

THEATRE MAGICK:
ALEISTER CROWLEY AND THE *rites of Eleusis*

DISSERTATION

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by

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

In October and November of 1910 seven one-act plays were produced at Caxton Hall, Westminster, London, under the collective title *The Rites of Eleusis*. These public productions were as much an experiment in audience and performer psychology as they were an exotic entertainment. Written, produced and directed by leading cast member, Aleister Crowley, *The Rites of Eleusis* attempted to present a contemporary interpretation of an ancient myth in order to reignite the role and importance of mysticism in modern society. Through exposing the audience to a variety of sensory stimuli such as incense, rhythmic music, dance, and poetry, it attempted to create within the audience itself an altered state of consciousness which would make them co-celebrants within the performance/ritual. As Crowley stated in the original broadsheet advertisements for the productions, the *Rites* were intended “to illustrate the magical methods followed by a mystical society which seeks for illumination by ecstasy.” But Crowley intended much more: he hoped the audience would not merely view an “illustration,” but experience an actual state of “ecstasy.” for “self-development” not only to the performers onstage, but also to the spectators. This experiment to recreate not only the “performer-priests” of antiquity but to include the audience as a part of the production foreshadowed the later work of theatre anthropologists and theorists such as Richard Schechner, and serves to illustrate one of the first attempts in the twentieth century to consciously create a

psychological connection between theatrical and religious practice within the western hegemonic society.

A close reading of the first *Rite* demonstrates that there are specific occult motivations for every artistic decision reflected in the actual productions. Thus, the position in which performers are discovered at the opening of a rite is not merely an aesthetic choice, but is also reflective of specific criteria established by qabalistic, astrological, or other occult requirements. The costumes and properties used within the *Rites* are also dictated by deeper symbolism.

The appearance of performativity in a religious or worshipful context is repetitive throughout history, and time after time it is spirituality that gives birth to the drama, rather than spirituality evolving from a performative context.

DEDICATION

To the memory of my Father, who taught by example,
To my Mother, who teaches by words,
And to my Daughter, Caitlin, who taught the most important lesson of all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Dedication..... | iv |
| Acknowledgments..... | v |
| Vita..... | vi |
| List of Figures..... | x |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Chapters | |
| 1. The Theatre of Spirituality..... | 41 |
| 1.1 Introduction..... | 41 |
| 1.2 The Beginnings of Myth..... | 42 |
| 1.3 Mythic Performances..... | 53 |
| 1.4 The Idea of Symbolism..... | 66 |
| 1.5 Symbolist Poetry..... | 69 |
| 1.6 Symbolist Music..... | 73 |
| 1.7 Richard Wagner..... | 75 |
| 1.8 Symbolist Theatre..... | 76 |
| 1.9 Symbolism and Psychology..... | 80 |
| 1.10 Conclusion..... | 87 |
| 2. The Theatre of the Golden Dawn..... | 88 |
| 2.1 Introduction..... | 88 |
| 2.2 The Occult World of the Nineteenth Century..... | 89 |
| 2.3 The Masonic Connection..... | 96 |
| 2.4 The Golden Dawn..... | 100 |
| 2.5 Samuel Liddell Mathers and the <i>Rites of Isis</i> | 114 |
| 2.6 William Butler Yeats..... | 122 |
| 2.7 Annie Horniman and the Abbey Theatre..... | 126 |
| 2.8 Florence Farr and the Egyptian Plays..... | 132 |

| | | |
|-------|--|-----|
| 2.9 | Conclusion | 139 |
| 3. | The Theatre of Aleister Crowley | 141 |
| 3.1 | Introduction..... | 141 |
| 3.2 | Biographical Background | 142 |
| 3.3 | Crowley's Magick..... | 163 |
| 3.4 | Crowley in Fiction | 165 |
| 3.5 | Crowley and Film | 167 |
| 3.6 | Crowley's Essays on Theatre..... | 170 |
| 3.7 | Crowley's Other Works for the Stage..... | 171 |
| 3.8 | Film Scripts..... | 193 |
| 3.9 | The Ragged Rag-Time Girls..... | 195 |
| 3.10 | <i>Doctor Faustus</i> | 197 |
| 3.11 | <i>The Mass of the Phoenix</i> | 198 |
| 3.12 | Conclusion | 199 |
| 4. | Aleister Crowley and the <i>Rites of Eleusis</i> | 202 |
| 4.1 | Introduction..... | 202 |
| 4.2 | The Use of Pharmaceuticals in Ritual..... | 203 |
| 4.3 | The Original <i>Rites of Eleusis</i> | 206 |
| 4.4 | The Origins of the 1910 Production | 208 |
| 4.5 | The Cast | 224 |
| 4.5.1 | Victor Neuburg | 224 |
| 4.5.2 | Leila Waddell..... | 227 |
| 4.5.3 | Ione de Forest..... | 231 |
| 4.5.4 | George Raffalovich..... | 234 |
| 4.5.5 | John Frederick Charles Fuller..... | 239 |
| 4.5.6 | Kenneth Martin Ward | 239 |
| 4.6 | Performance Reconstruction..... | 240 |
| 4.6.1 | The Rite of Saturn..... | 243 |
| 4.7 | Conclusion | 257 |
| 5. | Conclusion | 260 |
| 5.1 | Introduction..... | 260 |
| 5.2 | Background of the OTO in America..... | 261 |
| 5.3 | Vasilos Calitsis and <i>The Mysteries of Eleusis</i> | 264 |
| 5.4 | Conclusion | 267 |
| | Appendix A: A Time Line of Aleister Crowley | 277 |
| | Appendix B: <i>Looking Glass</i> : October 29, 1910..... | 280 |
| | Appendix C: <i>The Bystander</i> : November 16, 1910..... | 284 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Appendix D: <i>The Bystander</i> : November 23, 1910..... | 291 |
| Appendix E: <i>The Looking Glass</i> : November 12, 1910..... | 295 |
| Appendix F: <i>John Bull</i> : November 5, 1910..... | 303 |
| Appendix G: <i>The Sketch</i> : August 24, 1910..... | 308 |
| Appendix H: <i>The Mass of the Phoenix</i> | 312 |
| Appendix I: The Lesser and Greater Rituals of the Hexagram..... | 315 |
| Appendix J: <i>The Rites Today</i> | 325 |
| Bibliography..... | 341 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| <u>Figure</u> | <u>Page</u> |
|---|-------------|
| 1. Hebrew Alphabet | 31 |
| 2. Planetary Numbers..... | 33 |
| 3. Tree of Life | 37 |
| 4. The Three Realms on the Tree of Life..... | 38 |
| 5. The Two Pillars on the Tree of Life | 40 |
| 6. The Sorcerer..... | 50 |
| 7. Osiris Slain..... | 54 |
| 8. Isis Weeping..... | 54 |
| 9. Typhon and Apophis..... | 54 |
| 10. Osiris Risen..... | 54 |
| 11. “Drawing Two” from Chekhov | 84 |
| 12. Dr. William Wynn Westcott holding a Golden Dawn Fire Wand ... | 103 |
| 13. Dr. William Woodman in Masonic regalia..... | 104 |
| 14. Samuel Liddell Mathers in his Lieutenant uniform | 115 |
| 15. Samuel Liddell Mathers in <i>The Rites of Isis</i> | 118 |
| 16. Moina Mathers in <i>The Rites of Isis</i> | 119 |
| 17. #36 Blythe Road, August 2002..... | 120 |
| 18. William Butler Yeats about the time of his membership in the Golden Dawn. | 124 |
| 19. Annie Horniman..... | 128 |
| 20. Florence Farr..... | 133 |
| 21. Aleister Crowley in his early teens..... | 143 |
| 22. Aleister Crowley wearing his “solar phallic” forelock about 1912. | 158 |
| 23. Square of Mars..... | 210 |
| 24. Seal of Mars | 211 |
| 25. Planetary Attributes | 212 |
| 26. 124 Victoria Street, 2001 | 215 |
| 27. Banishing Pentagram of the East..... | 218 |
| 28. Banishing Pentagram of the South..... | 219 |
| 29. Banishing Pentagram of the West..... | 220 |
| 30. Banishing Pentagram of the North..... | 220 |
| 31. Victor Neuburg | 226 |

| | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 32. | Leila Waddell in <i>The Rites of Eleusis</i> | 229 |
| 33. | Capt. J. F. C. Fuller c. 1919 | 237 |
| 34. | Original Ticket for <i>The Rites of Eleusis</i> | 242 |
| 35. | <i>The Rite of Saturn</i> , Part 3 | 250 |
| 36. | <i>Rite of Saturn</i> , Part 4. Photograph taken at Caxton Hall | 252 |
| 37. | <i>Rite of Saturn</i> , Part 4 | 253 |
| 38. | The Hexagram of Fire | 317 |
| 39. | The Hexagram of Earth | 317 |
| 40. | The Hexagram of Air | 318 |
| 41. | The Hexagram of Water..... | 319 |
| 42. | Hexagram diagrams and Planetary Signs | 320 |
| 43. | Thelema Lodge Poster, 1991-2 | 331 |

INTRODUCTION

“The Method of Science, the Aim of Religion.”¹

Background

In October and November of 1910 seven one-act plays were produced at Caxton Hall, Westminster, London, under the collective title *The Rites of Eleusis*. The primary aim of this dissertation is to recreate as accurately as possible the experience of this production, including the colors and designs of the sets and costumes, the blocking and dance, the music, and the style of vocal delivery of the performers. This reconstruction includes a study of the experience of the audience during the performances, since audience involvement was an important goal of the production. This dissertation also explores the philosophical constructs which dictated many of the above-mentioned artistic choices and, through example and analysis, demonstrates how these productions reflect both a unique attempt to revitalize Western ritual magical practice through theatrical performance, and explores the close relationship which I suggest lies between contemporary magical practice and theatrical practice.

These public productions, presented at the end of the Edwardian age, were as much an experiment in audience and performer psychology as they were an exotic

¹The motto of Crowley’s magical organization, the *Astron Argon*, or Silver Star, which was found on the frontispiece of his periodical, *The Equinox*.

entertainment. Written, produced and directed by leading cast member, Aleister Crowley, *The Rites of Eleusis* attempted to present a contemporary interpretation of an ancient myth in order to reignite the role and importance of mysticism in modern society. Through exposing the audience to a variety of sensory stimuli such as incense, rhythmic music, dance, and poetry, it attempted to create within the audience itself an altered state of consciousness which would make them co-celebrants within the performance/ritual. As Crowley stated in the original broadsheet advertisements for the productions, the *Rites* were intended “to illustrate the magical methods followed by a mystical society which seeks for illumination by ecstasy.”² But Crowley intended much more: he hoped the audience would not merely view an “illustration,” but experience an actual state of “ecstasy.” And if ecstasy was not achieved, it was intended for the audience to experience some sort of “thrill” not typically found in their daily lives nor in other entertainments of the time.

The inclusion of sensory stimulation in the *Rites* for the purpose of subliminal emotional reaction foreshadows the theories of Antonin Artaud, who believed that it was beyond the power of language to serve as a full and complete means of communication. Christopher Innes, in his *Avant Garde Theatre 1892-1992*, states that Artaud “was the first to search for theatrical forms that would not only be non-European, but also specifically uncivilized [. . .]. And what impressed him about the Balinese dance-drama was ‘the instinctive survival of magic’” (Innes 59). Yet Crowley was years ahead of Artaud in the inclusion of “uncivilized” theatrical practice and demonstrations of magic. Artaud argued that the primary focus of an artist should be communication with the

² From an original broadsheet, Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute.

audience's subconscious process of thought and emotion. Nonverbal emotion would then be experienced as a physical reaction.

The performances of *The Rites of Eleusis* were an early harbinger of theories of theatrical presentation and meaning which were to be espoused fifty years later by theorists such as Jerzy Grotowski, who wrote in *Towards a Poor Theatre*:

We are concerned with the spectator who has genuine spiritual needs and who really wishes, through confrontation with the performance, to analyze himself. We are concerned with the spectator who does not stop at an elementary stage of psychic integration, content with his own petty, geometrical, spiritual stability, knowing exactly what is good and what is evil, and never in doubt. For it was not to him that El Greco, Norwid, Thomas Mann and Dostoyevsky spoke, but to him who undergoes an endless process of self-development, whose unrest is not general but directed towards a search for the truth about himself and his mission in life. (Grotowski 40)

The process of “self-development” (or “self-actualization” or “self-realization”) to which Grotowski refers may take many forms and use a variety of terms depending upon what system the individual is using. Crowley was following the paradigm posited by ceremonial magic that the successful use of ritual would create a change in the spiritual condition of human beings and, by steps, elevate them to an epiphany of spirituality. By actively involving the audience in his *Rites*, he was opening the opportunity for “self-development” not only to the performers onstage, but also to the spectators. This experiment to recreate not only the “performer-priests” of antiquity but to include the audience as a part of the production foreshadowed the later work of theatre anthropologists and theorists such as Richard Schechner, and serves to illustrate one of the first attempts in the twentieth century to consciously create a psychological connection between theatrical and religious practice within the western hegemonic

society. Schechner, in particular, has spent decades researching the anthropological evidence linking the psychology of behavior with theatrical performance. Many of his own productions (such as *Dionysus in 69*, a retelling of Euripides' *The Bacchae* as produced by The Performance Group in 1969) illustrate his theories of the relationship between the extent of an audience's involvement in a production and the power of the experience of that performance to engage them emotionally and, on occasion, even spiritually. In *Performance Theory*, Schechner states that "Among primitive peoples the creative condition is identical with trances, dances, ecstasies; in short, shamanism" (Schechner 41).

