concerning Holocaust denial. We must educate. The different races are like brothers, they help each other when asked, desire the success of each other, reprove the immoral behaviour of one another, and try not to interfere in one another’s business. This is all predicated on a doctrine that calls for, first and foremost, the greater Spiritual understanding of all people. We also understand that is is through the intermingling of older races that new and better races are developed. Nowhere in this doctrine is there any room for hatred.5

It may well be that there is no ‘room for hatred’ in Theosophy, but there is ample space, it seems, to allow for misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and wholesale perversion of intent. While it is clear that any form of Race Theory is open to corruption - if not inherently a species of bigotry in the first place - Blavatsky’s is particularly amenable to racist distortion. Her macrohistorical formulations graded peoples according to an arbitrary judgement regarding the level of their physical and psycho-spiritual development. This idiosyncratic template was then overlaid with a Spencerian ethnography which resulted in a conceptual map that located white (Anglo-Saxon?) Theosophists at the pinnacle of current evolution, and the indigenous peoples of the developing world (particularly Australian aborigines) at its other end - the Simian. Yet such was by no means an original schematisation.

Where the Theosophical ethno-historiography differed from most of its contemporaries was in its combination of (quasi-) scientific presentation and divine warrant. For many readers, past and present, The Secret Doctrine resembled nothing so much as a scientific text book. Its tabulations, elaborate discussions of human morphology, and its aetiology of biological diversity, appeared to many to be thoroughly convincing - an opinion which was likely reinforced, rather than diminished, by the book’s prolixity.

5Ibid. (Theos-World Cycles), 2.

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The ethnography so evident in the second volume seemed to provide a systematised division of humanity into scientific genera: Root Races, sub-races, family races, and so on. In short, *The Secret Doctrine* was something of an autodidact's dream.

Allied to the deceptively scientific rationalism of Blavatsky's Race Theory was the singular notion of its 'divine' origin. *The Secret Doctrine*, it must be remembered, was presented as a commentary on the sacred, more or less documentary, *Book of Dzyan*. Coupled with the (Atlantean!) antiquity of this work was the idea that the teachings were mediated to Blavatsky by a Brotherhood of perfected men which had watched over the unfolding of human evolution *from its inception*. Thus it was that Blavatskian esoteric ethnography was hallowed by the great triplicity: science, antiquity, and revelation.

The evolutionary progress of the Theosophical multiverse (there being many planes of existence) was articulated as a Universal Law of Progression, and this progressivist dynamic then construed as the divine energy which sustained all life. Such macroscopic developmentalism was typologically aligned with, and 'proved' by, the evolution of humanity at the terrestrial level. It follows that, for Blavatskian cyclic progressivism to be considered *the* abiding principle of life, it must also be observable at the micro level *among human peoples*. Thus it is that white 'Aryan' persons belong to the Fifth Root Race - the most recent - while black 'Lemurian persons (that is, primal indigenes) belong to an earlier and less-developed evolutionary stream, the Third Root Race. Of profound significance is the idea that these 'survivals' of the Lemurian age have only themselves to blame for their current predicament: not only are they the sacrilegious result of human-mammalian miscegenation, but their present status reflects the burden of *karma* which they have accrued through numerous past
lives, and which needs to be 'worked through'.

Theosophists have gone to pains to indicate that no racist interpretation can properly be applied to *The Secret Doctrine*:

> [L]et us emphasize again that this teaching can be used to establish no doctrine of racial superiority, but rather describes a chain of experiences through which all of us have passed.

Robert Ellwood's comments would be more convincing were he to have isolated a satisfying rationale undergirding the teleology of the system such that it didn't resonate with the tones of discredited nineteenth century racist ethnographies. It is also arguable that such language as 'a chain of experiences through which all of us have passed' is inherently teleologically progressivist, and thus seems to accentuate a hierarchy of being predicated on such characteristics as ethnicity and skin colour, and therefore cannot but espouse racial *priority*, if not *de facto* 'racial superiority').

Regardless, the fact remains that the attraction of a divinely-sanctioned justification for 'Aryan' dominance has proved alluring to many subsequent racist exegetes of.

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*One wonders whether part of Blavatsky's ethno-theology (for such it must surely be) can be traced to Mormonism, of which she was aware: see supra p. 307n.57. It is seldom recalled that in Mormon scriptures, black-skinned persons (particularly 'the African race') were deemed to have sinned in the pre-existence through assistance given to the devil. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie summarised the doctrine thus:

> [T]hose who were less valiant in pre-existence and who thereby had certain spiritual restrictions imposed upon them during mortality are known to us as the Negroes. Such spirits are sent to earth through the lineage of Cain, the mark put upon him for his rebellion against God and his murder of Abel being a black skin (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine - A Compendium of the Gospel*, revised ed., Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, 1966, 476-477).

In Mormon ecclesiology, a black skin (or 'one drop of ['black'] blood') would deny an individual the priesthood: see *Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham* 1:21-26 (The *Pearl of Great Price: A Selection from the Revelations, Translations, and Narrations of Joseph Smith*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1950, 31). Indeed, according to Brigham Young (1801-1877), any miscegenation is worthy of death:

> Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. X, 110: reprinted in Jerald Tanner & Sandra Tanner, *The Changing World of Mormonism: A condensation and revision of 'Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?*’, Moody Press, Chicago, 1980, 297).

That both Mormonism and Theosophy suggest that a black skin is a curse for having sinned in the pre-existence is an interesting corollary which requires further research. It might be noted that on 9 June, 1978, the Mormon hierarchy announced that black-skinned persons would thereafter enjoy 'all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords': in ibid., 291.

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Ellwood, *Theosophy*, 98.

Ellwood's statement is also suspect on other grounds: see supra p. 197n.28.

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Blavatskian ethnography. One example is that of Jack Grimes of the Aryan Racial Loyalist Party, whose rhetoric, vocabulary, and mythography are distinctly Blavatskian:

[Jack Grimes:] Each and every white person is of the Race of the Serpent, we are all blood kin to the great Old Ones. Each and every member of the Aryan Race regardless of geographical location is his or her own God in the making. They must choose to embrace their own divine Godhood. I predict that as the New Age actually dawns you will see psychic and emotional changes in the Aryan peoples as they give birth to the Super-Man. The Super-Man will come from every white country, nationalism is not a factor, genetic purity is.

It has become somewhat *de rigueur* in the less scholarly literature of occult historiography to focus upon the influence of Theosophy on certain individuals prominent in Hitler’s Third Reich. Certainly, it is true that such precursors of National Socialism as the *Lebensreform* and *Volksisch* movements were heavily imbued with esoteric speculation of many kinds. It is beyond the scope of the present work to examine the (often crypto-fascistic) progressivist Weltanschauung which provided the ideational infrastructure for such groups, but it is instructive to

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9 Xvar Akaal, ‘An Interview with Jack Grimes of the Aryan Racial Loyalist Party’ in *Sabbath Stone*, no. 1, Sun Vow Press / Order of the Sun, Hoeilaart, Belgium, 1994, 8. Grimes’ use of Blavatsky extends to her macrohistorical figurations, such as Theosophical Ages Theory and the Golden Age *topoi* of Atlantis and Hyperborea. It should be noted that the latter exist in much fascistic speculation (including that of Savitri Devi: see *infra* p. 778ff): see Godwin, *Arktos, passim*.


observe the traces of a redacted Master in the philosophies of one largely-forgotten fascist ideologue.

_Savitri Devi and the Hitlerian Avatar_

In a recent work, _Hitler’s Priestess: Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth, and New-Nazism_ (1998), Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke has introduced to scholars the figure of Savitri Devi Mukherji (born Maximiani Porta, 1905-1982), a revered figure in the neo-Nazi, as well as the Satanic, Right. Devi, a Frenchwoman of Anglo-Greek birth, had become interested in German National Socialism in the late 1920s during the period of her doctoral studies in Greece. After her graduation she immediately travelled to India, intent on immersing herself in the Aryan ethos she believed was maintained there (particularly via its caste regulations). Devi spent the years of the Third Reich in India - all the time awaiting the great victory of the Axis powers. In the interim she fashioned a synthetic creed of Hindu-Nordicism, in which she fused extremist racial ideology with Hindu cyclic temporalism and arrived at a cosmicised Nazi cultus.

Devi’s system was predicated - like Blavatsky’s - on an Indicised Ages Theory, in which humanity at present labours under the _kali yuga_, an era of degeneration. She posited three types of semi-perfected men: ‘Men in Time’, ‘Men above Time’, and ‘Men against Time’. ‘Men in Time’ are those whose characters are the distillation of the _kali yuga_, and who, though their striving for materialistic gratification, personify

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13 Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, _Hitler’s Priestess: Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth, and New-Nazism_, New York University Press, New York, 1998. Savitri Devi’s works were reprinted in the 1960s in _National Socialist World_, the publication arm of the World Union of National Socialists, run by Lincoln Rockwell and William Pierce. (Indeed, Devi’s ashes are kept in a Nazi shrine at Rockwell’s headquarters in Arlington, Virginia). They have since been published and distributed by Ernst Zündel, the owner of the extreme Right-wing Samisdat Publishers (and a key figure in Holocaust denialism). Further, Devi’s works are now becoming required reading for self-described Satanists: Realist Publications (the publishing organ of New Zealand’s _Ordo Sinistra Vivendi_) has reprinted her _The Lightning and The Sun_ (1958): see Anonymous, ‘The Lightning & The Sun by Savitri Devi,’ [rev. art.] in _The Heretic: A Journal of the Kulturkampf, Realpolitik, Esoterrorism_, no. 8, April, 1994, 25.

14 Devi’s dissertation subject was the excommunicated Greek Orthodox theologian and comparative religionist, Theophilos Kaires (1748-1853). See Goodrick-Clarke, _Hitler’s Priestess_, 16-18, 251.

15 Devi’s theories were articulated in well over a dozen books, ranging from the late 1930s to 1980. For a bibliography see in ibid., 251-253.

16 The following discussion is based on the materials in ibid., ch. 7.

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their age and yet hasten the advance of the regenerate ‘Golden’ age, the krita yuga.¹⁷ ‘Men above Time’ are those who have achieved ‘complete perfection’ and belong in the krita yuga, but who are ‘exiles of the Golden Age in our Age of Gloom’.¹⁸ Buddha and Jesus Christ fit comfortably into this category (regardless, it seems, of the latter’s semitic origins). ‘Men against Time’ - the most important of all - are the combination of the other two; they possess the spiritual qualities of the latter, and the necessary mercilessness of the former: they are both ‘Lightning’ and ‘Sun’. Unsurprisingly, Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) appears to have been the most representative ‘Man against Time’ in all history.

Goodrick-Clarke observed that ‘Savitri Devi is unquestionably the first Western writer to identify Adolf Hitler as an avatar’.¹⁹ Devi’s apotheosis of Hitler was the foundational aspect of her religio-cosmological vision. Hitler was the saviour of Aryan civilisation and the herald of a new Golden Age. To this end he was a foretaste of the perfection to be achieved communally in the soon to arrive krita yuga. Devi originally believed that the new Age would dawn in the wake of an Axis victory, but re-articulated her temporalism when confronted with the defeat of 1945. Consequently, Hitler became the perennial avatar of the Bhagavad Gita, ultimately to return in triumph to inaugurate the reign of Righteousness.²⁰ He may have appeared to lose the holy Aryan war, but he had in fact facilitated the ‘highest purpose of Creation: the survival of a superior mankind’.²¹ His sacrifice had brought forward the

¹⁷ Ibid., 115-116. A classic example of the ‘Man in Time’, so Devi believed, was Genghis Khan (1157-1227).
¹⁸ Quoted in ibid., 117.
¹⁹ Ibid., 119.
²⁰ The attraction of Devi’s post-World War II temporalism to those who had placed all of their trust in the messianic rôle of der Führer was immediate and obvious. Devi was feted by those who appreciated in her vision a means to rehabilitate Hitler (and the German nationalist movement) from the ignominy of defeat. Later, she became something of an icon for the neo-Nazi extreme Right (and for its quasi-militia, the ‘skinheads’). Goodrick-Clarke has listed some of her associations:
Through her divinization of Hitler and National Socialism, Savitri Devi became a leading light of the international neo-Nazi underground from the early 1960s onward. She was a confidante of Colin Jordan, the flamboyant leader of the National Socialist Movement in Britain, and his henchman John Tyndall, who heads the British National party today. She knew Lincoln Rockwell, the founder of the American Nazi Party, and in August 1962 she attended the notorious Cotswold Camp in Gloucestershire that acted as the founding meeting of the World Union of National Socialists (WUNS) (in ibid., 6).
²¹ Ibid., 125.

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coming of the glorious Age of Righteousness; as a ‘Man against Time’ he had - in Theosophical parlance - personified the ‘Bodhisattva Vow’.

Devi was certainly aware of Blavatsky and Theosophy. She selected the London Society to publish one of her major works, *A Son of God: The Life and Philosophy of Akhnaton, King of Egypt* in 1946.\(^\text{22}\) There is also little doubt that her particular brand of Aryanism was much influenced by such figures as the ‘Ariosophist’ Guido ‘von’ List (1848-1919) and the ‘Theozoologist’ Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (Adolf Joseph Lanz, 1874-1954).\(^\text{23}\) These two pivotal völkisch publicists - and others like them - mined *The Secret Doctrine* for mythologems applicable to their own nationalist and supremacist agendas. It cannot now be ignored that Blavatsky’s occult anthropogeny provided significant grist to the ideological mill of Germano-Austrian mystical racism.\(^\text{24}\)

\(^\text{22}\) See in ibid., 127, 251-252. Akhnaton was a ‘Man above Time’.

\(^\text{23}\) For List and Lanz von Liebenfels see Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, 33-122 et passim. In this company should also be included General Erich Ludendorff and his wife Mathilde von Kemnitz (for whom see *supra* ch. 26), whose occult conspiratology is but another face of the völkisch phenomenon. See also French, ‘Odin in the Antipodes’.

\(^\text{24}\) Into this company must also be included several figures outside of the European fascist milieu, but who incorporated various Theosophical tenets (and hermeneutics) into their own Nazi ideologies. One such figure is the Australian Alexander Rud Mills (d.1964), whose anti-Semitism was matched only by his anti-Christian sentiments. From the early 1930s he began to publish in Australian nationalist journals and magazines (e.g., *Publicist and Right*), and to issue his own Nazi pamphlets (*The Angle*, *The Anglecyn*, and *The National Socialist*). He wrote several books which extolled his own brand of ‘Odinism’: cf., eg., A. R. Mills, *The First Guide Book to the Anglecyn Church of Odin*, privately printed, Sydney, 1936; id., *The Odinist Religion Overcoming Jewish Christianity*, privately printed, Melbourne, 1939; ‘Tasman Forth’ [Alexander Rud Mills], *Hael, Odin!*, n. p., Melbourne, 1934. Mills, who had met and corresponded with Hitler and Goebbels, and was well acquainted with General Ludendorff (and possessed a signed photographic portrait of Julius Streicher), was interned for subversive activities during the Second World War: see Bruce Muirden, *The Puzzled Patriots: The Story of the Australia First Movement*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1968. There are distinct similarities in the writings of Mills and that of Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946), especially the latter’s *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Wertung der seelschicgseitigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* (‘The Myth[us] of the Twentieth Century: An Evaluation of the Soul-Spiritual Struggles of Our Age’). Rosenberg saw himself as the founder of a religion, though he tried to conceal this view (see Lixfeld, *Folklore & Fascism*, 75). For Mills see French, ‘Odin in the Antipodes’.

Mills is interesting in that his influence upon Neopagan Odinism has been immense, but he is an entirely forgotten figure elsewhere. One author has suggested that the defining characteristic of contemporary Odinism is its singular reliance on Mills: see Jeffrey Kaplan, ‘The Reconstruction of the Ásatrú and Odinist Traditions’ in James R. Lewis, ed., *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1996, 194-195. It might be noted that Mills was posthumously accorded the title of ‘Archbishop’ in the Odinist Church of Los Angeles by its leader, James Warner.
Savitri Devi's construction of the 'Man against Time' has some startling parallels with
the Theosophical Masters. Hitler, as the prototypical 'Man against Time', had as his
task the fostering of an elite such that they were psychically and physically prepared
for the coming age of spiritual awareness. To this end he employed the tools and
philosophies of his day so as to wrest the minds of his followers from the thrall of
materialism, and to redirect their energies to the goal of personal and corporate
evolution. He came during the present kali yuga so as to battle against those forces
antagonistic to the re-spiritualisation of the elite, and to comfort the faithful in their time
of trial. He was a semi-divine creature of ambiguous ontic status, and it was in his
image that the faithful were to recreate themselves.

Certainly there are differences between the depictions of the Master and the 'Man
against Time', and several of these are significant, yet there are sufficient Theosophical
echoes in Devi's presentation of her cultural hero to suspect that the Blavatskian corpus
provided a fertile resource, as it had for so many other ideologues of mystical racism.
Macrocyclicism, Ages theory, notions of an Indic prisca theologia, mystical
Aryanism, and the quasi-messianism of the 'perfected man', were all themes Devi and
others inherited from Blavatsky. The overtly esoteric aspects of Blavatsky's vision of
the Masters (which Devi suppressed) would ultimately be reincorporated into her
model in the 1980s by self-designated Satanists.\[26\]

Although rarely mentioned in the context of 'Malign Masters', Leadbeater's influence
on the way in which the Theosophical Masters were mediated to the reading public
should not be forgotten. It is important to remember that the perception of Theosophy
held by a large number of persons (including many Theosophists!) was formed by
their knowledge of the popular works of Leadbeater, rather than the erudite tomes of
Blavatsky. His Masters-oriented ethnology might appear more stridently racist than
Blavatsky's at first glance,\[26\] but this perception is in part due to his more inelegant
prose, and also his avowedly populist agenda. In fact, for the most part Leadbeater

\[26\] See infra p. 785ff.

\[26\] Nevertheless, it might be recalled that much of Leadbeater's writing was completed forty years or
more after Blavatsky's. One interesting development during this time was the phenomenon of Jazz
music; unsurprisingly, Leadbeater considered this to be a species of neoprimitivism, and reflective of
black tribalism.