While this statement suggests a link between "performance consciousness" and "religious consciousness," it does so through a reference to "primitive peoples." Much of Schechner's anthropological/theatrical work (as well as that of scholars such as Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz, both known for their work examining how cultural activity can be perceived as performance) addresses this link outside the context of Western and/or twentieth century practice. Upon examination of the numerous studies which explore the linkage between religious experience and performance consciousness little, if any, weight is given to this experience framed within western cultures.

What sets *The Rites of Eleusis* performances apart from other performances or practices which have been examined within the context of "occult theatre" or "avant-garde theatre" or even "experimental theatre"? It is not merely because they incorporated specific ritual practices developed by Western European occultists, nor because they displayed a methodology of theatrical production which did not become conventional until years later. What makes these productions unique and worthy of study is the fact

that they are relegated to a footnote in theatrical history because there is no direct connection, no “narrative link,” which may be drawn between them and the later works they foreshadow. The question of origins is one which occupies many historians. For theatre historians the *Rites* may be seen as the premature birth of the *avant garde* theatre of the late twentieth century. For the religious or social historian the *Rites* are the first truly public demonstration of pagan rituals³ in England in hundreds of years. Yet, no branches of academic study, whether performative, cultural, religious, or legal, have acknowledged the influence of these performances.

The lack of academic research into these areas by professional scholars is especially obvious when considering the works of Crowley. Although he was the author of numerous plays and skits and was involved in several theatrical productions (including serving as the “magical advisor” for Peter Brook’s first production in London, *Doctor Faustus*, in 1942), only two scholarly papers directly exploring Crowley’s theatrical activities have been published to date.⁴ While he is a primary focal point in several recent dissertations, the disciplines in which he is referenced are English Literature or Religion, not Theatre.⁵ While thirteen major biographies of Crowley have been published over the past fifty years, all of which include mention of the *Rites*, none dedicate more than a few pages to their production.

³ The fraternal rituals of organizations such as the “Druids” of the nineteenth century, which consisted primarily of marching to Stonehenge at the equinox while wearing white robes, cannot be considered truly pagan or magical since they claimed no religious or spiritual foundation or theology.

⁴ J. F. Brown, “Aleister Crowley’s *Rites of Eleusis*” in *The Drama Review*, 1976, and W. F. Ryan’s “The Great Beast in Russia: Aleister Crowley’s Theatrical Tour in 1913 and his Beastly Writings on Russia” in *Symbolism and After*, 1992. Brown’s is a straightforward account of the *Rites* productions written in a disdainful tone that is occasionally reminiscent of the yellow press reviews of the original performances. Ryan is no friendlier, but acknowledges Crowley’s familiarity with and appreciation for Russian culture, literature, and history.

⁵ see Heim (1975), Serra (1996), Verter (1998)

The reason for the neglect by scholars of Crowley as a legitimate subject of investigation is twofold. The first stems from his reputation as “the wickedest man in the world.” This title was given him by the British newspaper *John Bull* in the March 24, 1923 issue, following the death of one of his students under “mysterious circumstances” in Sicily. It was a sentiment expressed as early as 1900 by W. B. Yeats, who wrote to Annie Horniman regarding Crowley’s application to a higher grade in the magical order to which they both belonged, that Crowley was “a quite unspeakable person. He is I believe seeking vengeance for our refusal to initiate him. We did not admit him because we did not think a mystical society was intended to be a reformatory” (Symonds 1989: 36). Crowley was never shy about seeking publicity, and no small measure of resentment toward him throughout his life was due to the fact that many of his extreme claims were, in fact, true: he had won a scholarship to Cambridge University, one of the few people who could beat him at chess was the amateur champion of England, he had circumnavigated the world in his twenties, and he set climbing records in the Himalayas which stood until years after his death. He was also a heroin addict for over 30 years, sired illegitimate children by at least three different women, and many who became close to him ended their lives in poverty, alcoholism or suicide. His primary source of income the second half of his life was the charity of friends and contributions from magical societies. The disrepute which dogged him for the better part of his life was, to a great extent, of his own making.

Dying in relative obscurity in 1947, Crowley’s notoriety was revitalized in the 1960s by the actions of several high-profile rock bands. In 1967 The Beatles included his photograph (between Mae West and an unnamed Indian guru) in the “People We Like”

montage on the cover of the *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album. Jimmy Page, lead guitarist for Led Zeppelin, bought and restored Crowley's home in the Scottish Highlands and has since become the owner of one of the preeminent collections of Crowley memorabilia. Ozzy Osbourne scored a hit with "Mr. Crowley" on his first album after leaving Black Sabbath and it has since become a standard in his repertoire. These artists served as cultural role models for many of their fans, and the inclusion of Crowley in their work gave him a scope of legitimizing publicity (at least in the eyes of the young people buying the albums) unimaginable during his lifetime. The attraction of these performers to Crowley is understandable and the parallels are obvious. In his twenties and thirties Crowley was rich, attractive and experimenting with a variety of sexual practices, pharmaceuticals, and mystical paths, not unlike a number of his musical counterparts seventy years later. His credo "Do What Thou Wilt Shall Be the Whole of the Law" was interpreted incorrectly as synonymous with the "Do Your Own Thing" mantra of the 1960s. On the cover of the Bantam paperback issue of his autobiography in 1969 he was described as a "Victorian Hippie." Crowley is usually adjudged by those not closely involved with the early twenty-first century pagan/magical community to be a lightweight harbinger of counterculture attitudes and a dweller on the fringe of society. This is underscored by his identification as one of the pre-eminent occultists of the twentieth century. Occultism in the West has seldom been taken seriously (Winslade 86), and those who do take it seriously are seldom taken seriously. One need only remember the field day the press had with reports of Ronald and Nancy Reagan's close relationship with astrologer Joan Quigley to appreciate the mismatch of metaphysics and credibility.⁶

⁶ cf, Donald Regan, *For the Record* (1988), Nancy Reagan, *My Turn* (1989)

The second reason for Crowley's low standing as a subject for academic theatrical study is that Crowley never claimed to be a "man of the Theatre." In his autobiography he wrote "If I had had the most ordinary common sense, I should have got a proper impresario to have it [the *Rites*] presented in proper surroundings by officers trained in the necessary technique" (Crowley, *Confessions*, 638). He lamented what he viewed as the compromised quality of the productions. "I should have given more weeks to their preparation than I did minutes" (Crowley, *Confessions*: 636). Leaving behind no writing addressing dramatic theory or methodology, students of Crowley's theatrical work are forced to focus on what evidence is left of the productions themselves, and are given no pronouncements over which to conjecture or take umbrage.

An overview of the biographies presents an interesting, complex and, on occasion, contradictory picture, not unlike their subject. Crowley's own *Confessions* contains 921 pages and ends when he is forty-seven. The first two of six projected volumes were published in 1929 by the Mandrake Press of London, but the entire work was not available until Hill and Wang issued it in one volume in 1969. In 1929 The Mandrake Press also brought out Crowley's novel *Moonchild* and *The Stratagem* (a collection of short stories), and immediately ran into stiff opposition from London booksellers who were hostile to the idea of carrying works by "the wickedest man in the world." To counter the negative publicity, one of the proprietors of Mandrake, P. R. Stephensen, issued a booklet the following year titled *The Legend of Aleister Crowley: Being a Study of the Documentary Evidence Relating to a Campaign of Personal Vilification Unparalleled in Literary History*. This is a collection of newspaper and journal reviews

of Crowley's published works to date and defamatory articles about his activities, rebutted with calm logic by Stephensen.

The first two major biographies came in 1951, three years after Crowley's death, when John Symonds, whom Crowley named in his will as one of his literary executors,⁷ published *The Great Beast*, and the poet Charles Richard Cammell offered his personal reminiscences in *Aleister Crowley: The Man, The Mage, The Poet*. The titles alone indicate the camps into which the two writers fell. Cammell had known Crowley from 1936 through 1941. While more or less chronological in structure, Cammell's work is more an appreciation and positive criticism of Crowley's poetry. It avoids the more salacious reportage of the articles published during Crowley's life and attempts to present him as a remarkable man snubbed by his nation and posterity.

Crowley's powerful intellect was a riddle: now acute in judgement, now nebulous and unbalanced. His erudition, however, was solid and far-reaching, and his genius was prodigious. I have heard an eminent personage, General J. F. C. Fuller, a man famous in arms and letters, one who has known the greatest statesmen, warriors, dictators, of our age, declare solemnly that the most extraordinary genius he ever knew was Crowley. (Cammell, 1962 xx)

The response, or "return of fire" as it may be viewed in hindsight, came quickly from John Symonds. Although having access to Crowley's diaries and unpublished papers, and having had a personal relationship with him during the last years of Crowley's life, Symonds used a combination of carefully chosen facts and a vivid imagination to support his character assassinating portrait of Crowley as a sex-crazed, drug-besotted black magician.⁸ Seven years later Symonds issued *The Magic of Aleister*

⁷ The other was Louis Wilkinson, a.k.a. novelist Louis Marlowe

⁸ Various biographers have debated why Crowley chose Symonds to serve in this capacity considering the

Crowley (1958), which repeated much of the earlier material, but also added new (equally inaccurate) information. The misinformation which has become a Symonds trademark among students of Crowley's life includes the apocryphal description of his death. "He did not want to die, and as he passed into a coma the tears flowed down his white cheeks. Sister Tzaba was with him till he lost consciousness. She held his twitching hands and caught his last words: 'I am perplexed'" (Symonds, 1951:296). This same account was repeated verbatim in the paperback combination of *The Great Beast* and *The Magic of Aleister Crowley* (1973). By the release of *King of the Shadow Realm* in 1989 Symonds had modified the story.

Frieda Harris [Sister Tzaba] told me that Crowley died unhappily and fearfully. She held his twitching hands while the tears flowed down his cheeks. "I'm perplexed" he said. She was not with him at the very end. A Mr. Rowe was there; he was in the room with a nurse; and according to him, Crowley's last words were "Sometimes I hate myself" (Symonds, 1989:578).

This paragraph is repeated verbatim in Symonds' latest biography, *The Beast 666: The Life of Aleister Crowley* (1997). The problem with both accounts is that the person Symonds relies on for information, Mr. Rowe, was not in the room at the moment of death. There was someone there, Deirdre MacAlpine, the mother of Crowley's son (Kaczynski 452; Booth 483; Sutin 418), but she makes no mention of the presence of Mr. Rowe, and none of the other biographers have mentioned this name before or since Symonds wrote of him. There may be two reasons for Symonds omitting testimony from the one eye witness available. One, Symonds did not want a sympathetic account to mar the moral he tried to illustrate with the sad end Crowley came to in his account. Two,

result. One side uses this decision as an example of Crowley's dimmed capabilities in judging character, while another claims Crowley counted on Symonds doing exactly what he did, thereby ensuring Crowley's notoriety after death.

MacAlpine was aware of Symonds' bias against Crowley and wanted nothing to do with him. Since MacAlpine had nothing to gain by allowing the false story to circulate, the more plausible theory would be that Symonds just ignored her and told the tale as he wished it to be remembered.

The following year Daniel Mannix published *The Beast* (1959), a paperback which read more like a novel than a biography, and which relied primarily on Symonds for factual information, emphasizing the testosterone appeal (mountain climbing, world traveling, sex and drugs) of Crowley's life. In 1962, Cammell reissued *The Man, The Mage, The Poet*, in the forward of which, written by John C. Wilson, it is mentioned that "At this moment there are two biographies of Aleister Crowley circulating in paperback, either of which could be legally established as libel in any fair-minded court, were the subject of the biography alive today" (Cammell, 1962: xiii). James Harvey, probably a pseudonym, published *The Memoirs of Aleister Crowley* in 1967, a mildly pornographic paperback aimed at an adult male audience, which used selected scenes from Crowley's life as backdrops for titillatingly erotic episodes.

In 1969, Crowley's complete *Confessions* was published by Hill and Wang, edited and annotated by Kenneth Grant, the head of the British arm of Crowley's magical organization, the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO), and John Symonds. Symonds reiterated his disdain for Crowley in the introduction, and Grant took umbrage with Symonds in the preface. We may only speculate on the tenor of the working relationship between these two during the preparatory period prior to publication. Israel Regardie, who had studied under Crowley in the late 1920s, and had later gone on to publish a number of books on the Golden Dawn in addition to becoming a psychotherapist, brought out the first

balanced biography of Crowley in 1970. *The Eye in the Triangle* ends when Crowley is thirty, but approaches its subject from a psychological rather than a sensationalistic point of view. While acknowledging the less attractive aspects of Crowley's personality, Regardie provides insight into Crowley's motivations for a number of the incidents in his early adulthood which had become fodder for the anti-Crowley factions. Symonds answered this defense in 1973 with *The Great Beast: The Life and Magic of Aleister Crowley*, a paperback combination of his first two books.

In 1977, Francis King published a balanced account of Crowley's life (*The Magical World of Aleister Crowley*) which placed him within the larger context of twentieth century occult activity. This work was a natural next step from his 1970 book, *Ritual Magic in England*, which chronicled the history of the Golden Dawn, and included a final chapter, "The Aftermath," which detailed the activity of several Crowley-influenced occult groups into the 1970s. The following year Susan Roberts published *The Magician of the Golden Dawn*, a factually accurate novelization of Crowley's life.

Nine years passed before another biography was published. Colin Wilson had written *The Occult: A History* in 1971, which included a chapter on Crowley. In 1987, Wilson brought out his full-length biography, *The Nature of the Beast*. Like Symonds, Wilson had neither sympathy nor patience for Crowley's personality flaws, but was able to find some redeeming aspects in Crowley's philosophy. In 1989, Gerald Suster published *The Legacy of the Beast* which presents a biography of Crowley, an analysis of his ideas, and an overview of his influence on individuals and magical organizations since his death. This same year saw the fourth Symonds book, *The King of the Shadow Realm*, in which he presents the same host of inaccuracies about Crowley that he had

published previously, and some new misinformation about his own work as well.⁹ “This is my second and final – and let me hope definitive – biographical book about Aleister Crowley” (Symonds, 1989: vii). Not only was this his fourth, not second, biography of Crowley, but eight years later, in 1997, he would publish *The Beast 666*, which begins with the statement “Between 1951 and 1989 I published three biographical accounts of Aleister Crowley” (Symonds, 1997: vii). Symonds neglects to mention that his final three books (1973, 1989 and 1997) are essentially the same book reissued with different titles and prefaces.

The following year (1998), Roger Hutchinson published *The Beast Demystified* which attempted to present itself as an unbiased accounting, but which revealed its agenda when it repeated several of the Symonds accounts which had been previously discounted by King and Suster.

The new millennium brought forth two new Crowley biographies: Lawrence Sutin’s *Do What Thou Wilt*, and Martin Booth’s *A Magick Life*. Booth had previously (1986) edited a collection of Crowley’s poetry, had had numerous poems of his own published, and had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1980. His *Life* reveals sources ignored by Symonds, and which give other, more human, interpretations to some of Crowley’s “wicked” behavior. Sutin’s work may be considered an “inside job,” as it has been conjectured on several Crowley-oriented websites that he is a member of at least one of Crowley’s magical organizations. Neither

⁹ The Symonds biographies in order of appearance are: *The Great Beast* (1951), *The Magic of Aleister Crowley* (1958), *The Great Beast: The Life and Magic of Aleister Crowley* (1973), *King of the Shadow Realm* (1989), and *The Beast 666: The Life of Aleister Crowley* (1997).

work pulls its punches when addressing the negative aspects of Crowley's personality, yet both try to avoid outright condemnation of their subject.

While we may now look back and see reflections of the *Rites* methodology in the avant-garde "Happenings" of the 1950s and 1960s and the "performance art" of the 1980s and 1990s, bits and pieces of the theatrical theory and style which foreshadowed *The Rites of Eleusis* can be found scattered throughout the decades prior to their production. Wagner hoped he was contributing to the experience of a religious epiphany by his audience when *Parsifal* was first produced in 1882. The anti-realist movement in France spearheaded by Stephane Mallarmé in the 1890s and continued by Paul Fort at the Théâtre d'Art and Lugné-Poe at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre was a contributing factor to both the style and content of Crowley's production. The *Rites of Eleusis* would provide the perfect *coda* for a study of the Symbolist movement, yet the productions are never mentioned.

The *Rites* may also be indebted to the work of Sir James Frazier, most notably *The Golden Bough*. Published over a span of twenty years beginning in 1890, with the final volume being issued the same year as the production of Crowley's *Rites of Eleusis*, the thirteen volumes of *The Golden Bough* were a primary weapon in the arsenal of the Cambridge anthropologists who postulated that the development of drama was closely interconnected with the performance of religious ritual. An essay by Gilbert Murray ("Excursus on the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy") published in 1912¹⁰ presents a theory of a ritual structure comprised of *agon* (light opposing dark), *pathos* (sacrificial death), *messenger* (delivering information of death), *threnos* (lamentation),

¹⁰ see Harrison (1912).

anagnorisis (recognition of the slain God) and *apotheosis* (epiphany or resurrection) (Carlson 337). This is a structure closely reflective of the structure of the through line of Crowley's *Rites*. Considering the date of the essay, it is tantalizing to speculate whether Murray attended the performances of *The Rites of Eleusis* in 1910.

Theatrical productions subsequent to Crowley's *Rites*, yet connected through methodology, intent, or subject matter are too numerous to be addressed in detail, but a couple of examples will be discussed in Chapter Five. In 1997, an American branch of Crowley's magical organization, the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, began staging the *Rites of Eleusis* as public performances in Austin, Texas, and offering them for sale on videotape. These performances have since become an annual event. In 1998, Vasilios Calitsis presented his *World Mysteries* sponsored by the Brooklyn Academy of Music at the Majestic Theatre in New York. This was a production "inspired by the Eleusian Mysteries" the intent of which echoes Crowley's ideals.

Calitsis speaks [. . .] about construing theatre as a healing ritual, a journey to heightened awareness [. . .]. When Calitsis says, "I'm interested in their entering into a state close to *ekstasis*," he means the performers as well as the spectators [. . .]. This practice, he believes, can create a magnetic force between performers onstage and radiate that (*sic*) to the audience. (Jowitt, *Village Voice*, 5)

The structure of the *Rites of Eleusis* scripts is flexible enough to allow for their being presented in a variety of mythological interpretations as will be demonstrated in Chapter Four, but their original presentation was firmly based in a Greco-Roman style. As the world has grown smaller through the advent of advanced technology throughout the twentieth century, artistic expression has increasingly made use of cross-cultural experimentation and presentation. Thus, in 1936, during his employment with the Federal Theatre Project, Orson Welles presented a *Macbeth* set in Haiti; Akira Kurosawa

relocated *Macbeth* and *King Lear* to medieval Japan in his film adaptations of Shakespeare (*Throne of Blood* [1957] and *Ran* [1985], respectively), and Suzuki Tadashi has presented a number of Greek tragedies including *The Trojan Women* (1977), *The Bacchae* (1978), and *Clytemnestra* (1983) in the traditional Japanese style (McDonald, 45). Yet Crowley realized that the most widely-recognized semiotics for the audience of his day would be those of ancient Greece. His intended audience was university educated, and Crowley believed they would instantly make the metaphoric connections inherent in the scripts and staging.

This connection with Greece would have been further underscored by the momentum of the Greek revival movement which had occurred periodically throughout the nineteenth century. The movement was noticeable in the architecture, clothing, and furniture designs of the early to mid-1800s, and was rejuvenated in the 1870s with the archaeological discoveries of Heinrich Schliemann, and his excavations of Troy and Mycenae. It was a movement felt in the United States as well. George Cram Cook, poet, novelist, playwright, theatrical producer for and co-creator of the Provincetown Players, and, ultimately, Greek shepherd, was able to express in his *Athenian Women* the idea that lessons relating to humanity are universal, and transcend time regardless of the period in which the work is set. He remarked that he could not have interpreted the Peloponnesian War as he did had he not lived through World War I (<http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/spec-coll/Bai/tanselle.htm>).

Crowley did not employ a deconstructive approach to the original source wherein a new meaning appeared before the eyes of his twentieth century audience (e.g. the realization of feminist semiotics in a modern production of *The Taming of the Shrew*).

Nor was he interested in the simple updating of a classic script to modern times.

Crowley's goal was a recreation of the spiritual essence of the original performances and a rebirth of the recognition of the role of pagan religious practice in contemporary life.

Crowley's philosophical explorations which led him to attempt this production were greatly influenced by his involvement as a young man in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, an occult organization founded in London in 1887 by three high-ranking freemasons, which incorporated many of the performative aspects of Masonry in their practices. The higher degrees of Masonry known as the Scottish Rite have traditionally utilized theatrical performance as an intrinsic part of their degree initiations, and the practice of donning elaborate costumes and performing scripted ritual would have been nothing new to the founding fathers of the Golden Dawn. Crowley himself was ultimately made a 33 degree Mason, although the legitimacy of this accomplishment is in question. Nevertheless, clear parallels may be seen in the theatrical practices of Masonry and the various performative aspects of the Golden Dawn rituals.

Crowley was not the first member of the Golden Dawn to present magical rituals as professional performances for public consumption. One of the three founding members, Samuel Liddell Mathers, had preceded him in Paris in 1898 by presenting *The Rites of Isis* at the Théâtre Bodinière, near the Gare St. Lazare. These performances continued for several years at Mathers' house at 87 Rue Mozart, Auteuil, and incorporated readings from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, exotic costuming and dance. While both Mathers' *Rites of Isis* and Crowley's *Rites of Eleusis* were presented through a combination of scholarship, research, artistic creativity, and a desire to promote and publicize occult concepts and beliefs, they were also both designed to be profit-making

ventures. Mathers had little other income during much of the production period of his *Rites of Isis*. Mary Greer, in *Women of the Golden Dawn* (1995), documents the overlapping involvement of Irish actress Florence Farr and Abbey Theatre founder Annie Horniman, who financed the creation of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, in both the Golden Dawn and various theatrical ventures at the turn of the twentieth century, but fails to explore the motivation for them to use techniques which the two venues would have in common. There has been to date no specific investigation of the commonalities of the theatrical performative process and the magical performative process of contemporary magicians.

That Crowley should attempt this connection of religion and what today might be considered performance art is not surprising, for he considered himself both a philosopher of the occult and also an artist. His artistic creativity was expressed primarily through a voluminous output of poetry (he published a three volume set of his collected works when he was twenty-nine), but was also evident in a number of published mystery stories, several novels, over twenty short plays, film scripts, scores of pieces of art work, and a large body of writings expounding his metaphysical concepts. Although following the production of *The Rites of Eleusis* he experimented with a more mundane theatrical venue by forming a traveling troupe of female musicians and traveling to Moscow with his “Ragged Rag-Time Girls ,” his dramatic scripts were, for the most part, a poetic form of closet drama adapting classical themes (such as *The Argonauts* and *Orpheus*, both written in 1904, and *Adonis*, 1911), satirizing the melodramatic form (*Why Jesus Wept*, 1905, *The Sire de Maletroit’s Door*, 1906, *The Scorpion*, 1911), short sketches (*Ehe*, 1910, *The Ghouls*, 1911, *Elder Eel* , *Doctor Bob*, a dramatization of

Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*, 1912, and *The Tango*, 1913), or reflections of his philosophical or religious interests at the time of composition (*The God Eater*, 1903, *Aha!*, 1907, *The Ship*, 1908, *The World's Tragedy* and *Mr. Todd*, 1910, *Snowstorm* and *The Blind Prophet*, 1911). His classical scripts are written in a style which fluctuates between stilted prose (Medea: "The child hath hewn her sire asunder, seething him in herbs of sacred power" *The Argonauts*, act V) and large blocks of poetry posing as soliloquies. His sketches are more palatable, often incorporating heavy vernacular accents and displaying an irreverent and creative wit.

And yet, when Crowley was not trying to write drama *per se* but religious ritual, his writing demonstrates power and impressive cohesiveness. As Leonard Bernstein has said about the work of Beethoven, that each note seems an inevitable next step from the previous one, so Crowley transcends his penchant for lurid prose when involved in the composition of celebratory religious work. The rituals he wrote for his various magical ceremonies often demonstrate an effectively poetic use of language frequently missing from his other work. This is a curious phenomenon which is also evidenced in the works of Mathers, who spent much of his life living in poverty as a translator and librarian and who wrote many of the original Golden Dawn rituals. Mathers' writings in other fields are frequently banal, but the rituals which he wrote are an impressive combination of language, structure and symbolism.

In apposition to the "professional-occultist-as-theatrical-producers" such as Mathers and Crowley, the Golden Dawn counted a number of "theatrical-professionals-as-occultists" among its members at the end of the nineteenth century, including Florence Farr and Annie Horniman, actress, author, and feminist Maud Gonne, and the poet and

playwright W. B. Yeats. Their involvement in the Golden Dawn was more than a passing interest. Yeats wrote:

If I had not made magic my constant study I could not have written a single word of my Blake book, nor would *The Countess Kathleen* ever have come to exist. The mystical life is the centre of all that I do and all that I think and all that I write [. . .] it is surely absurd to hold me “weak” or otherwise because I chose to persist in a study which I decided deliberately four or five years ago to make, next to my poetry, the most important pursuit of my life. (Wade 210 - 11)

Horniman made a habit of utilizing Tarot card readings (a skill learned through her Golden Dawn association) to discern political and artistic conditions influencing the Irish National Theatre Society with which she and Yeats were involved at the turn of the century. Inspired by a Tarot reading done on October 9, 1903 (a photograph of which, together with her letter to Yeats analyzing the card spread, is extant), she agreed to purchase the building which was to become the Abbey Theatre. In January 1902, Farr wrote, produced and appeared in two plays with Egyptian motifs, *The Beloved of Hathor* and *The Shrine of the Golden Hawk* which were directly influenced by her Golden Dawn involvement.

When Crowley and Mathers attempted to present their occult concepts and beliefs in the guise of theatrical performances, they utilized a methodology of presentation which incorporated specific semiotic signs. The “occult temple” in which the *Rites of Eleusis* occurred was decorated in a manner appropriate for the celebration of a mystical event. The language of the scripts was stylized and formal, giving the dialogue an appearance of solemnity and importance. The positions and movements of the performers about the performance space were dictated by astrological and qabalistic symbolism. Care was taken to present the audience with an atmosphere conducive to not only a theatrical event,

but also, hopefully, a consciousness-altering experience through sensory stimulation. Where the modern audience of today would attend a performance expecting to sit in the dark in comfortable seats and have their attention engaged, Crowley's *Rites* were performed for an audience seated on stools just uncomfortable enough to prevent the mind from wandering away from what was happening. Crowley also recommended the audience attend in clothing color-coordinated for the specific rite they were to witness. Thus, an advertisement for the performances announced to those attending that:

you are requested, if convenient, to wear black, or very dark blue, for Jupiter violet, for Mars scarlet or russet brown, for Sol orange or white, for Venus green or sky-blue, for Mercury shot silk and mixed colors, for Luna white, silver, or pale blue [. . .] it is not necessary to confine yourself to the color mentioned, but it should form the keynote of the scheme [. . .].
(Crowley, *Eleusis*, 32)

This color coordination was another method whereby the audience members were to become not mere spectators but actively involved in the ritual experience. Their choice of clothing became their costumes, making them not passive observers but cast members, the theory being that the color of their clothing would subconsciously influence their brain activity. The idea that color can influence psychology has become widely accepted in the past fifty years, the concept appearing everywhere from interior and product design to clothing accessories. The theory has been adopted by a number of different institutions in the latter half of the twentieth century when developing interior design concepts integrating the use of color to achieve a desired psychological effect. For instance, it has been found through psychological testing that pastel shades of blue,

pink or green have a subconsciously calming effect on the human brain, and are therefore used frequently in hospitals and penal institutions.¹¹

Theories connecting color and psychology as they related to artistic expression were beginning to be published at about the same time as the *Rites* productions. Wassily Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter, a group of avant garde expressionist artists formed in 1911, subscribed to the theory that colors, lines, and shapes all have specific qualities which can evoke an emotional response, but the success of that evocation simultaneously relies on the ability of the artist to create an empathetic reaction from the viewer. This evocation of emotion through abstraction is closely aligned with the Symbolist goal, that of communication via subliminal means.