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remained faithful to the Blavatskian ethnographical template; typical is the following:

Let us trace the evolution of a human soul from the very beginning of the school of life. The newly-formed soul would dip into some savage tribe, and there he would learn his first lessons. He would then be an untrammelled savage, with no ideas of right and wrong or anything of that sort, but he would receive certain teaching. There would be men in his tribe, medicine men or others who knew something more than the rest, and they would teach him the tribal customs, and give him his primitive training. Being an utterly undeveloped human being he would simply obey his impulses. When he was hungry he would eat whatever and as much as he could get hold of.27

Leadbeater maintained the Blavatskian stress on the ‘Aryan’ (and, importantly, added the ‘Teutonic’), although it seems likely that his perception of the term was somewhat narrower than hers. Regardless, the hierarchy of souls is clear:

So he would pass on and on through many classes, just like a boy at school - because a race is simply a class in school - and he would at last get into the Aryan race. This great Aryan race, of which our own race is only one branch, is at present the highest, the most developed race in the world ... The fact that we have risen to this level merely means that we are older souls than the Australian...

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Aborigines for instance.  

Yet Leadbeater's stress on the relative age of souls (as a 'divine' justification for racial and social inequity) stands in stark contrast with his regular depiction of the Masters as esoteric eugenists, conducting an efficient human breeding programme to create new races and sub-races, and to restrict the procreational potential of the older races. If the Masters are personally responsible for human husbandry and the development of more evolved peoples, then what exactly is the place of karmic reincarnation in the macrohistorical system?:

The method of developing a new race is to take some of the best of the existing physical bodies (belonging, of course, to the old Race) and lead these people away, somehow, by some sort of segregation, so that they shall live in a community apart; then they can be moulded into a new Race. The Manu of a new Root-Race mixes his living materials as carefully as a chemist mixes his drugs, and then imbues his people with the idea that they are a chosen race, and must

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23 In ibid., 11. As an aside, it is interesting to observe (mutatis mutandis) that the recently-retired Presiding Bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church, the South African Johannes Cornelius van Alphen (b.1925), has noted (in an article on the 'New South Africa'):

Over the years, evolution amongst the Blacks progressed steadily, although by no means fast enough. Today, there is already a considerable intellectual presence amongst the emerging Black population (Johannes van Alphen, 'News From South Africa' in The Liberal Catholic, LXIII: 2, July, 1994, 7).

The influence of what might be called 'Theosophical condescension' has permeated much of the occult discourse of recent times. In a conference on the Golden Dawn, John Paternoster (who peppered his address with references to, and quotations from, an 'English Master who was canonised in 1935' [Thomas More?]), delineated a Kabbalistically-inspired hierarchy of being. It is worth quoting at some length:

What is human consciousness? It not only includes the mineral consciousness of its bodily composition but also that of the vegetable and animal levels and all of these have to be experienced and understood long before we aspire to what may be described as human consciousness. It is therefore reasonable to start from the vegetable consciousness. Here the person is learning to master the art of the simplest form of life, most probably they are the very young Souls who are just beginning their incarnatory lives. An example of such a person might be a forest native, a being who learns the art of feeding himself, of procreating and who recognises his own territory. On the other hand, Karma might force an individual back to this level to relearn a lesson forgotten; such is the fate of many a tramp. Indeed some tramps have sunk below the vegetable because they fulfil none of the criteria of vegetable man, and I use the term 'man' in this context just to mean a member of 'Homo Sapiens'. They cannot feed or house themselves although they might still manage to copulate. Visit the local pub and there you will find many a vegetable person; in between the pints or sherries; they eat, may work or draw benefit and have sex, but that is all that there is to their lives (John Paternoster, 'The Hierarchy of Souls - The Nature of Inner Plane Contacts' in Armstrong & Gilbert, eds., Golden Dawn, 202-203).
on no account intermarr[y] with other races.  

It is only one step from this proposition to suggest that the Masters are directly responsible for those sociopolitical structures which seem to be advancing the cause of ‘Aryan’ civilisation, the present ‘chosen race’. Thus it was that Leadbeater was able to find in Australia’s notorious ‘White Australia Policy’ a Masters-driven ‘theatre for [racial] experiments’:  

Mixture is often necessary - the mixture of different races in order that the best results may be produced; but the mingling must not be of those who are too far apart. You may usually combine two recent sub-races, but not another Root-Race with those. That may be the occult reason at the back of the prejudice in favour of ‘White Australia’ - the desire on the part of the Great Ones behind that there may not be too much of a medley in the population.  

This attribution to the Masters of a new function, that of evolutionary catalyst, is a crucial development in Theosophical discourse and one which enabled its effortless entry into neofascistic ideology, particularly of a Satanic persuasion. According to this construct, the Master quite literally weeds out those humans deemed to be evolutionary retardants. His sacred duty is not only to assist in the psycho-physical progress of a (Theosophical) elite, but also through direct means to facilitate the eradication of the older races, deemed inimical to the great processus. Although unnoticed in either the religionist or the scholarly literature, this development - begun under Leadbeater, and enshrined in several of his clairvoyantly-produced works - is a tremendous epistemological change for (Adyar Society) Theosophy. No longer is the individual solely responsible for personal evolution; the Master has arrogated unto himself a ‘hands on’ responsibility for the direction of human development.  

29 Leadbeater, Australia and New Zealand, 10-11.  
30 Ibid., 33.  
31 Ibid., 37.  
32 For clarity it should be stated that the term ‘Satanic’ is here employed as a referent for those groups which self-consciously designate themselves thus. There is no attempt made by the present author to ‘define’ Satanism, or to differentiate (if such a thing is possible) between orthodox Satanism and unorthodox or hererodox Satanism. For discussion see Jean La Fontaine, ‘Satanism and Satanic Mythology’ in Ankarloo & Clark, eds., Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Twentieth Century, 81-140. For broader issues see Jeffrey S. Victor, Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend, Open Court, Chicago, 1993.
traditional reticence of the Masters, which was a foundational dynamic of Blavatskian Theosophy, is replaced with their vigorous engagement with fashioning human destiny. Savitri Devi's cult of the avatar Hitler becomes more intelligible viewed through this particular Theosophical prism.

The concept of the Master as the active instrument of evolution, in essence the 'hand of God', is eminently corruptible as fascistic discourse - particularly when it is considered that, at an ideational level, Leadbeaterian Theosophy was directed solely toward the 'creation' of Masters through ceremonial or theurgical means (such as the Egyptian Rite). Any occultist can thus elevate a personal racist ideology into divine revelation by being ritually 'created' a Master. Thus it is that those who espouse an esoteric racist credo can find in Leadbeaterian Theosophy an unsettling divine warrant for such staples of supremacist belief as racial hygiene and eugenics.

The Order of the Nine Angles

In this context it is instructive to observe in the literature of a number of Right-leaning Satanic groups a preponderance of references to the theurgico-initiatory creation of Masters. The Order of the Nine Angles, an influential British entity inaugurated in the late 1970s, employs a septenary initiatic scale:

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3 Although the present author has chosen one Satanic group for the following discussion (The Order of the Nine Angles), several others have been examined; the comparabilities are striking, and indicate the need for independent analysis. One of the groups studied was the extreme Right-wing and anti-semitic 'Werewolf Order', run by Nikolas Schreck and Zeena LaVey, the daughter of Anton Szandor LaVey (1930-1997), the founder of the Church of Satan. One wonders how Zeena reacted to the September 1991 revelation (via Rolling Stone magazine) that her father was actually born Howard Stanton Levey, of Jewish ancestry. For a hagiographical PI biography of LaVey see Blanche Barton, The Secret Life of a Satanist: The Authorized Biography of Anton LaVey, Feral House, Los Angeles, 1992.

4 The title of the Order appears to be based upon arithmosophy and an esoteric interpretation of planar geometry (coupled with a semiological reading of ceremonial workings similar to the invoking pentagram rituals of the Golden Dawn). It might be noted that much of the language and mythos of the Order's rituals appears to be based upon the 'Necronomicon' mythistry of the fantasy novelist, Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937). Lovecraft's 'Cthulhu Mythos' - which he claimed was based upon an Arabic manuscript, the 'Al Azif' (or the 'Necronomicon'), written by 'Abdul Alhazred' in 950 - was itself much beholden to The Secret Doctrine: see Robert Turner, 'The Necronomicon: a Commentary' in George Hay, ed., The Necronomicon, Neville Spearman, Jersey, 1978, 65-79. For another Satanic variant see Michael A. Aquino, Commentary on the Seal of the Nine Angles, <http://www.trapezoid.org/thought/comm9a.html>, downloaded, 4 August, 2000. (It might be noted that Aquino and his Temple of Set, founded in 1975, are avowed enemies of the Order of the Nine Angles).
The first two stages of the Way train, prepare and extend the new novice. The end of the third stage creates an Adept - that is, it brings about a genuine ‘individuation’ ... The fourth stage develops [sic] the Adept - and brings an awareness and understanding of aeonic processes and forces ... The end of the fourth stage, creates a ‘Master’ or ‘Mistress’ ... During the fifth stage, this Master or Mistress use their [sic] knowledge and skill to effect changes in the causal ... The sixth, and last temporal, stage completes this process - there is a large-scale, fundamental aeonic change ... Thus does the existence of that Grand Master/Mistress achieve something significant and thus fulfil the potential that was latent within them [sic] ... It involves experience of ‘the forbidden’, the heretical, the Satanic ... It is a means to create the next stage of our evolution:

_Homo Galactica._

The objective of the Master or Mistress of the Order of the Nine Angles is not solely - or even primarily - to achieve personal ascendance, but to foster and encourage the universal evolutionary current toward the creation of a new being, just as Leadbeater's (Master) Manu had done:

The fundamental strategic (or ‘long-term’) aim of Satanism is to elevate the consciousness of all individuals to at least what is now described by ‘Adept consciousness’: i.e. to liberate the individual, internally and externally, and so create a new type of human being - someone who has achieved the next stage of our evolutionary development.

It is crucial to recognise, however, that the ‘next stage of our evolutionary development’ is presumed to accord with a preexisting racist ideology, and that those Masters/Mistresses who are its magical agents employ their ‘powers’ to direct evolution specifically to this end:

Change occurs mostly by the majority within [a] civilization being motivated (unconsciously) by the ethos or Destiny of that civilization

35 [The Order of the Nine Angles], 'The Inner Meaning of the Seven-Fold Way' in _The Heretic: A Journal of the Kulturkampf, Realpolitik, Esoterrorism_, No. 8, April, 1994, 5.

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- i.e. they create change without being consciously aware of what they are doing. A few individuals know what is actually occurring - i.e. they have an understanding and insight greater than the majority. These few are the genuine Initiates of esoteric traditions. This knowledge gives them a certain power - for they can use it to produce changes according to their desires/aims. In effect, they are the secret guardians of evolutionary change ... [T]hese charismatic individuals embody the Destiny of the civilization itself ... At this stage of evolutionary development, this Destiny must and can only be in its origins a racial one: derived from a sense of superiority, an instinct.37

‘Christos Beest’ [Stephen Brown?], the Grand Master of the Order of the Nine Angles, has made it clear that the purposes of his organisation and of National Socialism are identical: the creation of an Aryan super-race.38 In the case of the Satanic Order, however, the means are theurgical; the Master/Mistress, who has been elevated magically, has a divine onus to further the natural course of Aryan civilisation, and to work toward the eradication of those elements which inhibit the teleological processus. Unfortunately, he notes, ‘[t]raditional Satanism creates a few genuine Adepts and perhaps two genuine Masters/Mistresses per century’.39 Nevertheless, the group’s literature has advocated the ‘secret murder’ of ‘individuals considered to be opponents or impediments to the ONA’s goals’.40 Interestingly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, its Black Mass features the ‘evokation [sic]’ of Adolf Hitler:

[I]n the particular Satanic Mass, Adolf Hitler is not represented as he is portrayed by his opponents - or as he is today assumed - as some sort of ‘evil’ monster but as exactly the opposite, as a kind of

37 Ibid., 9-10.
38 Jean La Fontaine has noted that the founder of the Order of the Nine Angles was a member of ‘a very right-wing organization, the British Movement’: in La Fontaine, ‘Satanism and Satanic Mythology’, 113.
40 See Baddeley, Lucifer Rising, 155, emphasis added. From 1988 the Order of the Nine Angles has published a journal, Fenrir.
saviour'.

There can be no mistaking the unreconstructed Social Darwinism of the fascistic discourse, whether neo-Nazi or Satanic. At its more sophisticated level - in the works of Savitri Devi and the more well articulated Satanisms - Spencerian Social Darwinism is not left to chance, but encouraged by Masters which the groups 'create' themselves. Devi's 'Master', the Hitlerian 'Man against Time', was a cosmic creature, an avatar who descends in fury to crush materialism (personified by the Jews), and bring the elite (the Aryan peoples) into a Nordic Promised Land. The aptly-named Satanic 'Esoterrorists' follow a more Leadbeaterian path by fashioning their Masters theurgically - as *incarnate revelation*. It is then a simple measure to justify an entire racist creed on the basis of a (literally preordained) Dispensation. In both cases the results are identical: the 'Master' is the apparatus for an ethnologically-skewed evolutionism, and it is his responsibility to cull the flock to produce the whitest lambs.

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41 Anton Long [Stephen Brown?], 'Introduction' [to the Satanic Mass of the Order of the Nine Angles], in ibid. The 'Mass of Heresy', another of the Order's services, includes a Hitlerian creed:

- Adolf Hitler was sent by our gods
- To guide us in our greatness.
- We believe in the inequality of races
- And in the right of the Aryan to live
- According to the laws of the folk.
- We acknowledge that the story of the holocaust
- Is a lie to keep our race in chains
- And express our desire to see the truth revealed.
- We believe in justice for our oppressed comrades
- And seek an end to the world-wide
- Persecution of National-Socialists.
- We believe in the Magick of our wyrd
- And curse all who oppose us.
- We express our pride in the great achievements
- Or our race
- And shall not cease from striving
- Since we believe the destiny
- Of our noble Aryan race lies among the stars!


42 For discussion of 'Social Darwinism and Satanism in the 1980s' (and references to a 'Malthusian Mud Flood') see in Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising*, 148-159.

43 As an aside, the present author was once informed by a neo-Nazi skinhead youth that real whiteness could only be ascertained by an individual's ability to blush. One feels sure he didn't recognise the irony.
APPENDIX E

THEOSOPHY AFTER LEADBEATERS

For many historiographers of esotericism, the pot of gold at the end of the scholarly rainbow would be evidence of the direct transmission of one esoteric construct from initiate to initiate over a number of generations. While ‘traditions’ of this type are not entirely unlikely in some streams of esotericism (certain Sufi orders come to mind), evidence of unbroken links in such arterial constructs as Rosicrucianism has not come to light. Upon sober examination, the great majority of claims to exalted pedigree made by esotericists have proved illusory, or at least demonstrably unlikely.

Nevertheless, at certain definable moments in history the various strands of esoteric speculation have been brought together and woven into whole cloth. Interestingly, it appears that there are at least three causative factors which underpin this exercise, and which are necessarily confluent: the introduction into Western discourse of a new set of texts (and/or a novel hermeneutic); a social context in which traditional esotericisms (alchemy, astrology, magia, etc.) appear endangered;¹ and the presence of one or more charismatic individuals whose knowledge of such arcana extends beyond common autodidacticism, and into encyclopaedic polymathy. Such was the case with Blavatskian Theosophy. By the late 1880s, it is evident that Blavatsky had succeeded in becoming the single figure around whom most esotericists of her day orbited. After 1891, the occult world lost the pull of her gravity, and was sent off in search of other constellations. Many, it seems, are still looking.

The present study has focussed on Leadbeater as the individual most demonstrably representative of Theosophy’s second generation. Nevertheless, many other recensions or redactions of Blavatskian formulations are discernible in the generations following her death, and many more in the decades following Leadbeater’s. To trace the conceptual variations and cross-fertilisations between the many branches of the

¹Blavatsky makes her position clear, and at the same time justifies both her foray into modern scientific theory and her release of the hitherto secret Ancient Wisdom, with the following words: For Occultism, it is a question of self-defence, and nothing more (Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, vol. II, 649).
Theosophical tree is an exercise well beyond the scope of the present work, but one which is sorely needed for an accurate historiography of the occult current of the twentieth century (which, for all of its ostentatious rationalism, witnessed one of the most abundant inflorescences of esotericism in history).