The marketing campaign of the *Rites* was unique, if not ahead of its time. The seven performances were presented on seven consecutive Wednesdays at 9 p. m. Tickets for specific evenings were unavailable, the audience being required to purchase a block of seven. Individual tickets were, however, “transferable.” A large advertisement for the *Rites* announced that “only one hundred tickets will be issued; early application is therefore desirable.” This was an obvious ploy on Crowley’s part to generate interest in the production but also a necessity due to the spatial limitations of the venue.

Introduction to Chapters

Chapter One begins by addressing the origins and purposes of myth. A brief overview is presented of various theories of the origins of drama. This is followed by an exploration of different types of ritual, and examples are presented to demonstrate how religious ritual has been used historically in conjunction with civic functions to represent

¹¹ See: Davidoff (1991), Fehrman (2000), Rodemann (1999)

the connection between the secular and the temporal, and their interdependence. The religious nature of ritual and its ties to secular functions having been established, the methodology of nineteenth century Symbolism is examined, to demonstrate its connection to the ancient experience. Examples of Symbolist poetry, music, stage design, and theatre are presented to support the last section, Symbolism and Psychology. This ties together the idea of the ecstatic religious experiences of ancient religions with the study of modern psychology in an attempt to illustrate that the practices of those who incorporate artistic theory and activity into religious methodology are working from an established scientific basis.

Chapter Two gives a brief overview of occult activity in England and the United States during the nineteenth century, to aid in understanding the atmosphere out of which the groups next discussed emerged. It then discusses the rise of Freemasonry as an important organization in the formation of later occult bodies, and the influence that Masonic ritual had on these later groups. A history of the Golden Dawn is presented, followed by biographies of its founders, and three members whose theatrical productions were influenced by their Golden Dawn experiences: W. B. Yeats, Florence Farr, and Annie Horniman.

Chapter Three gives a biography of Aleister Crowley, and a brief examination of his philosophy. This is followed by an overview of his other scripts, either written with the intent of production or purely as closet drama, and his other involvements in theatre and film.

Chapter Four begins with a brief overview of other theatrical activity at the time of the *Rites of Eleusis*, and a discussion of the use of pharmaceuticals in ritual. An

examination of the original *Rites of Eleusis* is presented, followed by a history of the origins of the 1910 productions. The first *Rite*, the *Rite of Saturn*, is presented in a close reading to act as a model of how the other rites may be analyzed. Synopses of the other *Rites* are then given, with attention to the unique aspects of each. Concluding this chapter is a summary of the activity experienced by the performers immediately following the productions.

Chapter Five begins with a brief history of the OTO following Crowley's death. This establishes the soil out of which grew the resurgence of *Rites* productions in America in the 1970s. This is followed by an examination of Vasilios Calitsis' production of *The Mysteries of Eleusis*, produced in 1998, which provides an illustration of one incorporation of Crowley's methodology and intent in latter twentieth century theatre. My final conclusions, which restate the goals of this dissertation and the extent to which they were met, conclude the chapter.

Terminology

The nature of this dissertation requires the explanation of a number of esoteric concepts and practices in order to link methodology and meaning in this production. Crowley had spent the twelve years prior to the production immersed in occult study, and his knowledge of the intricacies of the qabalah, numerology, geomancy, astrology, the tarot, classical mythology, and ceremonial magic informed every artistic decision connected to the *Rites*. A brief explanation of some of the more frequently used practices follows, including an overview of the general philosophical concepts of the qabalah and the Tree of Life.

MAGICK¹²: The attachment of the letter “k” to the end of the word “magic” was a practice which Crowley adopted “in order to distinguish the Science of the Magi from all its counterfeits” (Crowley, 1997:47). The archaic spelling also appealed to Crowley’s romantic instincts. Its significance is revealed in its gematrical analysis. “K” is the eleventh letter of several alphabets (e.g. Latin, Chaldean, and Greek) and eleven is seen numerologically as a number representative of the concept of magic. The set of numbers from one through ten refers to various aspects of the physical world. For example, the number one relates to God, the highest manifestation on this level of reality, while the number ten relates to the base matter of the universe, i.e., the densest physical material, and everything we can perceive with our physical senses. The number eleven, continuing on after the number ten (ten + one), begins the next sequence of numbers, is representative of the transcendence of the physical world, and corresponds to a higher plane of knowledge and existence than the prior set which refers to the physical plane.

The combination of the five pointed pentagram (symbolic of wiccan, practical, “low” magic) and the six pointed hexagram (symbolic of the Hebraic-based, God-seeking “high” magic) creates an eleven-pointed symbol. In Crowley’s *Book of the Law*, which informed his occult work from about 1907 on, the goddess Nuit says “My number is 11, as all their numbers who are of us” (*The Book of the Law*, I, 60). The name of the goddess Nuit (or Nu) transliterates from Hebrew as נַו or “Nu.” This has a numerological equivalent of fifty-six, and five plus six equals eleven. Eleven is the number of the

¹² I have utilized Crowley’s spelling in the title of this dissertation to facilitate the identification of this work with Crowley. Those researching Crowley may use this spelling as a keyword search, and its inclusion here will act as a beacon indicating that the present work addresses Crowleyian concepts.

disciples who stayed faithful to Jesus, and the number of sepheroth in the Tree of Life (see Figure 1).

According to Crowley's system of interpretation, the eleventh card of the Tarot is *Lust*. Crowley's magic was heavily dependant upon the use of sex as a means of creating energy which would then be applied to achieving whatever goal or outcome was desired. Kenneth Grant, a disciple of Crowley's in the 1940s, ties in this focus with the spelling of "magick:"

"K" is also the *Khn*, *Khou*, or *Queue* symbolized by the tail or vagina, venerated in ancient Egypt as the source of Great Magical Power. Magick spelt with a "k" therefore indicates the precise nature of the Current which Therion¹³ (Crowley) embodied and transmitted. (Grant, 1974:5)

With the incorporation of the letter "K" in his spelling of "Magick" Crowley was making the statement that his particular branch of esotericism was specifically addressing the growth of human spirituality through the use of consciousness-altering methodologies which included sex and pharmaceuticals for the purpose of elevating consciousness, reality and, by association, existence itself to a higher plane of development. The word "Magick" not only served as a "brand name" logo for his particular practices, but, to the informed, acted as an indicator of how the stated goals of Crowley's organization would be pursued.

Crowley defined magick as "the Science and Art of causing change to occur in conformity with will" (Crowley, 1997:126):

Illustration: It is my Will to inform the World of certain facts within my knowledge. I therefore take "magical weapons," pen, ink, and paper; I

¹³Therion (**ΘHPION**) means "beast" in Greek. One of Crowley's magical titles was "To Mega Therion," or "the great beast." The source of and reason for this will be discussed in Chapter Three.

write “incantations” - these sentences - in the “magical language,” i.e., that which is understood by the people I wish to instruct; I call forth “spirits,” such as printers, publishers, booksellers, and so forth, and constrain them to convey my message to those people. The composition and distribution of this book is thus an act of Magick by which I cause change to take place in conformity with my Will. (Crowley, *ibid*)

This change could, therefore, be anything from spiritual development and transformation to something as simple as ordering a meal in a restaurant. Crowley viewed every conscious act as a magical act, making no distinction between everyday life and spiritual life. As Donald Michael Kraig put it in his book *Modern Magick*, “Magick is not something that you do. Magick is something that you are” (Kraig, 81).

QABALAH: The spelling of “qabalah,” like the spelling of “magick,” was chosen by Crowley not as a random affectation, but for a specific reason. The term “qabalah” (or “kabbalah,” or “cabala”) is from the Hebrew קַבְּלָהּ (QBLH) which is roughly translated “from mouth to ear” (Richardson, 18), or “received tradition” (Grant, 1974, 221), describing an oral tradition of education. It is also the root of the English word “cabal,” meaning a secret group of conspirators, reflective of the secretive approach to the teachings, and also suggests that those secret teachings were somehow sinister in nature. Crowley used the specific spelling “qabalah” because it was the closest transliteration of the Hebrew alphabet into English and, therefore, in his mind, the most accurate representation of the nature of the word. Crowley was a firm believer in empirical evidence, and felt that accuracy in the use of qabalistic techniques was as important as accuracy in any science-based procedure. Any minor variation of spelling or numerical calculation would create a result of inaccurate data or false information. In this case, Crowley used a methodology which related the Hebrew letter with the English

letter that had evolved through the Phoenician, Greek and Latin alphabets (Godwin, xviii).

Qabalah is a philosophical, theosophical, and practical method of codifying all aspects of the universe and, through interpreting these codes and applying their meanings in our daily lives, a guide for attaining spiritual advancement. It is seen by its adherents as “the universal language by which everything was made” (Bardon, 19). Crowley gives a more humorous example in his *Equinox*, 1:5, 95:

Truly there is no end to this wondrous science; and when the skeptic sneers, “With all these methods one ought to be able to make everything out of nothing,” the qabalist smiles back the sublime retort, “With these methods One did make everything out of nothing.”

Although the historical origins of the qabalah are traceable to roughly two thousand years ago, the traditional, or mythic, origins stretch back into prehistory. Qabalah is considered by those who follow its teachings to contain the knowledge of the structure and meaning of the universe, revealed by angels to the first humans, and then slowly forgotten until God revealed it to Abraham, who passed the knowledge to his son Jacob. Through Jacob it was given to Joseph, who died before passing it on. The knowledge was revealed to mankind once again when God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, giving him both the exoteric Ten Commandments and the esoteric qabalistic laws by which human beings should conduct their lives.

According to legend, Abraham left written portions of the qabalah in a book called *Sepher Yetzirah (Book of Formation)*. This book is also the beginning of the historic qabalah, since its authorship is also attributed to Rabbi Akiba (50-135 CE), an enlightened Jewish mystic of the second century CE who was ultimately charged with

sedition and executed by the Romans. The traceable history of the literature of the qabalah begins at this point, and continues with the work of a disciple of Akiba's, Rabbi Simon ben Jochai. When Akiba was executed, Simon went into hiding for many years in Israel. Tradition holds that it was during this time that he wrote the second important text of the qabalah, the *Zohar (Book of Splendor)*. *Sepher Yetzirah* addresses the origin of the universe and of mankind. The other book, the *Zohar*, discusses, among other things, the nature of God. The entire work of the *Zohar* fills five volumes, and is written in the form of a commentary on the Talmud. The Talmud is the collection of ancient Rabbinic writings consisting of the Mishnah and the Gemara, constituting the basis of religious authority in Orthodox Judaism. The *Zohar* was first published in Spain by Moses de Leon (1240–1305), who had often been accused of forging the work. It has since been republished numerous times. The *Zohar* served as a crystallization of the concepts of the qabalah as they had come to be understood by de Leon.

The qabalah as a body of knowledge may be divided into four major subsets: the dogmatic qabalah, the practical qabalah, the unwritten qabalah, and the literal qabalah.¹⁴ The dogmatic qabalah concerns itself with the study of the literature of the subject, for example the *Sepher Yetzirah*, the *Zohar*, and the *Bahir*. The practical qabalah addresses the creation of talismans and amulets in a specifically qabalistic manner for the purpose of influencing events in daily life. The unwritten qabalah addresses the metaphysical correspondences found within the Tree of Life, a glyph created to show numerous spiritual relationships and levels (see Figure 1).

¹⁴ see Kraig, 61, Gonzalez-Wippler, 89

The final subset, the literal qabalah, addresses the relationship between letters and numbers, and describes methodologies of transliterating the Hebrew alphabet into numbers for the purpose of divination. This area of qabalistic study further breaks down into three other branches. *Notarikon*, or the creation of acronyms, is a method of creating words which represent significant phrases which contain a hidden meaning. For example, the word “AMEN” in Hebrew is comprised of the letters Aleph, Mem, Nun (אמנ). These three letters represent the words **A**l (God), **M**Elech (King), **N**ehehmahn (faithful). The qabalistic meaning of the word “amen” may be translated as “God is our faithful king.” (Of course, the word itself also may be translated as “so be it.”) *Temurah*, the second branch of the literal qabalah, is a system of cryptographic letter transposition or substitution used to assist in textual interpretation. The third branch of the literal qabalah is the most important and most often used procedure, and was employed by Crowley on a daily basis for decades, influencing everything from identifying locations where he would be most successful in looking for an apartment to what color the cover of his latest publication should be. It is called *Gematria*.

GEMATRIA is a form of textual exegesis based on the Hebrew language, since, according to the Judaeo-Christian paradigm, the universe was created when God spoke. In Chapter One of Genesis, when describing the creation of various aspects of the world, the phrase “And God said . . .” begins verses 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26 and 29. The idea of God manifesting as a word is often presented in the Old Testament. This is a concept echoed in Christianity. The Gospel of John begins “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). This gospel continues “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (John 1:14). This association of Word as

Identity is repeated in Revelations 19:13: “And he was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God.”