The following brief notes are appended in order that the reader may become acquainted with some of the main inheritors of Blavatsky's 'Ancient Wisdom'. They are intended neither to be exhaustive, nor extensive, and as such no significant annotation has been included: for more detailed analysis the reader is referred to the short bibliography appended to each section. It has been decided for the sake of clarity to divide these notes into three sections:

1) Theosophical Groups in a direct and official or semi-official lineage;
2) Para-Theosophical Groups, or those which emerged from Theosophy but which developed into discrete entities;
3) Extra-Theosophical Groups, or those which emerged from without Theosophy, but which display discernible Theosophical influence and tenets.

Naturally, the decision to place a group or individual in one or other category tends to be somewhat arbitrary. Often, rather orthodox Theosophy is to be found outside of the mainstream of the Society, and occasional baroque and unrecognisable developments appear within it. No attempt has been made to discern the influence of Blavatskian conceptual mapping beyond those formulations which are demonstrably occultist; such an exercise would constitute an entire thesis in itself.

1) Theosophical Groups in a direct and official or semi-official lineage

There was no successful anti-Blavatsky putsch or significant schism within the Founder's lifetime. As noted supra, charismatic authority in the post-Blavatsky era was the most identifiable cause of ruptures, and this issue (based on the Theosophical sine qua non: contact with the Masters) has remained ever afterward the Society's
bête noire. The Judge division constitutes for most Theosophists - whether members of Adyar, Point Loma, or another body - the fundamental cause of an existential sense of disunity and fragmentation, entirely at odds with the stated aim of fostering 'Brotherhood'. This feeling was heightened under the Adyar Presidency of Besant and her éminence grise, Leadbeater, whose rather mannered outpourings comprised a significant departure from the Theosophy of *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. As the present study has been devoted to the Adyar Society, more attention is here placed on developments outside of the parent body, notably the Point Loma community. In each case, discussion is centred in the main upon issues relating to the Masters.

A. The Adyar Society

Following the death of Besant in 1933, George Arundale succeeded to the Presidency. Upon news of Leadbeater's death the following year, Jinarajadasa assumed Headship of the ES and, following Arundale's death in 1945, he also became Society President (in 1946). When Jinarajadasa completed his seven year term in 1953, he decided not to renominate (and died only months later), and the offices of President and Outer Head of the ES were again divided: N. Sri Ram (Rukmini Arundale's brother) was installed as President, I. K. Taimni became the Outer Head. John Coats was elected President following Sri Ram's death in 1973, and, following Coats' death in 1979, Radha Burnier (Sri Ram's daughter) succeeded to the Presidency (in 1980) after a bitter campaign against her aunt, Rukmini Arundale (Leadbeater's candidate for agent of the World Mother). In time Burnier also assumed the Headship of the ES. It is interesting that Rukmini's husband, brother, and niece were all Society Presidents; she herself was never elected, though she nominated several times.

Following the often baroque outpourings of Leadbeater, and the public collapse of the Coming, the Adyar Society has become rather reticent in discussing the current rôle of the Masters. It would appear that it has been many years since any officially-recognised direct communications were received from the Brotherhood, although accounts vary dramatically as to whom the last Presidential recipient was deemed to be. Popular opinion seems to suggest that such contact ceased sometime after the death of
A Select bibliography:


Geoffrey Hodson

Of all of those associated with the Adyar Society in the years following Leadbeater’s death, the most significant for the present purposes is Geoffrey Hodson (1886-1983) who, although an influential lecturer within the Adyar Theosophical Society, also led a personal group of disciples to whom he communicated teachings from Masters (including some unknown in the traditional Theosophical pantheon). Born into an English farming family, Hodson was forced to leave school due to family circumstances at the age of fifteen. In 1912, Hodson had occasion to hear a lecture on ‘The Great White Brotherhood’ by Annie Besant and became an immediate convert to Theosophy. He claimed that he had always possessed paranormal gifts and, since childhood, had been able to communicate with angles and nature spirits. During the 1920s, Hodson applied his psychic abilities in a series of investigations conducted by the London Research Group of the Theosophical Society, and became widely celebrated for publicising the so-called Cottingley fairies (exposed in 1935 as a photographic fraud). He subsequently worked professionally in the clairvoyant diagnosis (and ‘occult treatment’) of disease. He quickly acquired a popular status within the Society because of his professed psychic abilities, and toured internationally as a lecturer. Significantly, he was also involved in Leadbeater-styled clairvoyant research into archaeology and occult chemistry. Hodson also underwent training in Liberal Catholicism under Wedgwood at St. Michael’s in Huizen, and was ultimately ordained a priest.
From 1953 to 1955, and again in the 1960s, Hodson served as Director of Studies at the School of the Wisdom at the Theosophical Headquarters, Adyar. In the 1960s he settled permanently in New Zealand, although he continued his international lecture tours and maintained an extensive writing schedule. During all of this time Hodson had been an enthusiastic member of the E.S. and of Co-Masonry, writing at length on each, and was active in promoting the idea of the World Mother, as well as in encouraging co-operation between humans, angels, and nature spirits. He claimed that much of his work on angels and nature spirits was guided by a 'Heavenly Being' named 'Bethelda'.

Following the death of Leadbeater in 1934, Hodson assumed something of Leadbeater's clairvoyant mantle, and began various intense psychic investigations. Most significantly, he privately informed his associates that he was able to communicate with the Masters. He also, to a lesser extent, replaced Leadbeater as the clairvoyant authority within the Liberal Catholic Church, although (for reasons which were never made public) he was not active nor publicly identified as a priest for the last twenty years of his life.

As a self-appointed heir to Leadbeater, Hodson wrote three books on the 'inner side' of Liberal Catholic ceremonial: The Inner Side of Church Worship (1930), The Priestly Ideal (1971), and Clairvoyant Investigations of Christian Origins and Ceremonial (1977), the latter work being composed of articles originally published in The Liberal Catholic, together with a previously unpublished manuscript. Hodson's psychic expertise was called upon in the 1970s by the then Presiding Bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church, Sten von Krusenstierna, who desired answers to several vexing theological questions. Asked whether the Mass could be validly celebrated after Noon (Leadbeater had said that it could not be), Hodson's occultistic investigations proved that indeed it could, but that the species of the Eucharist were not as 'completely consecrated' as they would be during a morning service. After several experiments, Hodson also concluded that Leadbeater had been entirely correct in concluding that women could not be ordained; that is, the ordination of a woman would simply not work.

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Of Hodson's other writings, a few deserve mention. He completed a series of volumes on the esoteric interpretation of scripture, the first of which, *The Hidden Wisdom in the Holy Bible*, was issued in 1963. In a typical Leadbeaterian vein, Hodson wrote on the Seven Rays: *The Seven Human Temperaments* (1952). Hodson was one of the very few Theosophists to publish a defence of Besant and Leadbeater after Krishnamurti's defection: *Krishnamurti and the Search for Light* (n.d. [1939]).

In the wake of Hodson's death, his widow arranged the publication of his previously private - indeed secret - ES papers, together with his 'occult diaries', both of which caused some consternation in Adyar circles. Yet, given Hodson's voluminous writings, and the claims to contact with the Masters which he maintained over many years, the lack of official recognition is indicative of the mood of the Society in the years following the mannerism of Leadbeater and Arundale. Where once the claim to direct contact with the Brotherhood (and the clairvoyantly-received literature which such contact generated) would have ensured a tremendous reception, the second half of the twentieth century saw the suppression of such claims in the parent body. It seems that the Adyar Society had learned from bitter experience that the implied occult status which such claims presupposed was no longer a reliable guarantee.

*A Select Bibliography:*


B. The Point Loma Society

Katherine Tingley

Within a year of the separation from the Adyar Society, 'The Theosophical Society in America' was left leaderless in the wake of Judge’s death (on 21 March, 1896). Within five days, however, a pamphlet was sent to ES members by the American Council informing them that Judge’s papers indicated that he had provided for a successor, and that nothing had been left to chance. The pamphlet was signed by eight members, including Ernest Hargrove, James Pryse, Joseph Fussell, and Claude Falls Wright.

Following an ES meeting held on 29 March, it was agreed to send a further pamphlet to ES members emphasising that a new Outer Head had been selected according to directions left by Judge, but that the name was to be kept secret for the period of one year. The pamphlet (sent 3 April) stated that ‘The Outer Head is known to and is in communication with the Council’, but was not one of its members. A new form of pledge was introduced, and the *Book of Rules* was amended. The Council affirmed that it had received ‘unmistakable proof’ that the new Outer Head was ‘in direct communication with Masters, with HPB, and with the “luminous youth” or “rajah” as that Adept has been variously named’. Accompanying the pamphlet were the minutes of the 29 March meeting held at Headquarters, at which extracts had been read from Judge’s diaries (which had referred to the new Outer Head by the glyph ‘...’, or as ‘Promise’). Members were given 21 days within which to decide whether or not to accept the new Head. The decision was quickly decided in the affirmative.

Press and public speculation soon led to the revelation that ‘Promise’ was in fact Katherine Tingley - whose exposure drastically foreshortened the year of self-imposed reticence. By the time of the 1896 Convention in New York, Tingley’s Outer Headship was an ‘open secret’, and it was on the basis of her newly-acquired power

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1. ‘Point Loma’ has become the term most commonly applied to the present body claiming its descent from Judge’s ‘The Theosophical Society in America’ (and, from him, to Blavatsky). Under Tingley’s leadership, the group occupied a large estate at Point Loma, near San Diego, from 1897-1942, thus the title ‘Point Loma Theosophists’ or, more properly ‘The Theosophical Society (Point Loma)’. As the group underwent a number of changes of title throughout the twentieth century, ‘Point Loma’ is used here - as elsewhere - as the most convenient. For details see *supra* ch. 16.
that she successfully promoted Hargrove for the Presidency. At the same time it was announced that the Masters were preparing to found a ‘School for the Revival of the Lost Mysteries of Antiquity’. Subsequently, a circular was sent to ES members informing them that the Masters were also initiating a humanitarian World Crusade, and seeking funds to assist them in their project.

Tingley’s position was reinforced by the systematic efforts of Hargrove, who circulated to the ES suggestive details purporting to come from Judge’s occult diary, and accounts of Tingley’s early childhood in which voices and visions, later complemented by psychic powers, were offered as evidence of her adeptship. She herself claimed to have been Judge’s close associate for the two years prior to his death, and to have been appointed his suffragan and successor. The New York Tribune of 18 May, 1896, made Tingley’s position public in the course of a published interview; three days later a formal notification was sent to ES members - enclosing a copy of the interview.

Within a very short time, tremendous tensions appeared in the relationship between the President and the Outer Head, which eventually led to open conflict. Tingley campaigned vigorously against Hargrove’s reelection at the 1898 convention, and ultimately moved for major changes in the constitution: ‘The Theosophical Society in America’ became the ‘Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society’ with Tingley as ‘Leader and Official Head’. Although the new body was endowed with a Cabinet, Tingley nevertheless assumed ultimate lifelong authority.

Hargrove and his followers met after the adoption of Tingley’s proposal, declared the changes illegal, and reaffirmed the original 1895 Constitution of The Theosophical Society in America. This act led him and his 200 associates into direct schism (for which see infra). On 1st March, 1898, Hargrove sent a circular to as many members of the American ES as he could contact which included the text of ES letters between himself and Tingley. These letters have occasioned considerable discussion in Theosophical circles, and have led a number of commentators to conclude that Hargrove and others had organised the campaign to install Tingley as Outer Head.
because she appeared to be an innocuous individual around whom to congregate. Further, many have suggested that the letters substantiate the notion that the claims regarding Judge’s selection of Tingley prior to his death were either fabrications or significant distortions of his meaning.

Hargrove informed Tingley by mail that the Masters had removed her:

[B]y Order of the Master you have ceased to be the Outer Head of the E.S.T. in the interior and true sense. The Outer Head to follow you has already been appointed by the Master.\(^3\)

Unsurprisingly, the issue became the centre of organisational, journalistic, and legal battles. Nevertheless, Tingley remained firmly ensconced within the Universal Brotherhood, and maintained supreme control of the main body until her death in 1929.

Tingley’s tenure as Leader was a period of dramatic change for the ‘Judge Theosophists’. She instituted a variety of measures which elevated Theosophy into a communitarian movement; she closed many of the smaller lodges (the members, indignant, often reverted to Adyar membership), and directed the focus of all endeavours to the large utopian society at Point Loma, close to San Diego. At its peak, Point Loma was very much the New Jerusalem for committed Theosophists, and Tingley its benevolent dictator. From there the various activities of the group radiated outwards: Raja Yoga Schools, the Theosophical Permanent Peace Conference, the School of Antiquity, the Isis League of Music and Drama, \textit{inter alia}.

The power which Tingley consolidated as Leader was predicated, as it had ever been in Theosophy, on her presumed relationship with the Masters. Indeed, a number of her Point Loma (‘Lomaland’) disciples deemed that she herself was an advanced ‘adept’, and as such her powers and decisions were inviolable. She herself claimed to have met one of Blavatsky’s Masters near Darjeeling during the 1896 World Crusade; unfortunately for the other Theosophists who journeyed in her train (including a frustrated President, Hargrove), she had encountered the Master - who was dressed as

a Tibetan and whittling a yoke peg - on a solitary walk.

A Select Bibliography:


Gottfried de Purucker

As had occurred a number of times before, Katherine Tingley had made no clear provision for an easy transition to a new Leader. Nevertheless, the most obvious candidate - and ultimate choice - was Gottfried de Purucker (1874-1942), an ardent Theosophist, Sanskrit scholar, and author. De Purucker inherited a 'Lomaland' in precipitous financial decline, and soon set about altering the organisation to suit its straightened circumstances. He returned the Universal Brotherhood to its original title, the simple 'Theosophical Society', and replaced 'Raja Yoga Academy' with the 'Lomaland School'. Many of the more extreme measures of Tingley's semi-monastic regime were removed; uniforms for the residents tended to be replaced with civilian dress, the rule of silence was relaxed, honorifics for the Leader (such as 'dear', 'great', 'beloved') were forgotten, and - crucially - power tended to be decentralised, with the national sections regaining more autonomy.

Within months of his ascendancy as Leader and Outer Head, de Purucker claimed that a visit from Morya and Koot Hoomi convinced him to begin a rapprochement with the Adyar Society, to culminate in joint celebrations for the centenary of Blavatsky's birth to be held in 1931. De Purucker and Besant corresponded over the plan, but discussions broke down over two issues: the presence of Leadbeater (whom the Point Loma Theosophists abhorred), and the leadership of the joint body. It appears that
neither Besant nor de Purucker was prepared to relinquish presidential authority.

De Purucker’s writings remain some of the most systematic and popular Theosophical works since Blavatsky. His output was vast and, as Outer Head, included the first substantial revision and expansion of the ES curriculum since the separation from the parent body in 1895. He taught that there were seven degrees of Initiation (the Theosophical Society was the ‘outer court’), of which three were included in the ES:

1) The Esoteric Section, or the Eastern or Oriental School,
2) The Katherine Tingley Memorial Group (KTMG),
3) Those who were ‘put in personal communication with the Blessed Ones, our Chiefs’, known as the TD (or ‘Third Degree’).

De Purucker’s oral teachings have, for the most part, been published in the years following his death. The ES instructions, for instance, were incorporated into a series of booklets:

I. Chelaship: its nature and tests.
II. The Esoteric or Oriental School.
III. Space and the doctrine of Maya.
IV. Galaxies and solar systems: their genesis, structure and destiny.
V. Hierarchies and the doctrine of emanations.
VI. Invisible worlds and their inhabitants.
VII. The doctrine of the sphere.
VIII. Gods, monads, life atoms.
IX. Correlations of cosmic and human constitutions.
X. The hierarchy of compassion.
XI. Death and the circulation of the cosmos: I.
XII. Death and the circulation of the cosmos: II.

Not long after having completed the sale of the Point Loma properties, and the removal of the community to more modest accommodation in Covina, California, De Purucker died suddenly and unexpectedly, on 27 September, 1942. In a letter dated 25 January, 1935, he had left specific instructions regarding the succession of power: the successor was to ‘emerge’ within three years after de Purucker’s death, and would be recognisable by ‘the proper proofs of spiritual leadership’. In the interim, the Society
was to be ruled by a Cabinet, who, if no clear successor were to emerge, was to elect a Leader. De Purucker stated explicitly that anyone who claimed authority on the basis of communication with the Masters, or through psychic power, was *ipso facto* disqualified from the succession.

_A Select Bibliography:_


_Arthur Latham Conger_

Despite the best efforts of senior members, no clear successor emerged in the years following de Purucker’s death, and so the Cabinet elected Colonel Arthur L. Conger (1872-1951) as administrative Leader on 22 October, 1945. Conger, who had joined the Society in 1892 as a Harvard undergraduate, soon extended his remit by claiming to be the ‘Messenger of the Masters’ and _de facto_ Outer Head of the ES. He claimed, further, that Morya had instructed Tingley that he should be her successor; and that he was one of the seven leaders the Society would experience before Blavatsky’s return.

At a meeting of the ES Council on 21 December, 1945, Conger declared his Headship of the ES. Several of those present asked for a week’s grace in which to decide their position in regard to the matter. Although Conger agreed, within days he had had official letterhead printed which presupposed his Headship. A deputation of ten concerned ES members met Conger in the Leader’s residence on the morning of 23 December, 1945, to protest his actions, and on 6 January, 1946, three senior ES members (W. Emmett Small, Iverson L. Harris, and Judith Tyberg) confronted
Conger with a startling claim. They informed Conger of a secret inner circle within the ES, unknown in the wider Society, or even within the general ES membership (‘The Third Degree’; see supra). They wondered why, if Conger were the real Outer Head, he had not been aware of this group. Further, Conger was told that according to the rules of the ES established by de Purucker, one of the special tasks of the members of this higher degree was to recognise the Outer Head. In reply, Conger argued that de Purucker had not left such instructions, or - if he had - was not competent to do so at the time. Subsequent to the meeting, the leaders of the ‘Third Degree’ wrote to Conger, advising him that his claim to Headship was not recognised by them, and that they would not discuss with him the ‘insignia majestatis’ by which they would know the true Outer Head.