The practice of Gematria posits that letters and words have numerical equivalents and that by examining the relationships between words with numerical or mathematical connections one may gain insight into the hidden meanings which connect them:

| | | | |
|--------|-----|---------|----------|
| Aleph | א | 1 | A |
| Beth | ב | 2 | B |
| Gimel | ג | 3 | G |
| Daleth | ד | 4 | D |
| Heh | ה | 5 | H (E) |
| Vau | ו | 6 | V (U) |
| Zayin | ז | 7 | Z |
| Cheth | ח | 8 | Ch |
| Teth | ט | 9 | T |
| Yod | י | 10 | Y (IorJ) |
| Kaph | כ ך | 20, 500 | K |
| Lamed | ל | 30 | L |
| Mem | מ ם | 40, 600 | M |
| Nun | נ ן | 50, 700 | N |
| Samekh | ס | 60 | S |
| Ayin | ע | 70 | O |
| Peh | פ ף | 80, 800 | P |
| Tzaddi | צ ץ | 90, 900 | Tz |
| Qoph | ק | 100 | Q |
| Resh | ר | 200 | R |
| Shin | ש | 300 | S (Sh) |
| Tau | ת | 400 | T (Th) |

Figure 1: The Hebrew Alphabet and its Numerical Correlation

For practical magical purposes, the numerical equivalence between the temporal and spiritual worlds assumes an influential connection between them. This concept is described by Isaac Bonewitz in *Real Magic* as the “Law of Association:”

If two things, “A” and “B,” have something in common (anything!), that thing can be used to control both, and “A” and “B” have a mutual influence on each other, depending upon the size of the thing shared. The more they have in common, the more they influence each other (Bonewitz, 5).

This concept also reflects the astrologer’s adage “as above, so below.” Crowley wrote four works addressing this topic. *Liber 777*, a book listing a series of comprehensive tables of correspondence which was started by Alan Bennett, a fellow member of the Golden Dawn, was first published in 1907. *Gematria: An Essay upon Number* was an article published in *The Equinox*, 1:5 in March 1911. *Sepher Sephiroth* aka *Liber D* was published in *The Equinox* 1:8. *Greek Qabalah, Liber MCCLXIV*, has not yet been published although it exists in manuscript form in the archives of the OTO.

The practical application of the correspondences in creating ritual is illustrated by Crowley in his *magnum opus*, *Magick*:

Let us suppose that you wish to obtain knowledge of some obscure science.

In column xlv, line 12, you will find “Knowledge of Sciences.” the Planet corresponding is Mercury, its number eight, its lineal figures the octagon and octagram, the God who rules that planet Thoth, or in Hebrew symbolism Tetragrammaton Adonai and Elohim Tzabaoth, its Archangel Raphael[. . .] its colors Orange (for Mercury is the Sphere of the Sephra Hod, 8), Yellow, Purple, Grey and Indigo rayed with Violet; its Magical Weapon the Wand or Caduceus, its Perfumes Mastic[. . .] its sacred plants Vervain[. . .] its jewel the Opal or Agate, its sacred animal the Snake, etc. (Crowley, 1997, 614)

This interpretation of the universe as an infinite series of interconnections, as described and codified by the qabalah, was what informed every aspect of the creation of

The Rites of Eleusis. The specific references represented in the staging of the productions will be examined in detail in Chapter Four.

The seven planets of classical antiquity also have specific numbers associated with them, based on the squares of the sequential number of that planet. These numbers are used to create abstract designs, or sigils which are then used to represent that planet and the attributes with which it is associated.

| | | | | |
|---------|---|----|-----|------|
| Saturn | 3 | 9 | 15 | 45 |
| Jupiter | 4 | 16 | 34 | 136 |
| Mars | 5 | 25 | 65 | 325 |
| Sun | 6 | 36 | 111 | 666 |
| Venus | 7 | 49 | 175 | 1225 |
| Mercury | 8 | 64 | 260 | 2080 |
| Moon | 9 | 81 | 369 | 3321 |

Figure 2: The Planetary Numbers

Thus any appearance of the numbers 5, 25, 65, or 325 may be interpreted as having some relation to or connection with the attributes of Mars. This sequence of planets is also the order in which they are presented in *The Rites of Eleusis*.

Another example of the application of Gematria may be found by examining the name of the magical organization Crowley founded after he left the Golden Dawn. It is often referred to simply as the A. A. and it is assumed that this stands for *Astrum Argentium*, a Latin phrase meaning Silver Star. Although the English translation of the

organization's name is Silver Star, the letters actually represent the Greek words Astron Argon, **ΑΣΤΡΟΝ ΑΡΓΟΝ**. Although the two phrases mean the same thing, the Greek words numerologically translate to 451, the same as the words Konx Om Pax, **Κονξ όμ πός**. "Konx om pax," or "Light in Extension," is the title of a book Crowley published in 1907, during the formation of his new order, and this book serves as "a veritable Manifesto of the A. A." (Eshelman 23). Mathematically, the lowest factor of 451 is 11, the number associated with Crowley's style of magic. 451 also equates to the Hebrew words **את האדם** or "The Essence of Man," which is interpreted by members as meaning that within the AA is found the essence of humanity that is to be found within each individual. 451 is also numerically equivalent to **שאנים**, the "Angels of Tiphareth," and also to **תהום**, "The Abyss." Tiphareth is the sixth sephera of the Tree of Life, representative of Beauty. The Abyss is a symbolic place of psychological and spiritual initiation, the place where one crosses over from the mundane world to the celestial world, where the beauty of God is revealed.

Additionally, many of Crowley's more important works have several titles. Most are technically referred to as "Liber (number)," e.g., *Liber CCXX* (220 in Roman numerals). *Liber* is simply the Latin word for "book," while the number will usually have some symbolic connection to the nature of the work in question. For example, *Liber XXX* (Book 30) is subtitled *Liber Librae: The Book of the Balance*. It is work which deals with issues of maintaining equilibrium in one's life; 30 is the number of the Hebrew letter Lamed, which is linked with the astrological sign Libra, the scales.

TREE OF LIFE: The Tree of Life (see Figure 1) is a diagram used by qabalists to illustrate the macrocosmic interpretation of the spiritual construction of the universe.

It also serves as a microcosmic map of the path of spiritual development for individual human beings. The Tree is comprised of ten spheres, or sepheroth (singular: sephera) connected by twenty two paths representing the twenty two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. These spheres are then grouped into three sub-sets, an arrangement Kraig calls the “Three Triangles” (Kraig 90).

Working from the base up, the first set, comprising Malkuth, Yesod, Hod, and Netzach, is associated with an individual’s personality (see Figure 2). At the bottom, or least developed state, Malkuth (Kingdom), represents the physical body, the basic source of information about the world which is gained through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. Next comes Yesod (Foundation), whose planetary correspondence is Luna (the Moon). The realm of Yesod deals with the subconscious (Freud’s “id”) and repressed memories. Hod, the eighth sephera, representative of Glory, and whose planet is Mercury, corresponds to the realm of thought and intellect, while Netzach (Victory, number seven, connected to Venus), is related to emotions and feelings. Since we experience and interact with the world through the aspects of these four spheres, our senses, instincts, intellect, and emotions, the more sharply we have honed these capabilities and our understanding of them, the more effectively and successfully we will function within the physical world.

The next grouping of sepheroth is called the “Moral Triangle” by Kraig.¹⁵ It creates an inverted triangle with Tiphereth (Beauty, number six, and corresponding to the Sun), and Geburah (Severity, the fifth sephera, relating to Mars). Chesed (Mercy) is the fourth sephera, has Jupiter as its corresponding planet, and is the inverted apex of this

¹⁵ Or the “Realm of the Soul” (Parfitt, 33).

triangle. The lesson illustrated here is that the result of the balance of Severity and Mercy is Beauty.

The final grouping, the “Celestial Triangle” (Kraig, 90) or “Realm of the Spirit” (Parfitt, 34) is comprised of Binah (Understanding, the third sephera, represented by Saturn), Chokmah (Wisdom, the second sephera), and Kether (Crown) the first. These three are used in developing the capability to experience spiritual energies at their peak moments in our lives. They are manifested at those times we feel most “alive” or in synchronization with the rest of the universe.

The diagram of the Tree of Life illustrates a number of concepts. Since all other sepheroth descend from Kether, we may see the evolution of the universe out of this first sephiroth, the initial unity of God.

The positions of the sepheroth create three vertical columns within the Tree which are referred to as the Three Pillars (see Figure 5). The Pillar of Severity (the column on the left created by Binah, Geburah, and Hod) illustrates that Strength comes from Understanding and brings Glory. The complimentary pillar on the right, the Pillar of Mercy, shows that Wisdom combined with patience will bring Victory. The Middle Pillar, or Pillar of Mildness, teaches us that in this world we should seek to establish our foundation in beauty and equilibrium. The left pillar holds the attributes of femininity and passivity, while the right pillar is masculine and active. A numerically descending line is noticeable from Binah (sephera 3, Saturn) the first planet in the *Rites of Eleusis* series) to Yesod (sephera 9, Luna) the seventh and last of the *Rites*.

Working away from godhead would seem at first to be working against the goal of the rituals of the *Rites of Eleusis*, that is, achievement of a re-connection with God.