By March the situation for the dissidents had become completely untenable. Conger demanded their resignations, and when they declined to obey, they were ordered off the Covina headquarters. It is not inappropriate to consider Conger’s actions at this time something of a purge of the membership. Some of the most significant names in Theosophical research and publishing found themselves outside of the aegis of the Society for which they had worked for decades. Among those who left under Conger are to be found the following individuals: Iverson Harris, Sven Eek, Emmett Small, Judith Tyberg, Geoffrey Barborka, George Cardinal Le Gros, L. Gordon Plummer, and Boris de Zirkoff. De Zirkoff - a distant relative of Blavatsky, and the indefatigable editor of her Collected Writings - suggested that at least 126 other members of the ES also left under Conger’s Headship. Many of the dissidents founded their own Theosophical entities.

Conger continued as Leader and Outer Head of the Point Loma Theosophists until his death on 22 February, 1951. In the last years he attempted to close the ES completely, and sent out a directive to that effect on 14 February, only five days before the onset of death.

The first gathering of the Third Degree was held 25 November, 1929, at Point Loma. The last corporate gathering appears to have been held 26 September, 1942, at Covina. No records or minutes of meetings were ever taken, and no publications issued. The teachings were normally held in small groups, in question-and-answer sessions with de Purucker. The latter was solely responsible for calling meetings. The only ritual element of the group was the use of an entry password, and the reading of the membership roll. There were occasional members enrolled by de Purucker overseas: in England, Wales, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Australia (correspondence from W. Emmett Small to John Cooper, 26 August, 1990: copy in the possession of the present author).
his fatal heart attack.

**A Select Bibliography:**

Correspondence from W. Emmett Small to John Cooper, 26 August, 1990: copy in the possession of the present author.


Iverson L. Harris, 'Setting the Record Straight', unpublished manuscript, n. pl., n. d., 15pp.: copy in the possession of the present author.


**James Long**

Unusually for a Theosophical head, Conger had appointed *in writing* a successor as Leader. A document dated 27 March, 1946, installed William Hartley in the senior position in the event of Conger’s death. Nevertheless, Hartley’s attempt to assert his claim at the first meeting of the Cabinet after Conger’s death led to his denunciation by the members, and a fight - verbal and physical - ensued. Ultimately, Hartley left the headquarters (by then moved to Pasadena) and established his own Theosophical Society and ES which was never very successful and ceased to exist in the United States at his death. (Thereafter, the body’s headquarters moved to the Netherlands, where the movement had attracted a number of members, with D. J. P. Kok as Leader. He was succeeded by Herman Vermeulen, the current Leader).

Following the *contretemps* with Hartley, James A. Long (1898-1971) announced that the new Leader had taken possession of the office ‘when he prevented the Cabinet from considering Mr. Hartley’s claims’. When asked of whom he was speaking, he replied: ‘I am speaking of myself’. Subsequently, Long argued that although the Hartley document was genuine, Conger had been directed to issue it by the Master Morya as a ‘terrific test’ for the membership. He later declared that ‘anyone who believes anything a leader says about his successor is a damn fool’.
Long claimed association with the Masters, and to have willingly assumed the ‘karma of every FTS [Fellow of the Theosophical Society]’ at the time of Conger’s death, thus ‘dying’ to his individual self. His vision of the Society appears to have centred more upon social ethics than upon the ES, which he eventually closed with the words: ‘the esoteric has now become exoteric, and the exoteric esoteric’. Long died on 19 July, 1971, and was succeeded by Grace Knoche, who has continued the process of opening the Society to public gaze by maintaining the publications efforts of the Theosophical University Press, and allowing general access to the special collections materials of the Society’s library. Under Knoche, the Society has focussed more fully on the Blavatskian corpus.

A Select Bibliography:

Correspondence from W. Emmett Small to Gregory Tillett, 4 July, 1992: copy in the possession of the present author.

C. Groups deriving from the Point Loma Society

Ernest Hargrove and the Esoteric School

Following Hargrove’s resignation from the post of President in 1898, he led a breakaway of around 200 members from the Tingley-led Point Loma Society. The new group flourished for a time, and published some significant works, including two influential journals, The Theosophical Forum and The Theosophical Quarterly. In 1908 the Society assumed the title, ‘The Theosophical Society with Its Headquarters Based in New York’. The Society remained publicly active until it underwent ‘indrawal’ in 1935.
The ES was administered from December, 1898, by a Reference Committee consisting of A. P. Buchman, J. D. Buck, George Coffin, C. A. Griscom, Charles Johnston, Archibald Keightley, and William Ludlow. The identity of the Outer Head was never made known to the members, although ES documents prepared by the individual were distributed to them. These included *Aids and Suggestions* (to follow the seven papers previously issued by Judge) and *Subsidiary Paper D* (to follow Judge's *Subsidiary Papers A, B, and C*).

For the present research, *Aids and Suggestions No. 9* (dated 17 May, 1899) is of significant interest. In it the Outer Head noted that the ES had by then passed through its third corporate initiation. The First was when it successfully passed through the attacks made against Blavatsky. (Though the causes of the other two are not mentioned, it seems not unlikely they would centre around the two subsequent crises: the Judge case and the Tingley ascendency). The Second Initiation was 'as a psychic body, in the psychic world'. Following the Third, the ES as a whole was now:

an accepted Chela, of the Masters, and has its proper place and share
in the creative work of the Oversoul'.

The results of the Third Initiation on the individual members of the 'Inner Body' of the ES would be dramatic:

1) The power to guide his or her own life.
2) The power to draw forth the creative and the divine to become real and immortal selves, self-poised amid infinities.
3) The omniscience and omnipotence of the Eternal.

To facilitate the development of these powers, ES members were asked to complete various curricula of study, and to sit for examinations. A Board of examiners was appointed to assess the results. Such was entirely in accord with the Outer Head's conviction that the ES had passed from a period of *Instruction* under Blavatsky and Judge, to a period of *Discipline* under himself. The idea in the 'Hargrove' ES that the Inner Body of the ES participated with the Masters in Inner Plane work would make a fascinating comparative exercise with contemporaneous Leadbeaterian models. Regardless, it has been assumed that the 'Hargrove' ES entered into the same phase of 'indrawal' as the exoteric body in 1935.
Word Foundation

Harold W. Percival (1868-1953) joined the Theosophical Society in the United States in 1892, but, following the death of Judge in 1896, he separated from the Tingley movement to establish his own ‘Theosophical Society Independent’. Subsequently, he also instituted The Theosophical Publishing Company of New York, and began The Word magazine, which he published from 1904-1917.

Percival moved to a position closer to New Thought than to Theosophy in his teachings, suggesting that human beings lived in a state of self-induced hypnosis from which they needed to be awakened. His major work was *Thinking and Destiny* (1946), which he spent more than 30 years dictating to his amanuensis, Benoni B. Gattell. He also wrote *Democracy is Self-Government* (1952), *Man and Woman and Child* (1951), and *Masonry and its Symbols* (1952). In 1946, he and some associates established The Word Publishing Company and, in 1950, set up The Word Foundation. As at 1988, the Foundation claimed a membership of 350.

A Select Bibliography:


Temple of the People

In 1898, William H. Dower (1866-1937, known as ‘Red Star’) and Francis La Due (1849-1922, known as ‘Blue Star’), together with several of their disciples, broke from the Syracuse (New York) lodge of Tingley’s Point Loma Society. The foundational cause for their departure was that Blue Star had become the recipient of communications from the Masters. As a consequence, the pair founded the Temple of the People, which soon began to publish teachings gained through Blue Star’s astral contacts. Perhaps the most significant document received in this way purported to be a
third volume to be appended to Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*. Entitled *Theogenesis* (to accompany Blavatsky’s ‘Cosmogenesis’ and ‘Anthropogenesis’), the work was claimed to be the product of the Master Hilarion via Blue Star, and to be based upon the mysterious ‘Stanzas of Dzuan [or Dzjn]’. Other publications of the Temple of the People include *Teachings of the Temple* (3 vols., 1947-1985) and *From the Mountain Top* (3 vols., 1974-1985).

The new revelations from Hilarion taught that the spiritual hierarchy is headed by the Christos, the Central Spiritual Sun, with other Masters - all members of the Great White Brotherhood - embodying aspects of the Seven Rays. Central to the the Temple’s teachings was an eschatological expectation of the coming of a new Avatar - an incarnation of the Christos. This adventist expectation has characterised the Temple’s philosophy to the present day.

The Temple of the People eventually gathered in a community entitled ‘Halcyon’ near Pismo Beach, California, in 1903, where they inaugurated a cooperative colony under the title Temple Home Association. Although the colony was riven with internal disputes, the Theosophical community continued, and does so still, as the Home of the Temple Associated, Inc.

*A Select Bibliography:*

The short-lived Theosophical Society of New York was established in 1899 by Dr. J. H. Salisbury, who had been an associate of Judge, in concert with Donald Nicholson and Harold Percival (editor of The Word: see supra). Also involved with the group were Laura Langford (Mrs. Laura Holloway) and Dr. Alexander Wilder. It maintained its own ES, though the group seems not to have survived for long.

A Select Bibliography:

Franz Hartmann and the International Theosophische Verbruderung
Franz Hartmann (1838-1912) was a central personality in the early history of the Theosophical Society, and a prolific writer on esoteric subjects. He had been born in Bavaria, studied medicine, and joined the Society as the result of correspondence with Olcott. He arrived at Adyar on 4 December, 1883, and remained at the headquarters throughout the tempestuous months of 1884. He eventually returned to Europe in Blavatsky's train in 1885.

Following the crisis of 1895, Hartmann aligned himself with Judge, and later, with Tingley, being appointed as President of her German Section in 1897. Nevertheless, later that year he broke with Tingley and established his own International Theosophische Verbruderung in Munich, of which he became Corresponding Secretary. (Interestingly, this seems to be the first and only use of Blavatsky's former title in any of the continuing Theosophical traditions - no doubt a deferential practice). This body remains active.

Hartmann was particularly interested in the Rosicrucian tradition, and claimed to belong to a small extant Rosicrucian group, the teachings of which were reflected in some of his works. He was also one of the founding figures in the Ordo Templi Orientis, and was associated with a number of fringe Masonic rites. Further, he

\footnote{For analyses of two of Hartmann's novels see supra ch. 24, Appendix C.}
instituted an Order of the Esoteric Rose Croix and maintained an esoteric tradition within the *International Theosophische Verbruderung*.

A Select Bibliography:


*The United Lodge of Theosophists (ULT) and the Dzyan Esoteric School*

Of all of the 'separated brethren' of American (Point Loma) Theosophy, none has created the impact of the United Lodge of Theosophists, begun by Robert Crosbie. Crosbie (1849-1919), a Canadian, had been a member of the Theosophical Society at Point Loma, a President of the Boston Lodge under Judge, and a strong supporter of Tingley, prior to his expulsion from the headquarters in 1904. The cause for his leaving has been the subject of much intrigue and rumour for many years (from both Point Loma and Crosbie's continuators), but seems to have been based upon his claim to communications from the Masters. His assertions appear to have been rejected, and he was ordered off the estate. Thereafter, Crosbie was associated for a time with Hargrove's Theosophical Society in America before inaugurating the United Lodge of Theosophists in Los Angeles in 1909. Soon afterward, in 1912, Crosbie began publishing his own journal, *Theosophy*.

From its inception, the ULT has formally rejected any notion of hierarchical structure or leadership, and often vigorously denounced such strains in other Theosophical structures:

 completamente inoculato con el virus de 'apostolico sucesion', ambos

the fragments of the parent Theosophical Society rapidly degenerated.⁶

Nevertheless, as with any human gathering, *de facto* hierarchical structures soon arose within the ULT, and have been maintained over the years subsequent to Crosbie's death in 1919. Indeed, it is arguable that because the ULT leadership is concealed, the individuals who manage the body possess (*in potentia*) more power than they might

⁶ Anon. [Garrigues, ed.], *The Theosophical Movement*; 681.
otherwise achieve. In fact, Crosbie’s successor, John Garrigues (?-1944), was held to be the ‘owner’ of the ULT in a court decision of 1938. (After Garrigues’ death in 1944, Grace Clough became *de facto* Head of the organisation). Yet, the ULT appears in its literature to espouse a non-sectarian Theosophy, and to grant relative autonomy to individual lodges. The ULT sponsors its own ES, entitled the Dzyan Esoteric School (which they claim - with some authority - was Blavatsky’s intended title). The Dzyan Esoteric School maintains a strong adherence to both Blavatsky and Judge, to the degree that pronouns used in relation to the former tend to be capitalised. Indeed, Garrigues said of Blavatsky that there was ‘not in a jot or in tittle ... a contradiction or a disagreement in all she ever wrote’.  

A Select Bibliography:


The International Group of Theosophists

In the early 1940s, Boris Mihailovich de Zirkoff (1902-1981) founded the International Group of Theosophists, with *Theosophia* as its journal (1944-1981). De Zirkoff, to whom all Theosophical historians pay a debt of gratitude for his painstaking compilation and editing of Blavatsky’s *Collected Writings*, was one of the coterie of Theosophists expelled by Conger. This group formed a loose alliance and continued to extol the Theosophy of Blavatsky.

A Select Bibliography:


Ibid., 41.
2) Para-Theosophical Groups, or those which emerged from Theosophy but which developed into discrete entities

Not unexpectedly, there have been many individuals who have served something akin to an 'occult apprenticeship' in the Theosophical Society. The Society operated as a beacon for those with esoteric interests, particularly in its first fifty years, and many of those occultists of the twentieth century who have since become famed for their own specific strains of esotericism found their early interest fanned within the Society. There have been several such figures, and some - Steiner and Bailey, for instance - are highly significant conceptualisers in their own right. For reasons of space, the following brief discussion has been limited to three individuals: Rudolf Steiner, Alice Bailey, and Cyril Scott. Others, such as Nicholas Roerich, are discussed elsewhere in the present work.⁸

A. Rudolf Steiner and the Anthroposophical Society

Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) is rightly regarded as one of the seminal figures of twentieth century European esotericism. As his own works and those of his numerous continuators are readily available, the following is simply a brief overview of his 'esoteric career'.

Born in Kraljevic, Austria, the young Steiner developed an early interest in the works of Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), who was to remain one of the pivotal ideational influences throughout his life. After an early academic career (during which he penned the introduction to the standard edition of Goethe's scientific treatises, and worked at the Goethe Archives in Weimar), Steiner came into contact with the Theosophical Society (Adyar) in Berlin at the turn of the century. By 1902 he had been elected General Secretary of the German Section, and on 10 May, 1904, was elevated to the position of Arch-Warden of the ES in Germany and Austria by Annie Besant. Tensions developed between Steiner and the parent body over the next decade with regard to the Eastern orientation of the Society and its promotion of Krishnamurti. Ultimately, Steiner led the German Section (including the ES) away from Theosophy and, by 1914, had reconstituted the body as the Anthroposophical Society.

⁸For Roerich see infra Appendix B.
The remaining decade of Steiner’s life was spent in establishing solid foundations for his group, particularly through an emphasis on meditative scholarship. He moved the headquarters of the Anthroposophical Society to Basel, Switzerland, where he designed the justly famous Goetheanum centre. During this period he also developed such staples of Anthroposophical life as ‘Eurythmy’ - a spiritualised rhythmic dancing - and the Waldorf schools, based on Steiner’s philosophy of education. In 1921 Steiner agreed to the institution of the ‘Christian Community’, a focus for the ritualised enactment of his own version of esoteric Christianity. He wrote the rituals for the group (notably, its central liturgy, ‘The Act of the Consecration of Man’), and designed the vestments and ceremonial.

In the years following Steiner’s death in 1925, the Anthroposophical movement grew to be an international body, and maintained its particular interest in the educative field. The organisation has tended to suppress some of Steiner’s more occultistic endeavours (such as his membership of various fringe Freemasonic rites, and, particularly, the association between Anthroposophy and Steiner’s own Masonic group, the ‘MD’ or Misraim-Dienst), but maintains amicable relations with various of the Theosophical societies.

Steiner’s own esoteric vision has occasionally been called ‘Johannine Christianity’. His interests had always focussed primarily upon the synoptic figures of Western esotericism, and, as a consequence, his engagement with the neo-Hinduism of Besant was only ever slight by nature. Nevertheless, Steiner was very attached to the Masters, and claimed to be their ‘voice’. He was initially very flattering in his descriptions of Blavatsky, but ultimately came to the conclusion that she had been expelled from whatever fraternity of adepts into which she had been initiated, and then ‘captured’ by magical means by her erstwhile associates and prevented from betraying their secrets further. Thus it was that the Mahatma correspondence and The Secret Doctrine were the product of illusion, and the result of commerce with a ‘false’ Koot Hoomi.
For all of Steiner’s denunciation of Blavatsky, it is clear that much of his sophisticated system is directly indebted to her and to both the Mahatma letters and *The Secret Doctrine*. Nevertheless, he shifted the emphasis from Blavatsky’s aeternopised macrovision to a more teleologically-specific historiography, with its central pivot fixed on the incarnation of Christ. Yet the Masters still have a significant part to play as they provide the exemplary intermediary between the utterly human and the perfect model of self-divinisation - the Christ.

A Select Bibliography:


B. Alice La Trobe Bateman Bailey and the Arcane School

Alice Bailey was born in Manchester, England, in 1880. Raised in the Church of England, she undertook early work of a missionary nature, and, in 1907, married Arthur Evans, who soon thereafter became an Episcopal seminarian in Ohio. The marriage was unsuccessful and Alice Evans separated from her husband in 1915, and
found work to support her three daughters in a sardine-packing plant in Monterey, California. Soon thereafter she was introduced to Theosophy by two women who claimed to have been Blavatsky's disciples; almost immediately she joined the Pacific Grove lodge of the Adyar Society.

Within a short space of time, Bailey began to exhibit great promise as an elucidator of the often convoluted Theosophical tenets of *The Secret Doctrine*. She convened classes, and was soon in residence at the American headquarters, Krotona (in Ojai, California), where she was charged with running the cafeteria. By 1918 she was a member of the ES, and exclaimed upon seeing the portrait of Koot Hoomi for the first time that he had once visited her at age fifteen. In 1919 she had met Foster Bailey (?-1977), the then National Secretary of the American Section, and recognised something of a kindred spirit. Both were concerned with what they perceived to be the autocratic nature of the Besant administration, and felt the rigid rules concerning the ES to inhibit, rather than encourage, chelas in their search for the Masters.

By 1920, tensions in the American Section had become so apparent (focussed, in the main, on the consolidation of power in the ES) that Alice Evans and Foster Bailey were dismissed from their positions and called upon to leave Krotona. By this time Bailey had begun to claim that she had been contacted by the Master Djual Khul (spelled variously), 'The Tibetan', and had been invited to be the amanuensis for a new wave of revelation. Such a claim brought her into immediate conflict with the Theosophical authorities, but inevitably made her something of a focus for aspirant chelas. The couple soon moved to New York, were married, and began conducting independent classes in *The Secret Doctrine*. They attracted a core of converts (many from other Theosophical bodies), including Richard Prater who had been an associate of Judge and a pupil of Blavatsky. From Prater Alice Bailey received a set of the ES papers, which she subsequently put to good use:

[Richard Prater] gave me the esoteric section instructions as given to him by H.P.B. They are identical with those I had seen when in the E.S. but they were given to me with no strings attached to them at all and I have been at liberty to use them at any time and have used 723
Alice Bailey asserted that her own teacher was the Master Koot Hoomi, who had also been Blavatsky's personal Master. In this way she created for herself something of a pedigree, and also established herself in the eyes of her students as Blavatsky's natural heir. Djual Khul - who had also been taught by Koot Hoomi - ultimately dictated eighteen books to Bailey over a period of 30 years; she herself wrote six others. In the interim, the Baileys established the Arcane School (in 1923), which Alice Bailey claimed had been Blavatsky's original title for the ES. Requiring no pledges, oaths, or obedience, the Arcane School functioned as the focus for the Baileys' endeavours, and operated - for the main - as a correspondence school in Theosophy-based esotericism.

The Alice Bailey Weltanschauung is steadfastly Theosophical in foundation. The focus is clearly on the attainment of Master-ship, and a hastening of the process was believed to be achievable through the use of certain prayerful invocations, most notably 'The Great Invocation'. In the Bailey materials there is a predominant strain of adventism; the telos of the present age will culminate in the appearance of the Bodhisattva/Avatar/Christ whose reign will occasion the development of the (latent) sense of terrestrial fraternity. All must work toward the Coming of this avatar through personal and communal development initiatives. The means of the descent of the avatar are three: an 'overshadowing' of initiates; an outpouring of 'the Christ life' upon all humans; and the physical descent of the avatar. This position can be seen as a form of rapprochement between the Blavatskian and the Besant-Leadbeaterian positions.

There is an overt strain of premillennialism in Bailey's depiction of the Masters. The Masters often speak as premillennial heralds - warning of dangers for materialistic humanity. The human initiate works to avert such catastrophe by means of personal spiritual evolution, and the fostering of collegiality among peoples. To this end, Bailey advocated the establishment of a new world religion, which would encompass the (esoteric) truths of all creeds.

Following Alice Bailey's death in 1949, Foster Bailey took over the functioning of the Arcane School. After his death in 1977, the work was continued by his second wife.
Mary Bailey. There have been several offshoots from the original Arcane School:


2) *The School for Esoteric Studies.* The School for Esoteric Studies began as the result of a 1956 schism from the New York headquarters of the Arcane School.

3) *The School of Light and Realization (‘SOLAR’).* SOLAR, based in Traverse City, Michigan, was inaugurated in 1969, and follows the Bailey system. It is emphatically adventist in orientation, and awaits the establishment of the Aquarian Age and the return of the Christ.

*Benjamin Creme*

Probably the most well known of the Bailey-derived Masters-formulations is that begun by Benjamin Creme (b. 1922). Creme, born in Scotland, became an enthusiastic devotee of the Bailey teachings in his youth, and claimed to have made psychic contact with the ‘Spiritual Hierarchy’ in 1959. Following Bailey’s belief (outlined in her *Reappearance of the Christ* of 1948) that the new World-Teacher was imminent and might begin his public ministry sometime after 1975 (a common interpretation of Blavatsky), Creme received messages from the Hierarchy that the Lord Maitreya was soon to appear, and that he was to begin announcing the Coming. According to Creme, the Lord Maitreya descended in his physical body on 7 July, 1977, and soon thereafter began teaching in manifest form. In April, 1982, Creme - as ‘Baptist’ - took out large newspaper advertisements throughout the world, announcing that the Lord Maitreya’s ‘Day of Declaration’ would occur within two months. When no such declaration was made, Creme attributed responsibility to a disinterested media, and announced that the ‘Day’ had been postponed. His adventist movement (Share International Foundation) has become less visible since this time, but still exists - due in major part to Creme’s consistent touring and lecturing. In the United States, the Tara Centre has been established to perpetuate the teachings, and there are now associated groups throughout the world. In 1986, Creme revealed that the Lord Maitreya was living in London’s East End, and was a member of the ‘Pakistani Indian’
community, and on 11 June, 1988, he released a photograph of the Lord Maitreya visiting Nairobi, Kenya. Interestingly, unlike his last manifestation in Palestine where he descended upon Jesus, the Lord Maitreya (the 'World Teacher') has this time come 'Himself', yet he also ‘will mentally “overshadow” all of humanity simultaneously’. Thus it is that Creme follows Alice Bailey in reconciling the various Theosophical positions on the Coming. It might be noted that in 1988 the Lord Maitreya, through one of his ‘closest associates in the Asian community of London’ published an article which promised that 'm]any people will be healed from AIDS through the practice of prayer'.

A Select Bibliography:

*The Emergence of the World Teacher: with Invocation, Affirmation and Mantram for Aquarius*, Leaflet One, Tara, n. pl., n. d. (received May, 2000).

C. Cyril Meir Scott and The Initiate

Although Cyril Scott (1879-1970) is remembered now - if at all - as a composer, he was for a time a very influential writer on occult matters, and three of his books (all published anonymously) did much to shape the public perception of the Masters.

Scott, born on 27 September, 1879, at Oxton, near Birkenhead, England, began his
musical career early, and at age twelve was sent to Frankfurt to study piano. Within a few years he had become associated with what was later known as the 'Frankfurt Group', which included the Australian composer Percy Grainger. Ultimately, he moved to London and began to give piano recitals, eventually obtaining a contract to compose works for the publisher, Robert Elkin. He soon gained a significant reputation, and became acquainted with some of the musical luminaries of his day, such as Debussy and Ravel. Nevertheless, his success as a composer was somewhat limited in the public sphere, though he was much acclaimed by his peers.

Scott had become acquainted with various esoteric philosophies through friends, and eventually attended lectures by Annie Besant. He was immediately fascinated by the notion of the 'the Mahatmas, Adepts, High Initiates, Masters of Wisdom, by whatever name one elects to call them'. Enthusiastic, he joined the Theosophical Society on 27 November, 1914.

Scott claimed that his personal contact with the Masters began in the years 1919-1920. He met the Theosophist, psychic consultant, and Liberal Catholic Bishop, Robert King, who advised him to visit 'a sort of rest-house at Crowhurst near Hastings', called 'The Firs', which was run by a Mrs. Nelsa Chapman, who Scott was told was a medium through whom the Master Koot Hoomi spoke. While Nelsa conveyed the Master's messages, her husband would provide colour-therapy via a method which he claimed he had been taught by the same Master. (It was during his stay at 'The Firs' that Scott met Rose Allatini [d. 1980], who would later become his wife. Allatini achieved some fame herself as the novelist 'Eunice Buckley').

During the First World War, Scott wrote The Initiate: Some Impressions of a Great Soul By His Pupil, which was eventually published anonymously ('By His Pupil') in 1920. Scott later stated that he was 'amazed to hear of the large number of people that volume has converted to Occultism and believe in the Hierarchy'. He explained his involvement thus:

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{11}} \text{ Cyril Scott, Bone of Contention: Life Story and Confessions, Arco Publishing Company, New York, 1969, 133.} \]

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{12}} \text{ Ibid., 158.} \]

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{13}} \text{ Ibid., 176.} \]
Although it was my hand which wrote the 'Initiate Series' of books, the material was given to me by someone else whose identity could not be revealed. Even so, I discovered from K. H. that it was he who in the first place actually prompted me to relate the story of the man I called 'J. M. H.'. The Masters had wished to put the books through as an experiment in the hopes that they might bring some enlightenment to many who were groping in darkness.14

Scott subsequently wrote The Initiate in the New World (1927) and The Initiate in the Dark Cycle (1932). These books also related the story of the relationship between the pseudonymous author, Charles Broadbent, and the Master figure Justin Moreward Haig:

Whether Justin Moreward Haig (I am not permitted to reveal his real name) was what occultists call an Adept, this I cannot say; for in all honesty I do not know, the reason being that in matters concerning himself he was exceptionally reticent. But I do know that if one could erase the many unsatisfactory associations connected with the word saint, and rid the word 'Superman' of its equally unsatisfactory ones, Justin Moreward Haig (I usually called him Moreward) might with equal right be called either of these or both.15

'The Initiate' books were tremendously popular, and have remained in print more or less to the present day. The stories interweave fictional and real characters, and present Scott's account of Theosophical doctrine, particularly as it relates to the Masters. The author later explained that part of the reason he began the stories was to combat a number of erroneous assumptions about the Masters: that they all lived in Tibet, that they were surrounded by amazing splendour (as he believed Marie Corelli implied),16 and that they were 'morally dried-up mummies' (which he considered characterised Bulwer-Lytton's depiction of Masters in Zanoni).17

14 Ibid.
16 For Marie Corelli see infra Appendix C.
17 'His Pupil' [Cyril Scott], The Initiate: Some Impressions, xi. For Bulwer-Lytton's Zanoni see supra ch. 29.
Scott believed his access to the Master Koot Hoomi would cease following Nelsa Chapman’s death in 1930. Fortunately, he was able to maintain the psychic contact through the assistance of three mediums: Archibald Cockren, Brian Ross (known through his books as ‘David Anrias’),18 and ‘Marjorie H.’. Cockren - so Scott believed - was an alchemist who had transmuted lead into gold, and had been visited in the flesh by the Master the Count. Brian Ross, who became a good friend of Scott’s, published several works of his own on the Masters, and appears in The Initiate in the Dark Cycle, declaring that Krishnamurti was tearing down ‘the pillars supporting the Temple of Theosophy’.19 ‘Marjorie H.’ later became Scott’s companion ‘in accordance with K. H.’s wishes and intentions’, following a separation from Rose.

Scott’s portrayal of the Masters is not always systematic, though is more often than not in accord with the Leadbeaterian model. He taught that there were considerable numbers of Masters (the amount varied);20 in 1969 - at the time of the completion of his autobiography - he estimated that:

in all there are about two hundred Masters, but only a comparative few of Them have pupils, for Their time is taken up with other Work in the service of humanity.21

Scott’s influence on esoteric movements has been significant. The books he produced though telepathy (such as ‘The Author of “The Initiate”’ [Cyril Scott], The Vision of the Nazarene, George Routledge & Sons, London, 1933) proved highly popular, as did his works on the esoteric historiography and evolution of music, such as Music: Its Secret Influence Throughout The Ages, written at the direction of Koot Hoomi.22 He was for a time also a member of the Tantrik Order of America under Pierre Bernard (1875-1955), better known as ‘Oom the Omnipotent’.

18 For Ross/Anrias see infra Appendix A.
20 See infra Appendix A.
21 Scott, Bone of Contention, 234.
A Select Bibliography:

Desmond Scott, ‘Cyril Scott and Rose Allatini (Eunice Buckley): A Remembrance’ in *Theosophical History*, VI:6, April, 1999, 218-222.

3) Extra-Theosophical Groups, or those which emerged from without Theosophy, but which display discernible Theosophical influence and tenets

The influence of the Theosophical Society on other contemporaneous esoteric orders is a subject requiring significant attention. Yet the Society itself has been of less significance, in some ways, than the works of Blavatsky and Leadbeater (and others) which have promulgated Theosophical teachings to a vast reading audience. The following survey of various of these groups and individuals is only representative of a much larger pool of occultist groups which - knowingly or unknowingly - have perpetuated Theosophical teachings about the Masters.

A. Golden Dawn Masters: Theosophy and Theurgia

Several commentators have noted the sympathies between the Theosophical Masters and the ‘Secret Chiefs’ of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, begun in London in the late 1880s. Any serious analysis of the origin of the Golden Dawn - and of its Secret Chiefs - is far beyond the scope of the present work, but a few comments are necessary.

For a select bibliography of the Golden Dawn see *supra* ch. 29.
The literature written by the *adepti* of the Golden Dawn indicates that there were significant theoretical correlations between the Secret Chiefs and the Masters in so far as both represented esoteric constructs of *perfected* humanity, transformed through individual effort. The Golden Dawn emphasised the Western template of esoteric perfectibilism (as represented by the Rosicrucian Fraternity) while the Theosophical Society employed a vocabulary derived from Oriental sources - even if the underlying idiom remained steadfastly Occidental.

Although the Golden Dawn claimed to originate with the inspiration of Secret Chiefs (a term borrowed from *Hauts Grades* Freemasonry, with which the Order had conceptual and organisational links), there was little information about them circulated to the *adepti*. The *Adeptus Minor* ritual of the Order gave the names of the ‘Three Highest Chiefs’ as Hugo Alverda, the Phrisian; Franciscus de Bry, the Gaul; and Elman Zata, the Arab. One author has noted that later tradition supposed the three to be ‘a Greek, a Copt and a Hindou’.24 Whether these three are identical with the mysterious fraternal names of the first three initiates of the Inner Order (*the Ordo Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis*), as listed on the ‘Parchment Roll’ - ‘Lux Saeculorum’, ‘Lux Benigna’, and ‘Lux in Coelis’ - is impossible to determine, though not unlikely. Aside from these, references to the Secret Chiefs are rare.

The relationship between the Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society remains to be investigated fully. It is certain that there were parallel memberships, and that William Wynn Westcott, the figure responsible (very likely through forgery) for the documents on which the Order was ‘chartered’, was also a corresponding member of Blavatsky’s Inner Group. Samuel Liddell Mathers, the presiding genius of the Order, was closely associated with Anna Bonus Kingsford and her Hermetic Society, and something of an esoteric polymath in the Blavatskian mould. Significantly, though several *adepti* claimed to have contacted the Secret Chiefs psychically, only Mathers seemed to have met one in the flesh (on the streets of Paris).

24 Colquhuon, *Sword of Wisdom*, 35.
The story of the multiple schisms of the Order, and of the bitter accusations of fraudulent claims of access to the Secret Chiefs, has occupied a substantial number of scholars. For the present purposes, it is sufficient to examine in brief the career of one leader of a second-generation Temple, as it bears some striking parallels with the modern history of Theosophy.

*Robert William Felkin*

The early life of Robert William Felkin (1853-1926) was devoted to medicine, and particularly to the pathology of tropical disease. After a period of research in Uganda, he returned to his native Scotland and gained his degree from Edinburgh University. It was here that he encountered the Amen-Ra Temple of the Golden Dawn under the oversight of J. W. Brodie-Innes, and became a member (on 12 March, 1894). Soon thereafter he moved to London and joined the mother temple, Isis Urania, under Mathers, and was elevated to the Second Order in 1896. It is significant to note that he and his first wife, Mary Felkin, had joined the Theosophical Society in 1886, but felt it insufficiently ceremonial/theurgical.

Felkin showed early promise and swiftly became a leading light of the organisation. He also became involved in various inner workings of the *adepti*, such as the ‘Sphere’ group run by Florence Farr (1860-1917), which was devoted to the training of individual psychism so as to contact the Secret Chiefs ‘on the Inner Plane’. Following the acrimonious split of the Order into various factions in 1900, Felkin rose to become the *de facto* leader of one such Order, the Mystic Rose, later to be renamed the *Stella Matutina*. It was upon the Stella Matutina that Felkin impressed his own idiosyncratic adventist Rosicrucianism.