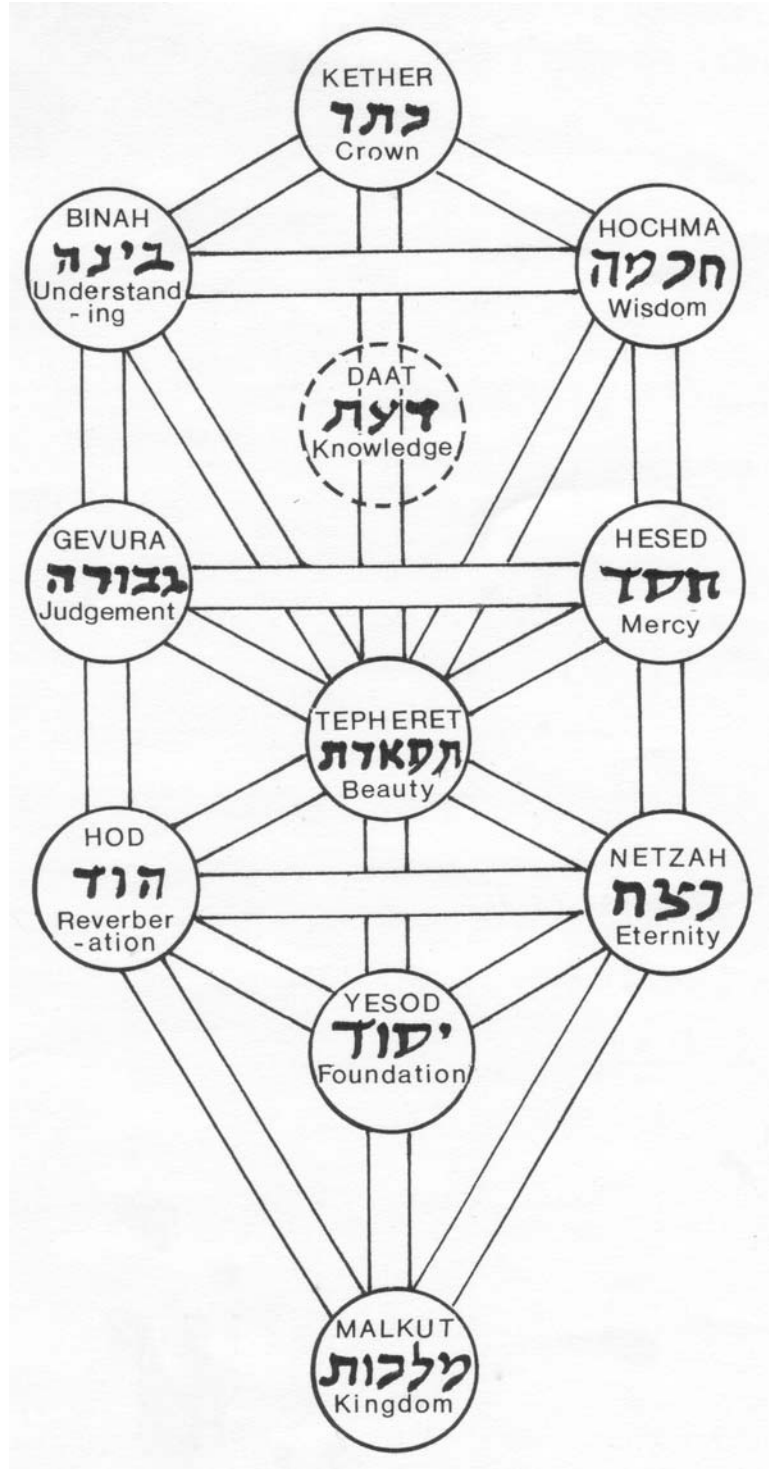


Figure 3: The Tree of Life

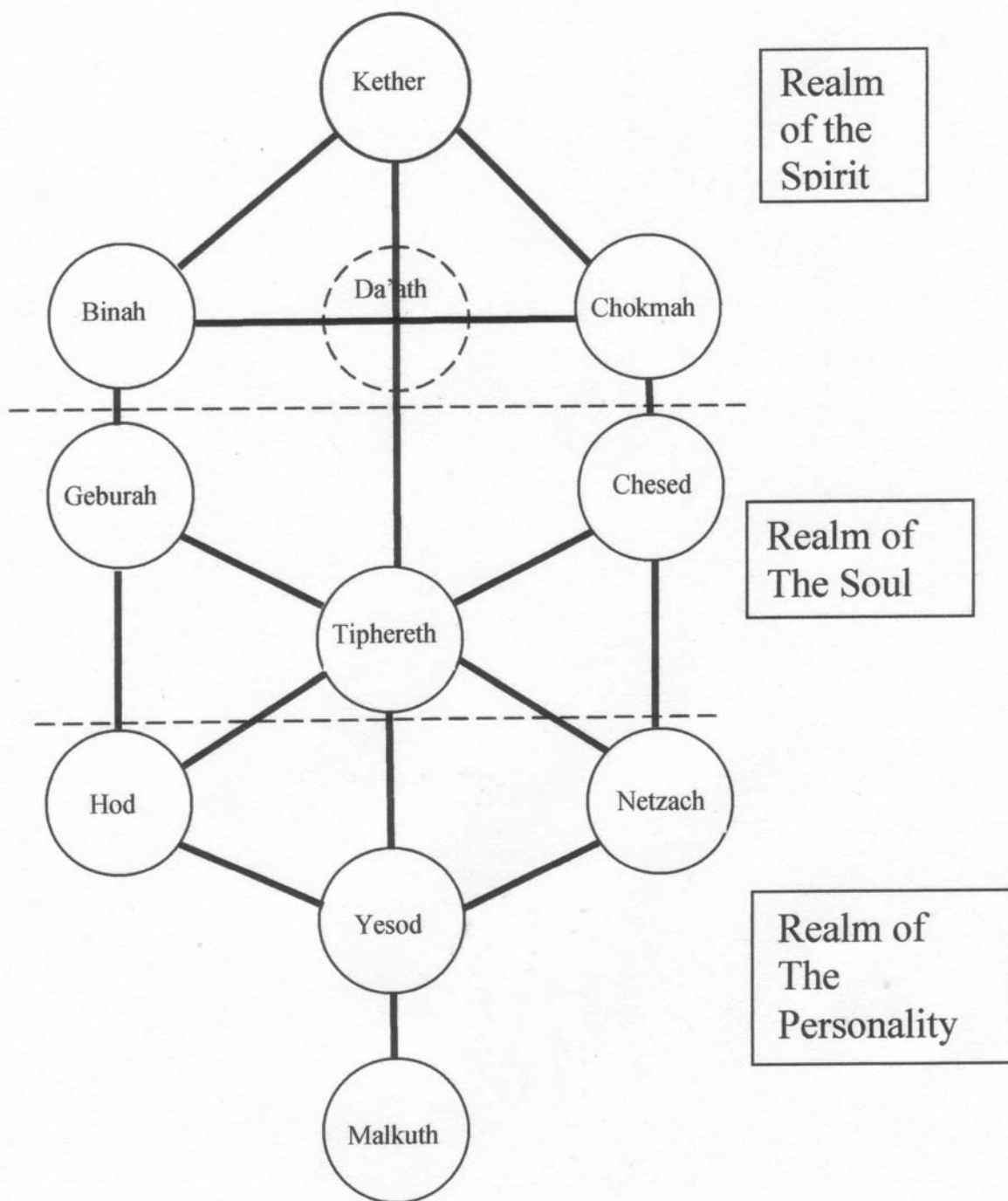


Figure 4: The Three Realms on the Tree of Life

And yet, by structuring Rites to reflect this specific process or progression, Crowley is demonstrating that the path to God leads ultimately toward Man, not away from him.

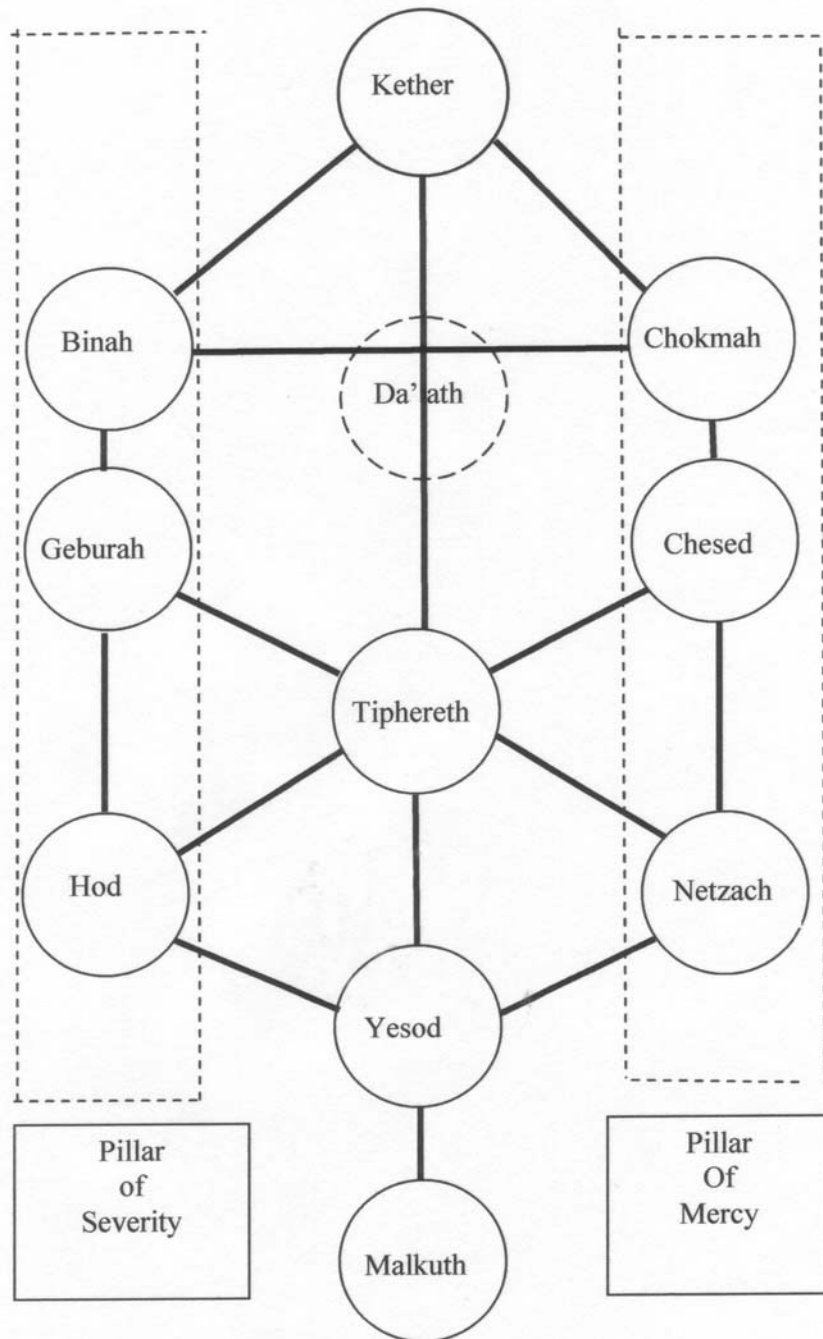


Figure 5: The Two Pillars

CHAPTER 1

THE THEATRE OF SPIRITUALITY

There never was a community of people who got together and said, "Why don't we have a theatre? We need a theatre. Where are the actors?" That never happened in the history of the world. A few hams got together and said "Let's get up on the stage and do something." In the caves somebody stood up and told a story. Nobody said "Let's have a story" until they'd heard a story (Orson Welles, American Film Institute Awards, 1976).

Introduction

The question of origins is an important one, but it is often difficult to determine where the answer to the question should begin. Every event has its precursors, influences that have shaped and informed it, and each of those, in turn, have theirs. In order to create a semblance of structure, this dissertation will progress chronologically or, in another sense, geometrically. Following the form of a pyramid, this first chapter may be seen as the broad base which creates the foundation upon which is then built a smaller, more focused second chapter. That is followed by an even more specific third chapter, and so on.

This first chapter addresses the basic historical and psychological issues which informed the creation of Aleister Crowley's *Rites of Eleusis*: the relationship between man and God, the relationship between society and God, and man's use of art as a means of communicating about and to God. In doing so, brief overviews are presented illustrating these relationships through time, concluding with the late nineteenth century, the period in which Crowley was coming into his own as an artist and philosopher.

The Beginnings of Myth

There are certain behaviors of humanity which transcend geography, linguistics, chronology, and race. One of these, as the quote above from Orson Welles suggests, is the urge to tell stories. The focus of this dissertation is not to discuss the interpretations and uses of terms such as "narrative," "story," or "discourse."¹⁶ For the purpose of this dissertation I posit that a narrative is created when events are identified as being significant and are placed in a sequence that allows our brains to make meaning out of those events. The human brain is in a constant, conscious and subconscious, search for meaning and understanding. This is a survival instinct. We search for meaning in the context of the events of our own lives, we search for meaning in the context of global events, and we even search for meaning in the context of galactic motion, action and reaction. No event is too great or too small but that human beings will look within it for some connection to a greater narrative, and a larger meaning created by the same humans observing those events. Our minds constantly seek to identify patterns by which we may recognize and communicate our location and condition to ourselves and to others.

¹⁶ See Phelan and Rabinowitz (1994), and Chatman (1993) for a more detailed analysis of the varieties of available terminology and their applications.

Anyone who begins a discourse by stating “This is how it was” is inviting conflict. History, even history as recent as yesterday’s news, is a combination of interpretation and conjecture, or, as Will Durant writes in *Our Oriental Heritage* “most history is guessing, and the rest is prejudice” (Durant, 1954:12). Many times we may be comfortable in stating “This is what happened,” only to be proven wrong later when new evidence surfaces. While historians attempt to reconstruct the past, both they and their audience must be prepared to stay aware that those reconstructions are temporary and will be revised, expanded, or possibly rejected entirely. To be an historian one must assume the mantles of scholar, detective, playwright, and mind reader in order to compose a clear explanation of how and why events unfolded, and what implications lie within. It is an especially challenging role when one considers a time before written records, where all the evidence consists of a few images on a stone wall and tenuous analogies made in relation to contemporary primitive cultures. Historians examine events in order to discover patterns and /or meanings reflective of a broader context, and it is not uncommon for more than one interpretation to arise from a single event.

The origin of the idea of the myth and of mythmaking has been examined by numerous scholars such as Walter Burkert, G. S. Kirk, Joseph Campbell, even Northrope Frye. Richard Caldwell (1989) offers the theory that myths serve a variety of needs ranging from the therapeutic, such as anxiety reduction experienced in the cathartic reaction associated with the ancient Greek tragedies, to the anthropological (“why are these people the way they are and why do they do what they do?”). Lauri Honko (Dundes, 1984: 41-52) suggests that no one answer provides the explanation for the creation of myths, but that their functions may include (1) myth as source of cognitive

categories; (2) myth as form of symbolic expression; (3) myth as projection of the sub-conscious; (4) myth as world view; (5) myth as charter of behavior; (6) myth as legitimation of social institutions; (7) myth as marker of social relevance; (8) myth as mirror of culture and social structure; (9) myth as the result of an historical situation; (10) myth as religious communication; (11) myth as religious genre; (12) myth as medium for structure.

Clearly, in its broadest function, myth serves as a model reflective of human mental and physical experience. It is an attempt to explain ourselves to ourselves. Often the work of Theatre addresses the same task, so it should not be surprising when these two forms of communication join forces toward a common goal.

There are many theories which attempt to explain the origins of theater but, lacking any clear evidence, all of them are conjectural. That Greece is often the focus of these theories is not surprising, since Greece is the location of the earliest extant examples of a coherent system of fictive dramatic performance. Yet recorded events in an established location still lead to numerous interpretations.

The *Dithyrambic theory* is presented by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. It is generally accepted that the *Poetics* was written c.330 BCE, almost a century after the zenith of Greek theatre. The *Poetics* describes how the drama was improvisational in origin, tragedy and comedy developing respectively from dithyrambic and phallic performances. Plato believed the original meaning of the term “dithyramb” was a celebratory song honoring the birth of Dionysus (Stuart, 2). The connection of the term “goat song” and “tragedy” has long been debated. Walter Burkert, in his collection of essays titled *Savage Energies*, accounts for some of the characteristic elements of tragedy such as violent

bloodshed, guilt, concealed identity, and song (Burkert, 2001: 7-9). In the rural festivals celebrating the god Dionysus, male goats that had passed their prime were sacrificed. Because of the instinctual human respect for life, the sacrifice is viewed as a deed both necessary and awful; therefore those performing the sacrifice wear masks to conceal identity. Burkert suggests that this tradition was carried down into later times as evidenced by the masks worn by public executioners. The sacrificers also gave voice to their guilt in a song of lamentation for the goat. These performances could have developed into a contest among the competitive Greeks. As is evident in the stories of Abraham and Isaac, and of Iphigeneia, myths suggest that animals occasionally replace human beings as the object of sacrifice. At the last minute, God accepts a ram as a substitute for Isaac, and Artemis substitutes a deer for Iphigeneia. The song of lamentation for a sacrificial goat might have been transformed into a song for a dead hero, whose exploits were well known from heroic myth. Human sacrifice is not an uncommon theme in extant tragedy and even murders are often described in the metaphorical language of sacrifice. When Aristotle discusses the origins of tragedy in his *Poetics*, he does not try to explain the connection of tragedy with goats, but merely suggests that tragedy arose from an improvisation involving those who led the dithyramb, or the leaders of the dithyrambic chorus. Aristotle may be referring to improvised exchanges between chorus leader and chorus, which developed into dialogue between an actor and a chorus.

Aristotle states that the impulse to imitate, *mimesis*, is inherent in humans (Aristotle, 20), and that theatre probably originated from improvised dithyrambs, hymns sung or chanted in honor of Dionysus, god of wine and fertility. Similar to Aristotle's

theory is the concept of the *Epic Rhapsode* supported by H. D. F. Kiddo and Gerald Else among others.¹⁷ This theory proposes that the original subjects of theatrical presentation were the same as those of the epic poems of ancient Greece, but that these poems were enacted or presented rather than merely recited. This theory downplays any involvement of ecstatic energy, and does not attempt to explain any connection between early performative events and the dithyramb or Dionysus.

The *Hero-Tomb* theory, first presented by William Ridgeway, states that the origin lies in the performance of rituals designed to honor dead heroes.¹⁸ The heroes might be great men or women of history, real or imaginary ancestors, or ancient gods or goddesses who have been demoted to human status. The activities in honor of the dead ranged from re-enactments of their most famous or important exploits to games held in their honor. Ridgeway identifies this type of activity as being performed throughout history in several locations around the world, including Sweden. He links his theory to the activities associated with ancient Roman *ludi funebres*, the funeral games held for important Romans, and also with modern traditions such as the firing of weapons over the grave of a dead soldier.

In his *Golden Bough* James G. Frazer suggests the theory that the source of theatre lies in the observance and celebration of gods representative of the changing seasons. Ridgeway counters this with his interpretation that “behind Frazer’s vegetation gods there was in each instance a real human being” (Vince, 10). Ridgeway spends several pages in *The Dramas and Dramatic Dances of Non-European Races* (1915:11-

¹⁷ See Kitto, 1951.

¹⁸ See *Origin of Tragedy* (1910).

19) attacking Frazer's research and conclusions. According to Ridgeway, Homer presents his heroes as noble men and worthy of admiration. Many, such as Hector and Achilles, later became objects of worship. Hero cults were distinctly different from mere attendance to the dead, the latter intending only to assure comfort in the afterlife. While the worship centered in general at the supposed place of the hero's tomb, the cult of some heroes, notably Hercules, was widespread.¹⁹ In hero worship, as in the ancient worship of most powers, rituals were performed, animals were most likely sacrificed, and offerings were left beside the hero's tomb.

Other theories propose that the origins of theatre lie in *storytelling*, as Orson Welles suggests, and a sixth theory grew out of the Cambridge anthropologists of the early twentieth century, known as *Myth-Ritual*. This interpretation claims the origin may be found in the movements and dances of the performer/shaman who would imitate the behavior of hunted animals and the hunters tracking them. Eventually this would incorporate costumes and properties such as animal skins and weapons and would, ultimately, lead to or be combined with the development of a narrative with a beginning, middle and end. This theory, supported by modern scholars such as Joseph Campbell and Richard Schechner, suggests that fictive reenactment is a development of ritual reenactment. It holds that from primitive religious rituals, primarily associated with seasonal cycles, came the development we identify as western classical drama. It does not necessarily claim that theatre evolved directly from the early ritual, nor does it require that all theatrical practice find this as a common source, but that ritual was a contributing,

¹⁹ See L. R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (1921).

influential factor in dramatic development. Dionysian worship is seen as having been truly ecstatic, resulting in emotional possession which imitated events in the life of the god. This is the theory that is the most widely accepted today, although it has not gone unchallenged.

Some scholars are not comfortable with the cultural Darwinism this theory suggests. Shortly after the Cambridge anthropologists (the most famous and widely published, aside from Frazer, being Gilbert Murray) began presenting their ideas they were challenged by the Functionalists. This group argues that it is impossible to accept the sweeping generalizations the Cambridge school makes regarding cultural development, and that it is logical and natural that cultures will develop differently from one another.

After World War II Claude Levi-Strauss, a French anthropologist, reinterpreted the role of myth in the relationships of cultures. Levi-Strauss felt that the main determinant of human behavior was structure. He focused on language and myth as the principal vehicles of collective consciousness forming the basis of stable social structures. Levi-Strauss was interested in why myths from cultures all over the world seem so similar, and how myths may be both historically specific yet universally applicable. For example, myths are almost always set in some time in the distant past, making them historical (Levi-Strauss' *parole*), yet, at the same time, the story of the myth is timeless, making it ahistorical (Levi-Strauss' *langue*). Levi-Strauss and the structuralists addressed two opposite methods of viewing the world: scientifically and mythically/magically. In primitive societies these methodologies are integrated naturally and with no sense of contradiction, whereas in our modern society they are not merely

separated, but employed as a basis for an evaluation of legitimacy of thought. Science and the scientific method are understood to be the standard by which legitimacy is achieved. The myth/magic paradigm of viewing the world is criticized as haphazard, generalized, and not as consistently valid, and therefore not as consistently valuable.

The urge to mythologize is another example of those universal practices or behaviors of humankind. The creation of mythological narratives is found around the world and across time. Various examples of cross-cultural mythic concepts (e.g. the Land of the Dead, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrected Hero²⁰) have been examined at length by Joseph Campbell *et al.* The combination of these behaviors, the creation of mythological narratives in order to explain and/or understand the structure or “rules” of reality, often resulted in religious beliefs and practices which have been part of the psychology of mankind for as long as mankind has possessed self-awareness. While the urge toward mythologizing is an attempt to intellectually understand the universe, some religious practices have attempted to combine that intellectual understanding with an emotional experience in an effort to make spiritual existence a reality within human consciousness. Evidence of both of these urges predates written history. Religions which value the ecstatic experience have recognized the importance of what may be called personality sublimation in order to open one’s psyche to that experience. This entails the conscious decision to relinquish control over one’s actions. Numerous examples of fictive reenactments of this type of experience are available: Ken Russell’s *Altered States* (1980), John Boorman’s *The Emerald Forest* (1985), and Wes Craven’s *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1988) come immediately to mind when considering

²⁰ See especially Campbell’s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1980) and *The Power of Myth* (1988).

cinematic representations of the power of religious ecstasy. Documentary films which have recorded this type of activity, including but not restricted to such events as voodoo ceremonies, religious snake handling, and whirling dervishes, appear regularly on television, including cable channels such as the Discovery Channel, the History Channel, The Learning Channel, and Arts and Entertainment.

One need only think of any of the classic images of prehistoric shamanic activity recorded in cave paintings to understand that this act of sympathetic connection between hunter and hunted played an important role in the lives of prehistoric societies. Consider the case of *Le Sorcier*, *The Sorcerer* (Figure 6).



Figure 6: *Le Sorcier*

Eight days before the outbreak of World War One, a French Count, Begouen and his three sons discovered a cave system in the Pyrenees, and the count named the caves after the three brothers: *Les Trois Freres*. The painting which came to be called *The Sorcerer* is found in a room called the Sanctuary. This is one of a series of rooms which form an enormous complex within the subterranean system. Over thirty bison, ten horses, four ibexes, one reindeer, and, at the center of the tableau, a strange man/bison/god/shaman, apparently dancing, are engraved on just one of the walls of the Sanctuary. Only *The Sorcerer* was not engraved into the wall but, rather, was drawn in black paint. The image is thirty inches high, fifteen inches wide, and its location appears inaccessible. However, a hidden corner of the Sanctuary leads to sunken corridor and long narrow passage, which emerges again into the far end of the same cave where there is an opening thirteen feet above the floor, and beyond which faces *The Sorcerer*. A man could comfortably lodge himself here in a good position to have drawn upon the wall, in an apparently inaccessible place fifteen feet above the floor. A fold of rock conceals this window from the rest of the cave. A shaman sitting there with a torch could cast light from an invisible source upon the image of *The Sorcerer* and, when he spoke, the words would seem to come from the image of the god himself. Of all the images on the walls of the Sanctuary, only the face of the Sorcerer looks directly at the observer. It has been estimated that the Sanctuary was decorated in about 14,000 BCE, during the Mid-Magdalenian period of the Paleolithic, or old stone age. At that time the world was in an ice age that did not end until 8,000 BCE (<http://www.lugodoc.demon.co.uk/sctb.htm>).

As Evelyn Underhill writes in *Mysticism*, "Consciousness is always running out to the encounter of the absolute and being forced to return"(Underhill 3). The desire that

keeps man running out to that encounter is what J. H. Leuba terms the “will to union” (Williams, 2). This “will to union” is the motivational force that is the essence of the qabalah, of Spiritualism, of all truly religious paths. It is the drive to correct the separation from God, or the Absolute, or whatever else it might be termed, and reunite, or “come home.”

Having created a theory of the nature of these powers or forces which affect daily life, a natural development is to attempt to influence that force, thereby regaining some measure of control over the events of one’s own life. It is noted by psychologists such as Abraham Maslow that the perception of loss of control over ones life contributes to the development of clinical depression.²¹ Feeling as though one has no ability to influence or guide one’s life, as though all events are purely random and that there is nothing that can be done to insure achievement or success, can lead to an attitude of hopelessness. The development of the idea of religion and gods was an initial attempt at understanding and adapting to reality. An analogy might be made between early *homo sapiens* learning through observation and reinforcement, and a small child leaning in the same way. It seems plausible that through the creation of activities meant to appease the gods came the development of religious ritual and, simultaneously, the development of primal performance. It may also be posited that, over time, those activities diverged into separate disciplines and practices, the one path leading to the development of spiritual ritual, and the other culminating in a performative art form. During the twentieth century we have seen the reintegration of these two paths.

²¹ See Maslow, 1968 and 1970.

Mythic Performance

The development of the performed myth was a logical outgrowth of the narrated or verbalized myth. It is one thing to be told a story, quite another to see that story with one's own eyes, heightening the ability to engage more fully in the meaning of the narrative. The development of the portrayed religious myth, the tradition of which, as will be shown shortly, extends back to the beginning of recorded history, was repeated with the rise of the liturgical drama of the middle ages. From its resurgence in the tenth century CE with the inclusion of the *quem quaeritas*, the enacting of religious stories and parables became a primary tool of religious education as well as the rebirth of socially acceptable theatrical performance.

The performance of religious ritual, that is, actions which are carried out for the purpose of influencing or connecting with another plane of existence, may be subdivided into several different forms: devotional ritual, ceremonial ritual, and dramatic ritual.

Devotional Ritual: Simple devotions generally do not require special dress or equipment, since it is desirable to be able to perform them frequently under varying circumstances. The primary purpose of devotional ritual is to fill the devotee's awareness with the lasting or recurring presence of the object of his devotion, i.e. the god, goddess, angel, energy, or entity which is the object of devotion. It is to immerse oneself in the essence of that object to the extent that the ritualist feels connected with the deity. The three principal components of that awareness usually incorporated are the verbal/auditory, the corporeal/kinesthetic, and the visual.

The verbal/auditory includes the selection of text, with attention to the style of the language, the appropriateness of the subject matter, and the effectiveness of its sound.

Music, either a capella or instrumental, may also be included. The text may be no more than a simple mantra such as the repetition of “Om,” or the repetition of a preplanned prayer, poem, or other appropriate words.

The corporal/kinesthetic elements are signs or gestures associated with each of the sequential segments of the text. In Crowley’s system of magic, specific movements or body positions are used during various rituals.



Figure 7, Osiris Slain



Figure 8, Isis Weeping



Figure 9, Typhon and Apophis



Figure 10, Osiris Risen

These postures are the final four of ten ritual positions, and are also known as the LVX., or Lux signs. Under certain conditions the letters LVX. may represent the Latin word *Lux* or, as it is written in Latin, *lvx*.²² These letters also form a notarikon for the phrase “Light in Extension.” Deities of resurrection or redemption are invariably associated with the sun, which is not only the source of generative energy and heat, but also the principal source of light for the planet. Thus salvation is understood to be a case of “seeing the light,” or, as in the Entered Apprentice degree of Masonry, of being “brought to the light.” The first initiation ritual of the Golden Dawn charges the initiate to “quit the night and seek the day.” These physical positions illustrate a sequence of birth, death, and regeneration by representing, with the sequence Osiris Slain, Isis Weeping, Typhon Destroying, and Osiris Risen.

Ceremonial rituals are more elaborate, usually involve more than one person, and will frequently rely on the use of properties positioned in specific locations at exact times, and costumes. Ceremonial rituals will differ from devotional rituals in several ways. Most importantly, they are not necessarily religious in nature. Ceremonial rituals may include the swearing in of a political official, the crowning of a royal figure, weddings, funerals, graduations, even the daily opening bell of the New York Stock Exchange may be considered a ceremonial ritual. Religious ceremonial rituals include the Catholic Mass, the Bris, and communion. Ceremonial rituals may involve an

²² Kraig points out another gematrical association concerning the word LVX: using Roman numerals L=50, V=5 and X=10 for a sum of 65. In the Hebrew alphabet Aleph = 1, Dalet = 4, Nun = 50 and Yod = 10.

These letters spell Adonai (אדני), one of the names of God. Thus a connection or relationship is assumed between the concepts of light and divinity (Kraig, 146).

experience of ecstasy, but that is not usually the intended outcome, since the success of the ceremony depends on a series of accurately executed actions.

Dramatic ritual serves a dual purpose. It might even be said they serve several dual purposes, meaning that there are several different events happening simultaneously which are themselves operating simultaneously on two levels. Although ostensibly presented with the audience in mind, serving the purpose of providing a means for that audience to connect with the spiritual event the ritual is undertaking, it must also maintain a rhythm and power created by and directly affecting the primary performer(s) as well. Although the performer becomes a representative of the audience, inciting and sharing in the spiritual experience, the audience is, at the same time experiencing the event for themselves, as do the performers. The performers, then, experience this duality of creating a sacred event for themselves, and also facilitating the experience of a sacred event for others. The audience is simultaneously sharing a sacred event created by others, and also creating within themselves a personalized (as all truly sacred events must be) experience.