From 1901, Felkin travelled regularly in Germany in search of the Secret Chiefs, whom he believed to be the natural heirs of Christian Rosenkreutz. Initially unsuccessful, he amplified his psychic efforts and was soon reporting contact with various of the Chiefs (including a group of ‘Sun Masters’, an individual named Sri Parananda, and even Rosenkreutz himself). By 1907, Felkin had gained psychic access to an entity named ‘Ara ben Shemesh’, who claimed to occupy - with other
‘Sons of Fire’ (a very Blavatskian term) - the ‘Temple in the Desert’ into which Rosenkreutz had been initiated many centuries prior. From Ara ben Shemesh, Felkin learned that Rosenkreutz would soon take possession of a male initiate (popularly believed to be Felkin himself), and bring about a complete religious and social *renovatio*. It seemed that twelve of Ara ben Shemesh’s disciples would likewise occupy the bodies of various *Stella Matutina adepti*.

Felkin continued his pilgrimages to Germany, and in 1910 came under the influence of Rudolf Steiner, whom Felkin soon came to recognise as a crucial link with the Secret Chiefs (and not unlikely a Chief himself). Felkin poured much Steiner material - as well as various strains of the Rosicrucian Orientalism of the *Ordo Templi Orientis* and other of the fringe *rites sauvage* - into the Stella Matutina, creating an ever more hybridised theurgic occultism, over which he maintained singular control.

After escaping from Germany in the wake of the declaration of war in 1914, Felkin returned to England and redoubled his efforts in expectation of the imminent Coming, which he predicted to occur sometime between 1926 and 1935. To this end, Felkin moved to Havelock North in New Zealand (which was believed able to provide something of an occult laboratory for the active development of a more advanced humanity), and, from 1916 until his death in 1926, presided over the ‘*Smaragdum Thalasses*’ Temple of the *Stella Matutina* which he had established during his first visit of 1912/1913.

Felkin’s adventism became ever less pronounced in his later years and, following his death, his widow and daughter continued the Temple workings under a more normative Golden Dawn aspect. Indeed, the ‘*Smaragdum Thalasses*’ Temple, centred upon the Felkins’ remarkable house ‘Whare Ra’, survived for several decades more, and initiated many hundreds of committed occultists.

There are obvious parallels between the adventist expectations of Felkin and the quasi-messianic fervour embraced by Leadbeater. Aside from the idea of an ‘initiate’ being overshadowed by a ‘Master’, there are other more subtle similarities, such as the belief
that Australasia and America (that is, the 'white' countries of the Pacific basin) would provide the crucible for the development of new races. One interesting schematic parallel is that Leadbeater's Egyptian Rite and Felkin's 'Havelock Work' (in 'Smaragdum Thalasses') both entailed degrees which presupposed 'entry' into the sphere of Master-ship. Where the original Golden Dawn tradition had entailed three separate Orders - the Golden Dawn itself, the Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis, and the 'Third Order' for the Secret Chiefs - of which initiates could gain entry solely into the first two, Felkin (and his continuators) breached this divide by creating rituals for entry into the Third Order. It appears that the Golden Dawn may well have faced the same sort of existential crisis as did Theosophy: if the Masters are unwilling to 'descend' for the purposes of chelaship, then chelas will 'ascend' for the purposes of Master-ship.

A Select bibliography:


Dion Fortune (Violet Mary Firth)

Dion Fortune, one of the most popular English occultists of the twentieth century, was born Violet Mary Firth in Wales, in 1890. Growing up in London under the strict Christian Science environment fostered by her mother, Fortune experienced early trauma at some species of 'training college' - which was to encourage her later interest in psychoanalysis. She trained in London as a lay-analyst (although the origin of her qualifications remains unknown), and began lectures in the field. These were later published in her *The Machinery of the Mind* (1922). Her interests were rather diverse as can be seen from other early books: *The Psychology of the Servant Problem* (1925); *The Soya Bean* (1925); and *The Problem of Purity* (1928).
Fortune encountered Theosophy in her mid twenties, and avidly read Besant's *The Ancient Wisdom*. From this text Fortune discovered the Masters, and then made it her mission to make contact with the Brotherhood. Early psychic encounters delivered two Masters: the Master Jesus ('the Most Holy Lord of Compassion'), and 'The Most Wise' (whom she later identified as the Master the Count).

Early in her esoteric career, Fortune came under the influence of an Irish occultist, Theodore Moriarty (1873-1823), who had attracted substantial numbers of devoted disciples to his centre at Bishop's Stortford, 30 miles north-east of London. Moriarty's occultism was heavily flavoured with Theosophical cosmology and principles, supplemented with his own septenary system of correspondences: Correspondence, Law and Order, Vibration, Rhythm, Cyclicity, Polarity, and Sex. He also claimed to be an initiate of the Order of Melchizedek - a fraternity of Masters.

During this time (in 1919), Fortune was also initiated into one of the second generation Golden Dawn Temples loyal to Mathers, the *Alpha et Omega*, run by J. W. Brodie-Innes. Soon thereafter she was placed under the tutelage of the newly-widowed Mina Mathers, in the central London Temple, and began her career in earnest. She came into conflict with Mina Mathers over her claims to contact with the 'Third Order', and her desire to establish herself as a published authority on esoteric matters, and was eventually expelled from the Golden Dawn in 1926.

Fortune's desire to assert her independence led to her inauguration in 1922 of the Fraternity (later Society) of the Inner Light. She proved to be very industrious and attempted to gain control over the remnants of Moriarty's group following the leader's death in 1923, but was unsuccessful. She soon began to promote her own correspondence course in the Golden Dawn tradition, offering ritual initiations for those who completed the work to her satisfaction. This encouraged her to search out further occult pastures, and in 1924 she became involved in the Christian Mystic Lodge of the Theosophical Society, which had been established the year prior under the presidency of the Australian Daisy E. Groves (1879-?), author of several books on Theosophical Christianity. (Fortune later claimed that she had been specifically
instructed by the Master Jesus to join the Theosophical Society). Fortune soon found herself in conflict with members of the lodge; she was interested in the Master Jesus, they in 'the Christ' (that is, the Lord Maitreya, who was expected to descend upon Krishnamurti). Fortune eventually resigned from the Christian Mystics in 1927, and devoted herself to the Fraternity of the Inner Light.

By the end of 1923, Fortune had become the centre of her own small community in London. During a visit to Glastonbury (long considered a pilgrimage site for Christian esotericists, and later the subject of a study by Fortune), she began to establish contact with Masters outside of the Theosophical pantheon: Socrates (469-399 B.C.E.), Lord Thomas Erskine (1749-1823, known as 'Lord E' or 'The Chancellor', and who previously incarnated as Thomas More [1478-1535]), and David Carstairs. Of the various claims made in reference to the earthly Carstairs (for instance, that he had been an officer killed during World War One), none has been verified. The identity of these three Masters remained for many years a closely guarded secret of the Fraternity of the Inner Light.

During 1923 and 1924, Fortune also received what she described as 'transmissions' from her Masters for what she regarded as her most significant treatise - a work she likened to The Secret Doctrine. Though not published until 1949 (it had circulated privately in the Fraternity), Fortune's The Cosmic Doctrine is certainly reminiscent of Blavatsky's work in so far as it is heavily dependent on the latter's conceptual mapping. It is also not dissimilar to Moriarty's Aphorisms of Creation and Cosmic Principles (1923).

Over the next two decades, Fortune continued her ritual work with the Fraternity, and published voluminously. She also created the Guild of the Master Jesus to support those who required a comprehensively Christian occultism. Of her works, the following are representative: The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage (1923), Esoteric Orders and their Work (1928), Sane Occultism (1929), The Training and Work of an Initiate (1930), Spiritualism in the Light of Occult Science (1931), Through the Gates of Death (1932), Practical Occultism in Daily Life (1935), and
In 1926 and in 1937 Fortune met two individuals who became quite important in her theurgic workings. The first was Christine Campbell Thompson (1897-1985), better known by her nom de plume, Christine Hartley), who was subsequently to become Fortune’s literary agent. The second was Charles Richard Foster Seymour (1880-1943). The ritual workings begun by the trio in 1937 led to the discovery of several new Masters: the Biblical ‘Melchisedec of Salem’; Lord Eldon (1751-1838); Kha’muast (c.1300-1246 B.C.E.); and Cleomenes III (c.235-222 B.C.E.). Contact with these and other Masters occupied much of the remaining decade of Fortune’s life. She died in London in January, 1946, and was buried in her beloved Glastonbury.

Fortune’s influence on the subsequent history of English-language occultism has been immense. Through her deft promotion of the Fraternity of the Inner Light, she became a pivotal figure in the post-World War II occult movement in England, and the source of the idiom for many who, though starting in the Fraternity/Society, later hived off to form independent groups. Two such figures (and there are others) are W. E. Butler (1898-1978) and Basil Wilby (who writes under the nom de plume ‘Gareth Knight’). Butler, particularly, became a celebrated author and the progenitor of his own occult order, the Servants of the Light, which claims an authority from Inner Plane Masters. Butler was a disciple of the English spiritualist and one-time Liberal Catholic Bishop, Robert King, and had been a member of the Theosophical Society before making contact with Fortune. He subsequently became one of the key figures in her Guild of the Master Jesus, and was a Priest of the Liberal Catholic Church.

Fortune admitted to a rather ambivalent attitude to Theosophy. She certainly disliked the ‘Neo-Theosophy’ of Besant and Leadbeater:
The specific statements of the Neo-Theosophical literature of the Besant-Leadbeater school, which attempt to enlighten and convince the conscious mind, are not the centre round which the movement founded by Mme. Blavatsky is rallying its shattered forces; it is the Secret Doctrine which is the book that will hold the movement together long after The Lives of Alcyone have been mercifully forgotten.25

She seems also to have believed that within the Adyar Theosophical Society, there were 'Black Magicians', including those who employed sexual teachings for evil purposes. (It is likely that Leadbeater and Wedgwood were the intended recipients of such opinion).

Fortune's opinion of Blavatsky was very much higher indeed. Her disciples have since considered that she belongs in the same category as Blavatsky and Anna Bonus Kingsford, though it must be said that much of her system appears somewhat derivative of Blavatskian models. Fortune's success was founded in her ability to meld Blavatskian occultistic gnosticism with the theurgical principles of the Golden Dawn, and to present the resulting synthesis as Masters-based revelation. In this, she can certainly be considered one of Blavatsky's most enduring twentieth century heirs.

A Select Bibliography:


B. The Rosicrucian Order of the Crotona Fellowship

The Rosicrucian Order of the Crotona Fellowship was founded around 1920 by George Alexander Sullivan, an actor known on the English stage as Alex Matthews. Little is known of Sullivan, other than that he claimed to be an immortal Master, and was known to his disciples as 'Aureolis' or 'Marcus Aureolis' [sic].

Sullivan had founded an earlier group, The Order of the Twelve, in England in 1911, but was forced to disband the entity on account of the difficulty in maintaining contact with the 'German Rosicrucians' during the First World War. He later established the Crotona Fellowship in Christchurch, England, though it seems to have had some branches beyond Christchurch, and certainly operated for a time in Liverpool. He continued to operate the Fellowship until the 1930s, when it was sorely challenged by (the putatively immortal) Sullivan's death.

The Crotona Fellowship was divided into four bodies, entitled the 'Ecclesia', the 'Academia Rosae Crucis' (which awarded degrees), the 'Theatricum', and the 'Templum'. Sullivan's authority over all was absolute; he accorded himself the titles - in a typical Latinate flourish - 'Magi Supremus' or 'Magi Supreme'. The Fellowship itself was divided into Three Points (each worked in a separate Chapter), and each Point into Three Degrees. Members who could not join a Chapter, could operate a Singular Chapter (that is, work alone at home).

The Fellowship was probably mostly famed for its Theatricum, the Rosicrucian Theatre, which was opened on 15 June, 1938. Sullivan provided most of the ideas for productions, in part due to his wealth of experience: he claimed to have been Pythagoras, Cornelius Agrippa, and Francis Bacon (considered to be the real author of Shakespeare's plays) in past lives. The Theatricum was thus blessed with a modern-day Shakespeare. (Curiously, Sullivan also claimed to be immortal and thus to have no need to reincarnate; he explained this apparent contradiction by declaring that he periodically removed himself from public view for several years, and then assumed a new identity).
It appears that Sullivan also claimed himself to be the Master the Count (or the Prince Ragoczi). Herbrand Williams, the Egyptian Rite renegade, and himself in contact with the Master the Count, felt it important to inform his fellow initiates of Sullivan's false claim:

I should like here to mention a point in connection with the Master’s work in Europe. A certain Dr. Sullivan has been recently proclaiming that he is the Master the Prince in person, and has led astray several of the pupils. The Master again speaks with tolerance and charity, but desires it to be known by all pupils that He has made no links with Dr. Sullivan, that he is in no way authorised to speak in the Master’s Name, nor is he in any touch with His Hidden Brotherhood.26

The Fellowship was actively supported by Mabel Besant-Scott (1870-?), daughter of the Theosophical Leader, Annie Besant. Besant-Scott had held high office in Co-Freemasonry until her mother’s death, at which time she led a minor schism away from the larger body, and then became associated with Sullivan.27 In time she came to manage the community which lived around the theatre.

In so far as the Crotona Fellowship has left any continuing legacy, it was indirectly: around 1939, Gerald Brousseau Gardner (1884-1964) joined the Fellowship and encountered - so he claimed - an ‘inner group’ which perpetuated the practice of witchcraft. Gardner asserted that he was initiated into the group in September, 1939, by ‘Dafo’ who was a Co-Mason, as were Sullivan and many of the Fellowship’s members. Gardner later ‘elaborated’ on the sparse rituals and created ‘Wicca’, which has since become the most popular creed of Neopagan Goddess worship, and a mass international religious phenomenon.28 The nexus between Theosophical Masters-based esotericism and modern witchcraft requires extensive analysis.

26 Herbrand Williams, *The Work of the Seventh Ray: An Instruction from the Master the Prince Ragoczi (Being Revised notes of an Address delivered at Stamford House, on Whit Monday, 1934, by Captain Herbrand Williams)*, n.p., n.d., 12. Note that Sullivan appears to have adopted the title, ‘Dr.’, which likely came from his own ‘Academia Rosae Crucis’.

27 Mabel Besant-Scott resigned from the Theosophical Society on 5 February, 1934.

28 For modern witchcraft see *supra* ch. 16.
**A Select Bibliography:**

Materials for the study of the Crotona Fellowship are held in the British Library, including copies of constitutions, rituals and services, together with Sullivan's execrable poetry.


Herbrand Williams, *The Work of the Seventh Ray: An Instruction from the Master the Prince Ragoczi* (Being Revised notes of an Address delivered at Stamford House, on Whit Monday, 1934, by Captain Herbrand Williams), n.p., n.d.

**C. Baird Thomas Spalding**

The presence of the Masters in the American popular imagination - immediately before and after the Second World War - was directly attributable to the writings of Baird Thomas Spalding (1872-1953). His five volume work, *Life and Teachings of the Masters of the Far East* (1924-1948), sold more than a million copies, and documents the author's claim to have established contact with the Masters during a sojourn in 'the Orient' in 1894.

Very little is known of Spalding's family background, other than the fact that his grandfather, John Spalding, seems to have spent many years in India. Indeed, Spalding appears to have deliberately cultivated an atmosphere of mystery surrounding his background and person, even to the (somewhat Leadbeaterian) degree of claiming to be some twenty years older than he actually was. His only substantial reference to professional qualifications was his assertion of being a 'research engineer'; otherwise, he appears to have been interested primarily in various mining ventures.

The impact of the first volume of *Life and Teachings of the Masters of the Far East* was considerable, and Spalding immediately became celebrated, and hotly pursued for lectures and speaking engagements:

Spalding's admirers assigned to him certain attributes and evolutionary attainments to which he made no claim. From his writings, the popular conception became rather fixed that his alleged association with the Masters had achieved at least a degree of Mastership for him. However, Spalding states that he was one of a
‘research party’ who visited the Far East. Three of the party stayed
to devote their lives to the teaching of the Masters but he was not one
of them.29

In the preface, Spalding claimed to have travelled to India as part of a scientific
expedition sponsored by an American university (which denied the claim immediately
upon the book’s publication), and to have made contact with Masters in India, Tibet,
and China. The popularity of the work encouraged Spalding to complete a second
volume which appeared in 1927, a third in 1935, and a fourth in 1948. The last
volume was released by Spalding’s publisher immediately prior to the author’s death,
and consisted of transcripts of talks that the author had given over the previous two
years. Spalding died on 18 March, 1953, in Tucson, Arizona; his faithful publisher
issued an announcement of the fact:

Baird T. Spalding, 95 [he was in fact 80], research engineer, world
traveler and author of the four volumes entitled ‘Life and Teaching
of the Masters of the Far East’, died March 17, 1953 in Tempe
Arizona. Mr Spalding was known internationally to more than a
million readers of his books and had lectured in more than 200
American cities.30

The origin of the material which made up the first four volumes of Spalding’s work
remains a mystery. One story, presented by Spalding’s associate, David Bruton, is
that the first volume was authentic in so far as it was based on a manuscript given to
his grandfather in India by a Master. In the manuscript, ‘He disclosed intimate details
of Their daily lives, some clarification on religious thought and general information
which They wished printed and made available for public consumption’.31 Bruton
claimed that Baird Spalding had acquired the manuscript from his grandfather and used
it as the basis for some classes he gave (presumably to Spiritualists, with whom he
was closely involved). Eventually a wealthy Californian woman offered to have a
thousand copies printed for distribution to her friends. More and more copies were
produced, and a publishing phenomenon ensued; Bruton asserted that 20 000 copies

29 David Bruton, Baird T. Spalding: As I Knew Him, DeVorss and Co., Marina del Rey,
California,1980,6.
30 Ibid., 8.
31 Ibid., 117.
were thus sold in the first month. He further noted that only the first volume was based on the mysterious manuscript, and that the others were all extrapolations. While Bruton’s claim cannot be dismissed, it does tend to operate within a standard esoteric topos of the ‘mysterious tome’. What is known is that there is no evidence that Spalding himself visited India until 1935 (over 40 years after the events recorded in the first volume).

The five volumes depict a Brotherhood of Masters who, although committed to the Buddha as the ‘Way to Enlightenment’, nevertheless espouse a ‘Christ Consciousness’:

\[
\text{We [the Great Masters] have idealized, conceived, and brought forth into manifestation the perfect God body. We are ‘born again’ truly of and in the Spirit Kingdom of God.}^{32}
\]

The work, thus, is an eclectic blend of Theosophy, New Thought, and Christian Science, yet what made it such a celebrated success was its ability to substantiate preexisting Theosophical claims. Baird Spalding was heroised as one of those who ‘proved’ Blavatsky to be telling the truth.

A Select Bibliography:


D. Manley Palmer Hall and the Philosophical Research Society

One of the most indirectly influential of the latter-day disciples of Blavatsky was the American occult author and bibliophile, Manly Palmer Hall (b. 1901). Although never a member of the Theosophical Society, Hall was profoundly influenced by Blavatsky as is exhibited throughout his numerous writings. He noted that:

Mohammed well said that each age has its book, and *The Secret Doctrine* is unquestionably the *magnum opus* of the literature of the

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modern world.\textsuperscript{33}

Between 1921 and 1928, Hall worked on his major volume, \textit{Man: The Grand Symbol of the Mysteries}, an attempt to synthesise the world’s esoteric traditions, much premised on Blavatskian universalism and idiosyncratic notions of a \textit{prisca theologia}. In 1934, he established the Philosophical Research Society, based in Los Angeles, where he gathered an extensive library, and provided extremely popular courses and lectures on esotericism. Hall’s closeness to the template of the Theosophical Masters is shown in numerous works, most notably his \textit{The Adepts} series.

\textit{A Select Bibliography:}


\textbf{E. Guy Warren Ballard and the ‘I AM’ Movement}

Guy Ballard (1878-1939) was born into a farming family in Kansas, and later studied business, prior to serving in the American services during the First World War. Thereafter he followed an interest in mining, and worked in his uncle’s silver and lead mine in Tucson, Arizona, the first of many such ventures with which Ballard would become involved. In 1916, Ballard married Edna Anne Wheeler (1886-1971), a concert harpist, and moved to Chicago.

While in Chicago, the Ballards’ interest in occultism became ever more apparent. Edna worked in a metaphysical book store, and edited \textit{The American Occultist}, while Guy became involved in a panoply of esoteric and related endeavours, including New Thought, the Unity School of Christianity, Christian Science, Rosicrucianism (in myriad forms), and Theosophy. Both became very familiar with the occult author

\textsuperscript{33} Manley Palmer Hall, \textit{The Phoenix}, Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles, 1960, 122.
Baird Spalding (another mining entrepreneur: see supra), who stayed with them for a time.

Ballard's business enterprises - such as the promotion of oil wells - seem not to have been successful; in March, 1929, he was charged with fraud, although the case was never heard. In his Unveiled Mysteries of 1934 (published under his nom de plume 'Godfré Ray King') he claimed to have spent much of this period (that is, from 1919 to 1929) travelling in 'the Far East', though there is little to substantiate the assertion.

In late 1930, Ballard's fortunes were to change considerably. During a business trip to California in August of that year, he become acquainted with the stories about a Brotherhood of Masters said to live on Mount Shasta. During a hiking expedition around Mt. Shasta in September, so he later claimed, he encountered the Master the Count St. Germain, and was told that the Masters had chosen him, together with Edna and their son Donald, as the only 'Accredited Messengers of the Ascended Masters' as part of a plan to bring in the 'Seventh Golden Age'.

Ballard asserted that over the following several months, he underwent a number of strange initiatory experience with the Masters. He was taken 'astrally' to distant and exotic places, was shown his previous incarnations, observed councils of the Masters, and welcomed an embassy of twelve exalted beings from Venus. These experiences and teachings were later assembled into Ballard's first book, Unveiled Mysteries. There is much about them that is reminiscent of Leadbeater - though traces of New Thought, evangelical Christianity, and even science fiction can be discerned:

The constructive thought and harmonious feeling within a human mind and body are the activities of Love and Order. These permit the Perfect Ratio and Speed of the electrons within the atom to remain permanent, and thus, they stay polarized at their particular point in the Universe, as long as the duration of the Breath of God within their core is held steady by the Will of the Directing, Self-

\[745\]
Conscious Intelligence using the body in which they exist.\textsuperscript{35}

Although St. Germain ('the Master the Count' in Theosophical parlance) is the central figure of Ballard's account, others are mentioned, including 'the Tall Master from Venus' and the Master Eriel; each is 'one of those Powerful Emissaries from the Spiritual Hierarchy of Ascended Masters who govern this planet'.\textsuperscript{36} Indeed, Ballard was told by the 'Presiding Master', Lanto, at an assembly of Masters and disciples - including the 'twelve Guests from Venus' - that every twenty-five hundred years the Seven Kumaras, the 'Lords of the Flame' from Venus, who were 'the Only Ones from this entire system of planets, who of their own free will and infinite Love, offered to guard the children of earth and assist their upward progress' release 'a greatly increased outpouring of Cosmic Love, Wisdom, and Energy' which 'gives a forward impulse to the growth of the entire earth, as well as its humanity'.\textsuperscript{31} Such an outpouring was to occur soon, and humanity would enter a 'New Dispensation'. The book concludes with the assembled Masters and disciples observing crystal containers in which are held 'those bodies [Ballard, his wife, and son] laid aside so long ago', and which had been 'sustained and purified' over many centuries as an 'experiment' which has proved successful.\textsuperscript{38}

In 1931 Ballard returned to his family in Chicago where he soon established the Saint Germain Press and the Saint Germain Foundation, and began to hold meetings at which he and Edna passed on the teachings of the Masters. In 1934 he held the first public ten-day class - with some ten participants. These ten day classes thereafter became the basic introductory program on the teachings of what the Ballards termed 'the Ascended Masters'.

*The Magic Presence* (1935) picks up from where *Unveiled Mysteries* concluded. Ballard is instructed in various esoteric disciplines by St. Germain and others of his disciples, and undertakes several adventures, including a visit to a vast cave used by

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., vii.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 252.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 248-249.
the Masters as a laboratory for experiments in chemistry and electronics. It appears that they are especially interested in 'perfecting formulas for the protection of America in the next and final crisis of her experience'. (The nationalist sentiment is omnipresent in the Ballard system). The Masters make use of an Atomic Accelerator ‘to assist in raising the physical flesh atom into its Divine Purity and Structure - the Electronic Body' which will remain ‘eternally youthful, beautiful, strong, perfect, and free from every conceivable limitation’.39

Ballard and several other disciples then travel to Paris at the direction of the Master St. Germain, and experience all manner of wonders in his presence. On their return to the United States they undergo three months ‘intensive training’ with the Master, spending a further period in the great cave. They then journey by sea to Paris, then to Alexandria, and ultimately to ‘Arabia’ accompanied by a cohort of Masters. At the Masters’ ‘Arabian Retreat’ - a great city buried beneath the sand - they encounter a huge ‘Television Chamber’ which enables the Masters to ‘see, instantly, any place or activity occurring at any distance’.40 The city also includes vast electronic and chemical laboratories, art and music workshops, and facilities for training disciples who are to be placed in influential positions in governments around the world. There are also archives and a museum containing records and relics of vast antiquity: ‘Some of them dated back to the advent of man upon this planet’.41 Later, Ballard attends an international convention of Masters, where decisions are taken about the government of the world for the year to come. After a further visit to the Indian Masters in Calcutta, Ballard is instructed to remain in the ‘Palace of Light’ for one year.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the ‘I AM’ teachings (as they were called) attracted considerable attention, and the Ballards travelled throughout the country holding classes, and appointing assistants to teach. Controversy followed, both as a result of criticisms from other religious groups and denunciations from former disciples, and in November, 1939, the classes were closed to the general public.

40 Ibid., 327.
41 Ibid., 332.
Ballard died in December, 1939, much to the astonishment of his followers who assumed that (as he and Edna had taught) he would 'ascend' in his physical body. Ultimately, the event was reinterpreted, and Ballard was declared to have become an Ascended Master himself, with no further need for his physical body. Edna Ballard, who had provided much of the ideational and organisational impetus from the start, immediately assumed control of the movement, yet was soon faced with an indictment for having knowingly solicited money to promote a religion she knew to be false. Although the charges were later somewhat modified, she was convicted in 1942, and thereafter denied the use of the United States Mail Service. Unsurprisingly, the conviction was overturned on appeal to the United States Supreme Court. Following the death of Edna Ballard in 1971, and Donald Ballard in 1973, the Foundation was administered by a Board of Directors.

The Ballards' 'I AM' movement presented an entire panoply of Masters, including - significantly - female Ascended Masters: Maitreya, St. Germain, Jesus, 'Queen of Light', Venus, Hercules, Lanto, Mary, Nada, Meta, Quan Yi, Helios, Diana, Cassiopeia, and many others. Every inherent possibility in the Blavatskian corpus (and, indeed, just about every other tradition in their purview) was seized upon and exaggerated in mannered abandon. The books themselves read very much like colourful combinations of science fiction and 'Boys' Own' adventures, with a liberal seasoning from the genre of occult conspiratology.\footnote{For occult conspiratology see supra ch. 29.} Although the 'I AM' materials employ the iconography and vocabulary of the Blavatskian Masters-discourse more extensively than in any other extra-Theosophical group here considered, the Ballards' Masters extend the process of 'etherealisation' begun by Leadbeater. The 'I AM' Masters appear quite literally to have 'Ascended' beyond the human frame; any physicality is accidental in so far as it is unnecessary. For Blavatsky, of course, the physical ontology of the Masters was crucial to the exercise of making the radical transcendence of the divine appear panentheistically to permeate into the mundane sphere. According to the Ballards, the Masters themselves have entered somewhat into the stratum of 'transcendence', and - in line with the process begun by Leadbeater - cease to be 'available' to the enthusiastic seeker, other than through the mediation of the Ballards themselves. Thus it is that the Masters' revelations through the Ballards
instantiate an irony which would not have been lost on Blavatsky: the imposition of Spiritualist dynamics over Theosophy.

A Select Bibliography:


Gerald B. Bryan, Psychic Dictatorship in America, Truth Research Foundation, Los Angeles, 1940.


F. The Church Universal and Triumphant

The Ballards' 'I AM' movement appears always to have been something of a rather loose confederacy of the like-minded. Over the years it has witnessed the departure of many breakaway groups which have gone on to establish themselves in something approaching a lineage. The most significant of these - and one of the phenomenal successes of the contemporary New Age - is the Church Universal and Triumphant, founded (as 'the Summit Lighthouse') by Mark Prophet.

Mark L. Prophet (1918-1973) became involved in a splinter 'Ascended Masters' group in the 1950s, following Air Force service in the Second World War, and various sales positions thereafter. Initially involved in a Ballards-oriented group - the Lighthouse of Freedom - run by Francis K. Ekey, Prophet established an independent entity, the Summit Lighthouse, in 1958. Prophet claimed to have been appointed the new 'Messenger of the Masters' by the Ascended Master El Morya, and to this end began to issue teachings, and to gain followers.

In 1961, Prophet met Elizabeth Clare Wulf (1940-), a woman raised as a Christian Scientist, but by the 1960s a devoted 'I AM' follower. The couple married in 1963, and began to propagate the teachings of the Ascended Masters in earnest, particularly
those of St. Germain and El Morya. Within a year the couple had inaugurated an inner group, the Keepers of the Sacred Flame (Fraternity), to teach those whose devotion was clear; ultimately the training of this group was provided by the Prophets’ Summit University (founded 1971).

Various of Mark Prophet’s teaching materials were published in his lifetime, and several books of collated materials appeared posthumously. Most of the works are directly dictated messages from several Ascended Masters, with the goal of self-divinisation (and unity with the Christ) believed achievable through various means, notably spoken decrees which call forth transformative power (especially from one or other of the Seven Rays).

Mark Prophet died in 1973 and was declared to have Ascended. As the Ascended Master Lanello, the ‘Ever Present Guru’, he works from the Inner Planes to assist in human development. Since that time the organisation has been run by Elizabeth Clare Prophet, who was appointed as the new Messenger by St. Germain. The following year the Summit Lighthouse was incorporated under a new name, the Church Universal and Triumphant, with Elizabeth Clare Prophet continuing to transmit messages from the Ascended Masters, including her deceased husband.

There are several centres of the Church’s activities, including a 33 000 acre property near Yellowstone Park in Montana. The group has received criticism for the ostentatious wealth of its leaders (baptised members are required to tithe), and its fervent millenarianism, though it appears to be extremely popular in the New Age milieu, and has centres throughout the world.

It is interesting to note that although the Church has deep roots in Theosophical discourse (and employs, among other clear borrowings, the Schmiechen portraits of Koot Hoomi and Morya), there is little reference to Theosophy in the organisation’s

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43 See infra Appendix A.
voluminous literature. Where Blavatsky is mentioned, she is noted as one 'Messenger' among many, and seems not to be accorded special status. Yet it is clear that the cosmological and philosophical underpinnings of Elizabeth Clare Prophet's teachings - disseminated through dozens of hours of videocassettes and many books - are thoroughly Theosophical, even if simplified and refracted through the prism of the (American) New Age. It is interesting to wonder, however, what Blavatsky would have thought about such configurations as the Ascended Master John XXXIII.

A Select Bibliography:


G. Tuesday Lobsang Rampa and Cyril Henry Hoskin

As noted supra, Peter Bishop has stated that:

Claims made by Blavatsky about mahatmas in the Himalayas...

... evolved a hundred years later into the kitsch absurdities and occult extravaganzas of Lobsang Rampa. Bishop is right in intuiting that Lobsang Rampa's baroque assertions about Tibetan supermen have their genesis in the public reception of the Blavatskian Masters.

Lobsang Rampa's hugely popular books (which have left a lasting impression of

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44 In one of the movement's prime texts on the Ascended Masters, *Lords of the Seven Rays* (Mark L. Prophet & Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *Lords of the Seven Rays: Mirror of Consciousness*, Summit University Press, Corwin Springs, MT, 1986), a work of nearly 600 pages, the present author has been able to find no reference to Blavatsky. This observation is interesting in so far as the book has chapters devoted to 'El Morya', 'Serapis Bey', 'Hilarion', and 'Saint Germain' (*inter alia*), and contains personal histories of the Ascended Masters - and is otherwise quite well referenced.

45 Peter Bishop, *The Myth of Shangri-La: Tibet, Travel Writing and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape*, The Athlone Press, London, 1989, 234. See also supra Appendix B.

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‘mystical Tibet’ on the Western imaginal), fit snugly into the preexisting mould established by the Theosophical Society, and owe their enthusiastic acceptance to the particular model of the Eastern sage fostered by Blavatsky’s idiosyncratic Orientalism.

In 1956, the respectable English publishing house, Secker & Warburg, published *The Third Eye* by T. Lobsang Rampa, to terrific public (and some critical) acclaim. The book purported to be the autobiography of a Tibetan lama, and documents the many trials which the young Tuesday had to endure in the process of becoming an abbot, and ends with the Dalai Lama dispatching him to strife-torn China. The title of the book, incidentally, relates to a special operation performed on the eight year old Tuesday which involved the drilling of a hole between his eyes (an Oriental trepanning?) such that he could then observe ‘auras’, perceive clairvoyantly, and travel on the ‘astral plane’.

Secker & Warburg had sent the manuscript to several Tibetologists for purposes of peer review, with extremely variable response. Some, such as David Snellgrove and Marco Pallis, were appalled. One, Agehananda Bharati, concluded:

Every page bespeaks the utter ignorance of the author of anything that has to do with Buddhism practices and Buddhism as a belief system in Tibet or elsewhere. But the book also shows a shrewd intuition into what millions of people want to hear.\(^\text{46}\)

Faced with the criticism, the publishers offered the author the possibility of printing the work as fiction. Lobsang Rampa refused: the work was fact, and must be represented as such. Secker & Warburg went ahead with the publication (with an unsubtle publisher’s preface absolving them of responsibility), and were met with a tremendous success: 300 000 copies were sold in the first eighteen months. Indeed, the first six British editions sold 80 000 copies, and the first German translation close to 100 000. In England alone *The Third Eye* went through nine hardback editions in two years. By the end of 1957, the book had become a bestseller in twelve countries, and had received enthusiastic reviews - including a glowing testimonial from *The Times Literary Supplement*. It might be noted that Lobsang Rampa received £20 000 in

royalties in the first year alone.

Several of the scholars who had condemned the manuscript (including Heinrich Harrer, author of *Seven Years in Tibet* [1953]) banded together to employ a private detective to investigate the Tibetan abbot.\(^7\) They discovered, to use Bharati’s words:

> the Tibetan lama turned out to be Mr Hoskins [sic], an Irish ex-plumber, who sat it out in various libraries in London, reading science fiction, pseudo-orientalia including, no doubt, Blavatsky, and concocting this amazing book.\(^8\)

Cyril Henry Hoskin (1911-1981) was discovered to have been the son of a plumber from Devon, England (on this point Bharati seems to have been mistaken), who assisted in his father’s business until the latter’s death in 1937. In 1938, Hoskin undertook a correspondence course with a firm offering ‘time-and-motion study’, and in 1940 joined the company as a clerk, first in London and subsequently in Weybridge, Surrey. He appears to have worked in several small companies. At the same time as the private investigator was tracing Lobsang Rampa’s identity, a journalist from the Spiritualist newspaper, *Psychic News*, was making inquiries of Hoskin’s neighbours. They recalled him telling stories about a childhood in China and about occult subjects, and volunteering to cast horoscopes for anyone who desired one. He also learned that Hoskin had settled in Thames Ditton, Surrey, during the Second World War, and had taken to calling himself Dr. Kuan - emphasising his Chinese birth, apparently, by shaving his head. Other neighbours recalled that they’d been told that he had been raised in China, where he’d become a flying instructor with the Chinese Air Force, until captured by the Japanese and tortured as a prisoner of war. By 1948, Hoskin had left his employment, and changed his name to Carl Kuon Suo, describing himself as a Tibetan-born doctor. Not long thereafter he wrote two manuscripts: one on Tibet (later to become *The Third Eye*), and one on corsets.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these findings of fact became public and attracted press attention, but affected sales of the book hardly at all. The noted publisher of

\(^7\) For a copy of the resulting report by Clive Burgess (the investigator) see Donald S. Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, 99-100.

\(^8\) Bharati, ‘Fictitious Tibet’, 30.

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Orientalia, E. J. Brill of Leiden, simply added a small note to their advertising copy for the book, to the effect that the work was probably not a genuine study of Buddhism or Tibet. Hoskin, who had by this time moved to Ireland, was encouraged to capitalise on his success, and penned a second book, *Doctor from Lhasa* (1959). The work offered no fresh clues to the Hoskin-Rampa conundrum, and simply picked up where the first book had left off. It concludes with Lobsang Rampa being captured by the Japanese, and then escaping from a prison camp on the day of the Hiroshima bombing by stealing a fishing boat and putting out to sea.

Under mounting pressure from critics, the author eventually agreed that his body had indeed been born as Cyril Henry Hoskin, but that its current occupant was the lama Lobsang Rampa who had taken it over some nine years earlier when Hoskin had suffered concussion as a result of falling from a tree on 13 June, 1949. He explained this extraordinary event, and the reasons for it, in his third book, *The Rampa Story* (1960). The story begins with Rampa's rescue after his boat runs aground near the Russian border. Unfortunately, the lama is captured and pressed into service in the Soviet army at Vladivostok; following an escape, he is eventually arrested, subjected to dreadful torture in Lubianka prison, and deported to Poland [1]. *En route* to Poland, he is involved in a terrible accident and is seriously injured. While recuperating in hospital, he travels on the astral plane to the 'Land of the Golden Light' and is informed that his work must continue, but that his physical body must be replaced. After several more adventures, involving journeys to Czechoslovakia, France, and the United States, Lobsang Rampa is ready to take on the Hoskin body, but is warned that he will:

return to hardship, misunderstanding, disbelief, and actual hatred,
for there is a force of evil which tries to prevent all that is good in connection with human evolution."

After an investigation of Hoskin in the 'Akashic Records' to examine his 'Kharma [sic]', the lama instructs the former to fall out of a tree. When Hoskin does so, his 'silver cord' is severed and Lobsang Rampa enters his body. Thus it is that Hoskin ceased to exist, and that it matters not at all that there is no evidence that before his move to Dublin he had ever travelled abroad - the lama had done it all for him.

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Soon after the publication of his third book, Hoskin/Rampa emigrated to Canada. There he produced several more books, including: *The Cave of the Ancients* (1963); *Three Lives; I Believe; The Saffron Robe* (1966); *As It Was!; Candlelight* (1973); *Twilight* (1975); *The Thirteenth Candle* (1972); *Feeding the Flame; Chapters of Life* (1967); *Living with the Lama* (1964); *You - Forever* (1965); *Wisdom of the Ancients* (1965); *Beyond the Tenth* (1969); *The Hermit* (1971); *Tibetan Sage*, and a lesser known volume, *My Visit to Venus* (1966). It might be noted that the Hoskin/Rampa book of 1964, *Living with the Lama*, was narrated to the author by his cat, ‘Mrs. Fifi Greywhiskers’ and then translated by the former into English. Nevertheless, he maintained the inerrancy of his works. In an author’s preface to *The Hermit* of 1971, he noted:

I, the author, state that this book is absolutely true. Some people who are bogged down in materialism may prefer to consider it as fiction. The choice is yours - believe or disbelieve according to your state of evolution. I am NOT prepared to discuss the matter or to answer questions about it. The book, and ALL my books, are TRUE!50

The phenomenon of the Lobsang Rampa books is now generally ridiculed as an extensive fraud. Yet it should be remembered that most of the corpus remains in print, and a number of the works - including *The Third Eye - have never been out of print*. It is also worth repeating Donald Lopez's observation that Lobsang Rampa's works on 'Tibet' - as Lopez writes it - have sold far more copies than any other author on the subject.51 Christopher Evans, in attempting to discern the phenomenon, describes the books as reading:

like a cross between James Hilton's archetypal novel *Lost Horizon* and Alexandra David-Neel's *With Mystics and Magicians in Tibet*. Similarities to the style of the latter, incidentally, are occasionally remarkable.52

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51 Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, 86.
It is perhaps sufficient to note that both Hilton and David-Neel were themselves substantially affected by Theosophy and the Blavatskian concept of the Master. Interestingly, a discernible Leadbeaterian influence flavours the Lobsang Rampa tales; such motifs as the ‘Astral Plane’, the ‘Akashic Records’, ‘thought forms’, and the ‘aura’ are standard Leadbeater fare (though also present to some degree in Blavatsky). However, aside from the obvious ‘mystic Orient’ discourse which undergirds the works - and a predictable anti-Communist bias - the single most powerful influence on Hoskin was surely the Blavatskian map of the Tibetan Master. His ‘Tuesday Lobsang Rampa’ is presented as an individual whose psychic talents, wealth of wisdom, and physical paranormalc, all result from disciplined personal effort - and are evidence of accelerated spiritual and physical evolution. If nothing else, his remarkable popularity must be interpreted as evidence of the lasting imprint which Blavatsky’s recension of the ‘Hidden Master’ topos has had on the Western imaginal.

A Select Bibliography:


H. The Channeled Masters

The linear historiography which Blavatsky and subsequent Theosophists have espoused would have it that Spiritualism was a prodrome of Theosophy, and that after the revelations of the latter it would cease to have any raison d’être. Yet, as has become clear, the influence of Spiritualism on Theosophy and related movements has proved pervasive, and continuing. It is crucial to recognise that in the latter nineteenth
century Spiritualism developed beyond its normative necromantic parameters, and came to incorporate spirits with more sophisticated purpose and origin. Although Spiritualism, as a doctrinal formulation and Church, has faded from view in the latter twentieth century, it has been replaced to a significant degree by one contemporary New Age dynamic of revelation, 'Channeling'. Channeling can be considered the natural progeny of Spiritualism.

The tradition of inspired or automatic writing has long provenance, and achieved prominence in the Victorian era with the works of William Stainton Moses and others. Of the many other significant texts, two require mention: the 1882 *OAHSPE: A New Bible in the Words of Jehovah and his Angel Ambassadors*, received by the Spiritualist John Ballou Newbrough [1828-1891], the founder of the Faithists of Kosmon; and *A Dweller on Two Planets or The Dividing of the Way*, transmitted to Frederick Spencer Oliver by 'Phylos the Thibetan', and published in 1886. These works, and others similar, introduced into Spiritualist discourse notions of a celestial hierarchy reaching far beyond the human sphere. Crucially, many such revelations were couched in the idiom of perfectibilism, and even (quasi-Darwinian) evolutionism. The tradition has continued.

Grace Cooke ([?]-1979, also known as 'Minesta'), who established one of the most influential contemporary 'Spiritualist' groups, the White Eagle Lodge, claimed to be the channel for a highly advanced being, known as 'White Eagle'. (The mundane identity of White Eagle - a favourite 'control' for a number of Spiritualists - has long been a matter of discussion within Spiritualism. Some have suggested a Mayan, others John the Divine). Interestingly, Cooke had originally been a spiritualist medium of the more conventional type, but found herself being contacted by White Eagle, who, around 1929, began speaking of the 'White Brotherhood'. (It might be noted that, in 1931, Cooke and her husband became members of a Theosophically-inspired French esoteric group, the 'Polaires', which had been established in 1929).

The notion of the 'White Brotherhood' - an obvious reference to the Theosophical

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53 For Moses see *supra* ch. 7.
54 For Oliver see *supra* Appendix B.
Masters - is indicative of the way in which many subsequent channelers (or the entities themselves) have incorporated the Theosophical idiom into their revelations. Indeed, not uncommonly the Masters themselves have appeared as the channeled entities. Maurice B. Cooke (no relation to Grace), for instance, has channeled more than a dozen books via 'Hilarion' since 1977. 'Hilarion' and his fellow 'Masters' in the 'White Brotherhood' encourage lesser spirits on the path to perfection. The 'Dark Brotherhood', however:

act as testing agents for the human race of man, as forces whose task
it is to weed out from the human flock the souls ... [who] are not
developed enough to allow them to move forward into the higher
ground of spiritual achievement.

Koot Hoomi has also proved very popular with channelers, sponsoring a large literature. One who has channeled 'Kuthumi' is 'Tuella', a woman from Durango, Colorado. Interestingly, 'Tuella' also channels 'space brothers', including the 'Ashtar Command', and has revealed that humans are to await an impending planetary catastrophe, and only those 'spiritually evolved' will be 'harvested' by the extra-planetary ambassadors (including Kuthumi?) for continuing life. The communications run to many volumes.

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38 Cf., eg., 'Kuthumi', Five Books of Wisdom: Messages from the Highest Spheres, Regency Press, London, 1967. The mediums for this work are unknown, but the reader is told they reside in Johannesburg, South Africa.
I. The Space Masters

The modern fascination with Unidentified Flying Objects (‘UFOs’) and with the prospect of contact with life from ‘outer space’ is generally identified as beginning with reports of sightings of ‘flying saucers’ by Richard Arnold, a United States Air Force pilot, at Bakersfield, California, on 14 June, 1947. Certainly, it is the case that speculation about life in the skies was a phenomenon of earliest prehistory, but Arnold’s assertion initiated a very specific development in such speculation - a development which accords to an occultistic profile.

The occult interpretation of UFOs - and the first claims to have made direct contact with their occupants - appears to have begun with George Adamski (1891-1965), who alleged he talked with a being from Venus in the Californian desert on 20 November, 1952. It should be noted that Adamski was intimately associated with a number of occult organisations, ultimately founding his own group, the Royal Order of Tibet [1], in 1936. Following his contact with the extraterrestrials, Adamski published several books which declared that the visitors represented a higher order of evolution, and were visiting Earth in order to advance the (spiritual and physical) evolutionary progress of its peoples:

[The Venusian ‘Kalna’:] Of course, all planets and their people must pass through the orderly stages of evolvement from lower to higher. But yours has not been an orderly or natural progress; rather, an endless repetition of growth and destruction, growth and destruction. There have been Earth men who have left your planet with our help, in order that they might learn from us and, in time, return to their Earthly home and pass their knowledge on to you. But under the conditions existing on your planet to-day, it is no longer possible to do this ... we find ourselves blocked by those we
Interestingly, for the present purposes, prior to Adamski’s contact the major means of assisting ‘the law of progress’ (‘On our planet ... all we know is progress’) was by the incarnation of extraterrestrials upon the Earth. Materialism and rampant rationalism have made such methods inadvisable (as they would be ‘branded as lunatics and confined in a mental institution’), so the extraterrestrials now come in person - but only to a select few:

[The Venusian ‘Kalna’:] After the crucifixion of Jesus, who was sent to be incarnated on your world to help your people, as had others before him, we decided to carry on our mission in a way less perilous to those concerned than actual birth on your planet. This was made possible by the great advance in our space travelling ships.

Adamski’s depiction of the alien visitors (whom he called ‘masters’), created something of a template to which most contemporary Ufologists adhere. The aliens comprise a beneficent body of advanced life, who take upon themselves the burden of assisting a corrupted humanity to reawaken its spiritual potential. They are wise and generous, though they must operate in secret to avoid the glare of skeptical public attention. They select certain individuals for particular training, intending them to be avatars of a new world consciousness. The parallels with the Blavatskian Masters are striking.

Following the wide distribution of Adamski’s highly popular works, several other individuals and organisations began to proclaim teachings they alleged were received from advanced extraterrestrial beings. Perhaps the most successful of these was the Aetherius Society, founded by George King (1919-1997) in London in 1955. In May of that year, King, who had previously professed a profound interest in occultism, received a commission from an extraterrestrial source to be ‘the Voice of Interplanetary Parliament’. King’s parlance was even more thoroughly Theosophical than

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61 Ibid., 217.

62 Ibid., 93.
Adamski's. He claimed to be in contact with a variety of 'Masters' who constituted the 'Great White Brotherhood': Master Aetherius from Venus, Master Jesus from Mars, and the Interplanetary Parliament itself - which was based on Saturn. King attracted many disciples (who addressed the Voice as 'His Eminence Dr. King'), and the organisation continues to flourish throughout the world.

The melding of Theosophy and Ufology reached its pinnacle in the figure of George Hunt Williamson (1926-1986). Williamson, a Liberal Catholic Priest and spiritual leader of the Peruvian 'Monastery of the Seven Rays', was a noted author of both Theosophical treatises and 'alien contact' literature. Having been present at the scene of Adamski's historic encounter, he later alleged that he was the personal spokesman for 'Kadar Laqu', the head of the Interplanetary Council-Circle. In Williamson, many of the concerns of this portion of the present work find their fulfilment; he claimed contact with the Theosophical Masters, the 'I AM' Masters, and the Interplanetary Masters (whom he also channeled), and organised a community around himself in preparation for their Coming. His numerous works also present a revisionist historiography which finds in the Masters (terrestrial and extraterrestrial) the guiding hand for human development and history. To his credit, Williamson intuited that what was ending with him and the 'Interplanetary Council' had begun many years before (with Blavatsky?). He expressed his sentiment rather eloquently:

During the nineteenth century on Earth there was a Great Influx of Universal Truth. Many fine writings appeared, especially in the late 1800's. These scattered reports and ideas have a definite relationship to each other and tie into the pattern of present day happenings. Although these various writers use different terminology, they are essentially saying the same thing. They are

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63 For Williamson see supra Appendix B.
64 It should be noted that, although the idea of Space Masters intervening to advance human evolution has been popularly identified with the works of Erich von Daniken (1935-), it has a lineage going back to George Hunt Williamson: Other Tongues - Other Flesh (1953), Secret Places of the Lion (1959), Road in the Sky (1959). Others also contributed to this Theosophical outlook, such as Brinsley Le Poer Trench's The Sky People (1960). Von Daniken, however, popularised the idea extensively through a substantial number of best-selling books, television appearances, a film, and even a long-playing record. His books include Chariots of the Gods? (1968), Gods from Outer Space (1968), and The Gold of the Gods (1973). For a hagiographical defence of von Daniken, see Peter Krassa, Erich von Daniken: Disciple of the Gods, W.H. Allen, 1978. For a scientific rebuttal, see Ronald story, The Space Gods Revealed, New English Library, London, 1978.

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telling Man that he is truly a god in his own right! This knowledge came to a selected few so that they could open the way for the world to awaken to a New Age - an Air Age to replace the ancient Fish or Water Age. What is the grand goal of it all? There is no goal, for we are heading for All Perfection but we will never get there. It is ever moving ahead of us as we progress. What then is the purpose of all our pleasure-pain experiences? We are to know perpetual expanding grandeur.65

The ‘extraterrestrialisation’ of the Masters is, no doubt, a somewhat predictable response to the confluence of several factors, including the burgeoning popularity of science fiction literature, rapid technological advances which promised imminent space exploration, and Cold War imperatives to foster a truly global consciousness.66 Yet there is perhaps one factor which transcends all. In Blavatsky’s day, mystery could be geographically located, and necessary models of human perfection could be situated immediately over the horizon as an aspirational goal. A century later, the Earth appeared perilously close to being entirely mapped, and its secret hoards of mystery laid waste. Ever resourceful, the esotericist was aware of one inexhaustible trove of possibility: he could always look up.

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66 Interestingly, a few Christian theologians have been among the only commentators to recognise the link between the UFO phenomenon and Victorian-era occultism. Hieromonk Seraphim Rose (d. 1982), an American convert to Russian Orthodoxy, has noted that ‘[i]n the 19th century it was usually necessary to seek out dark seance rooms in order to enter into contact with demons, but now one need only to look into the sky (usually at night, it is true)’: Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future, 3rd ed., Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, California, 1990, 140. He further noted that ‘man is not to “evolve” into something “higher”, nor has he any reason to believe that there are “highly evolved” beings on other planets’: in ibid., 145.
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