An actor may occasionally be called upon to repress his or her own identity and assume an iconic or representational identity within a narrative. That identity will have to be recognizable to the audience so that the audience may benefit from the experience. The experience the audience has during the performance is not necessarily one of recognition in the sense of understanding a situation, attitude, or character type expressed onstage. The identification may be, rather, that of an emotion external to the plot. By this is meant that what is being experienced by the audience is an effect that is real yet unidentifiable, ineffable, beyond something that may be experienced or expressed

through language.²³ It is an experience that goes beyond the cognitive ability to explain or express. It is a transcendent experience.

An attempt to trace the genesis and development of theatrical performance often will find that the origin of performance has roots in common with that of religion and mythology. The similarity exists not only in the methodology, theory and practice, but also in the subject matter. Large themes such as birth, death, justice, and rites of passage are observable in numerous myths from around the world, and are also identifiable in many early socio-religious rituals. When examining the various cultic rituals, which are still extant from around the world, certain similarities within their structure and intent become apparent. Gaster claims that the pattern of seasonal dramas incorporates four major elements in this specific sequence: *mortification, purgation, invigoration, and jubilation* (Gaster 26). Mortification reflects a stasis of existence of any group such as a city-state or nation. This mortification represents the death of vegetation, the infertility of the earth, and the time between death and rebirth. Purgation is the initial desire of a group or society to consciously eject any negative energy or activity which might impair future growth and prosperity. During the Invigoration stage the group engages in a course of action the direct result of which will be the reinvigoration of the society through birth, growth or other form of change. Finally, in the Jubilation stage, relief at the assurance of continuance is expressed through ritual celebration. Although Gaster uses this sequence to illustrate a form of cross-cultural seasonal dramas, it is also reminiscent of the dramatic structure of several Greek plays, most notably Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. At the opening of this play Thebes is suffering under a curse. The

²³ "Ineffable" in its truest sense, as in "the ineffable name of Jehovah."

city-state is in a condition of paralysis and mortification. Purgation occurs when Oedipus vows to right the wrong for which Thebes is suffering, no matter what the cost.

Invigoration follows at the point where Oedipus seeks out the testimony of the Shepherd and the Messenger, and Jubilation is experienced when Oedipus transfers his authority to Creon and leaves Thebes. When Gerald Ford assumed the Presidency after the resignation of Richard Nixon the American public was repeatedly assured by leading members of Congress and the media that the American system of government had worked, and that this peaceful transference of power following such a catastrophic event was a prime example of the success of this system. The transfer of authority from Oedipus to Creon assures the Thebans, and the viewing audience, that the city will endure, thus giving cause for jubilation.

Jane Ellen Harrison argues in *Epilegomena* (1921) that the most important religious rite of ancient cultures was that of initiation. She notes that the Greek word for “initiation,” **τελετη**, means “completion, accomplishment, fulfillment” (Harrison, xxxii). She suggests that when one became an initiate into adulthood, or into sacred religious mysteries such as those of Eleusis, the ceremony which marked this transformation signaled the end of innocence, or the end of the beginning, as much as it did the beginning of a new phase of existence. But although Harrison uses the words “completion, accomplishment, fulfillment,” making it sound as though the primary function of initiation is the conclusion of a process or condition, it must be remembered that initiation is a form of birth, if not rebirth. To initiate is to begin. The initiation she writes of was not the culmination of a process, but rather the point at which one’s focus shifted or expanded. These rites of initiation functioned as a metaphor for the cycle of

Death and Rebirth, recognized in the yearly cycle of crop sowing and harvesting, in the yearly death and rebirth of the sun, and in the cyclical life of farm animals that were born, bred, and slaughtered. Countless variations on the theme of the Young King slaying and replacing the Old King are found through the mythologies, religions, and literature of the world. One need only think of the symbolic yearly battle between the Oak King and the Holly King, each making way for the other's rule, or of Jehovah of the Old Testament being superseded by Christ (who was himself to experience a Death and Resurrection), or the struggles between Claudius and Hamlet, Laius and Oedipus, Duncan and Macbeth, even the Victor Frankenstein and the Creature. The King is dead, long live the King.

The death and resurrection interpretation of these rites is not limited to a reference to the physical conditions of life and death. Richard Caldwell notes the Freudian implications inherent in the association between castration/impotence and death which "underlies the common double-entendre . . . *l'amour* and *la mort* (Caldwell, 151)." It may also be seen as a personal metaphor for the death or dissolution of the old self and the rebirth or growth of individual spirituality, the death of the base, physical, animal instinctual level of human consciousness and the birth or release of the higher, more spiritual aspects. This idea has been incarnated in a number of mythologies, among them the quest for the Holy Grail, which serves as one of several metaphors for the search for the God within each individual. Parsifal is a Christ-like figure, presenting himself as a person which the audience may both admire and, subconsciously, with which they may identify.²⁴

²⁴ Jung has suggested that Christ also serves as an archetypal figure representing Consciousness, as opposed to Mercurius/Hermes who represents the unconscious (Jung, 1983: 247).

The West is by no means unique in its history of incorporating performance into religious observance. Egypt provides us with a number of examples of combined secular/temporal performance texts. It also gives us, by looking for patterns within these texts, a model by which we may identify commonalities of construction in rituals found in other parts of the world at that time. *The Egyptian Coronation Drama* was first discovered in 1896 at Thebes. The papyrus has been dated to c. 1970 BCE, but the rite itself may go back to 3300 BCE.²⁵ *The Memphite Creation Drama* is recorded on the so-called "Shabako Stone" and is currently preserved in the British Museum. The stone is a copy of an earlier carving estimated to originate from c. 2500 BCE, and presents a script with a prologue and epilogue. Line six introduces the deities created by Atum who is begat by Ptah. Lines 7 - 35b are the mystery-drama proper portraying the division of the rule of Egypt between Horus and Seth which is narrated and enacted. Lines 48 - 52 reveal the new heading for Egypt and Ptah's epiphanies, including a reaffirmation that all deities are manifestations in Ptah, to whom Ptah gave birth. Although stilted, the assigning of dialogue is quite recognizable.²⁶

(10a) Geb's words to Seth : "Go to the place in which you were born."

(10b) Seth : Upper Egypt.

(11a) Geb's words to Heru : "Go to the place in which your father was drowned."

(11b) Heru : Lower Egypt.

(12a) Geb's words to Heru and Seth : "I have separated you."

(12b) Lower and Upper Egypt.

(10c, 11c, 12c) Then it seemed wrong to Geb that the portion of Heru was like the portion of Seth. So Geb gave Heru his inheritance, for he is the son of his firstborn son.

²⁵ The earlier date is identified by the original translator, Kurt Sethe, based on an intertextual reference to a type of priest commonly found in the First Dynasty (see Gaster, 80).

²⁶ Parenthetical notations refer to the specific lines on the stele.

- 13a) Geb's words to the Nine Neteru : "I have appointed
 (13b) Heru, the firstborn."
 (14a) Geb's words to the Nine Neteru : "Him alone,
 (14b) Heru, the inheritance."
 (15a) Geb's words to the Nine Neteru : "To his heir,
 (15b) Heru, my inheritance."
 (16a) Geb's words to the Nine Neteru : "To the son of my son,
 (16b) Heru, the Jackal of Upper Egypt ---
 (17a) Geb's words to the Nine Neteru : "The firstborn,
 (17b) Heru, the Opener-of-the-ways."
 (18a) Geb's words to the Nine Neteru : "The son who was born ---
 (18b) Heru, on the Birthday of the Opener-of-the-ways.

By c. 2000 BCE records began to be kept concerning the involvement of the muu dancers who were instrumental in the performance of funerary rites during the Middle and New Kingdoms.²⁷ From examining the walls of Middle and New Kingdom tombs it has been determined that there were three kinds of muu dancers. The first of these went ahead and intercepted the funeral procession on the west bank, using hand gestures to provide the necessary permission to enter the necropolis. The second type were guards or watchmen stationed in a special muu "Halle." From here they guarded the necropolis. The third type of muu were associated with the "people of Pe." They are shown in New Kingdom tombs dancing as a pair facing each other. References to the muu are found scattered throughout Egyptian archaeology.

Think of the day of burial,
 the passing into reveredness.
 A night is made for you with
 ointments and wrappings
 from the hand of Tait.
 A funeral procession is made
 for you on the day of burial;
 the mummy case is of gold,
 its head of lapis lazuli.
 The sky is above you

²⁷ See Emma Brunner-Traut: *Der Tanz im Alten Ägypten* (1938), and Hermann Junker, *Der Tanz Der Mww Und Das Butisch Begräbnis Im Alten Reich* (1940).

as your lie in the hearse,
oxen drawing you,
musicians going before you.
The dance of the muu-dancers
is done at the door of your tomb.

This is a description of the ideal funeral as envisioned by King Senwosret I. It was part of an inducement to the wandering Sinuhe to return home to Egypt before he died (Lichtheim 229).

Between 1887 and 1849 BCE King Usertsen III built a shrine to Osiris at Abydos. I-kher-nefert was sent by Usertsen to organize a dedicatory performance for the shrine that would recount the death and resurrection of Osiris (Macgowan and Melnitz, 18). The surviving record of this performance came to be known as the *Abydos Passion Play*. *The Triumph of Horus*, dated to c. 1300 BCE, reenacts the victory of the god Horus over the god Set, or Seth, and the coronation of Horus as ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt. These bits of evidence of performance within the context of religious observance are recorded in tomb carvings, paintings, and stele throughout Egypt. They are indicative of a culture that found ritual and religion indispensable to their lives, and that found it necessary to enact demonstrations of their beliefs.

In India the god Shiva, Lord of the Dance, is believed to have created the universe with his Ananda Tandavam, the Dance of Joy, performed in tandem with his feminine counterpart Shakti. Worshippers of Shiva and Shakti still perform ritualistic dances honoring the two, and these cults having existed for hundreds of years. Dance has been a part of the art of dramatic theatre in ancient India, particularly in non-Aryan, primarily Dravidian societies for thousands of years. The oldest evidence of this activity to date is the bronze figure of a dancer from the Indus Valley Civilization excavation sites at

Mohenjo Daro and Harappa. The figure is bronze, dated c. 2500 BCE, and shows the dancer with one hand on her hip, her body in a curve with the weight resting on one leg, her hip out-thrust. The oldest treatise on Indian dance and drama is dated from approximately the second century BCE. The Sanskrit text, called *Natya Shastra*, is said to have been composed by the ancient sage Bharat Muni. Its 36 chapters address in minute detail aspects of music, dance, stage setting, poetry, costumes and make-up. Legend has it that Brahma, the creator of universe, composed a fifth Veda out of the existing four in order to entertain the gods, demons and humans. He then taught it to Bharat Muni, who wrote the treatise on it. The sage is also believed to have staged the first play, enacted by his 100 sons and celestial maidens. Titled *Amrita Manthana*, the play depicted the mythological churning of the Milk Ocean and was enacted in the amphitheater of the Himalayas. Shiva was so pleased with the performance that he sent his disciple, Tandu, to teach the finer aspects of dance to Bharat Muni. *Bharata Natyam* was the dance technique evolved in the South of India in Tamil Nadu and practiced in the temples Shiva. It is a highly specialized science with a traditional background and rigid codes and conventions. Bharata Natyam embodies the three primary ingredients of dancing. These are *bhava* or mood, *raga* or music and melody, and *tala* or timing. The technique of *Bharata Natyam* consists of 64 principles of coordinated hand, foot, face and body movements which are performed to the accompaniment of dance syllables. For many centuries *Bharata Natyam* has been performed only by certain families in the district of Tanjore, these practitioners of the art being known as 'Nattuvans'. The chief exponents of this dance were the Devadasis or temple dancers. They would perform the dance daily at the time of worship or on festive occasions. It came to be patronized by

the Rajas and princes. In course of time Devadasis started dancing in the royal courts, thereby abrogating its religious sanctity. *Bharata Natyam* stands in the forefront of all the classical dance arts now prevalent in India, owing to its religious origin and its highly developed technique. It is the form of dance most akin to the code of performance compiled by Bharata Muni in his *Natya Shastra*.

Mesopotamia was the source of the *Hymn to Ishtar*, written c. 1600 BCE, a work which revealed the close relationship of the goddess to both the fertility and secular aspects of that society. *The Hymn to Ishtar* was preceded by *The Exaltation of Inanna* by several centuries, and demonstrates a combination of attributes of the goddess Ishtar with that of Inanna. Even before this was Nanna, the Moon God (later known as Sin by the Babylonians and Assyrians), who held strong connections with time, fertility and kingship. Nanna was also known as the Prince of the Gods, and was next in rank after Enlil, the chief god of Mesopotamia. As the patron of time, Nanna's direct connection with and control over the coming and passing of days, nights, seasons and the year, is cited in the following hymn:

Nanna, great Lord, light shining in the clear skies,
Wearing on his head a prince's headdress,
Right god bringing forth day and night,
Establishing the month, bringing the year to completion (Jacobsen, 1973:122).

The Akitu Festival of the First Month, as noted in a series of tablets dated from the reign of Ibbi-Sin of Ur, lasted a minimum of five days. The high point of the festival was Nanna's entry by barge into Ur from the á-ki-ti House in Gaesh. This occurred probably on the third day, when a special offering to the Boat of Heaven, Nanna's transport to Ur, was made. There were no offerings on the third and fourth days, indicating Nanna's absence from the complex. On the fourth day the Great Offering was conducted at the

dug-ür sanctuary and the Ekishnugal, indicating Nanna's presence in Ur proper (Cohen, 1993:409-410).

Sufism is a mystical current within Islam that began during the ninth and tenth centuries and reached its height during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Members of Sufi orders are commonly called dervishes, from the Persian *darwish*, one who gives up worldly concerns to dedicate himself to the service of God and community. The well-known Whirling Dervishes or Mevlevi order of Dervishes in Turkey incorporate elaborate choreographies called *sema* which are accompanied by sung poetry from the founder of the order, Jalal al-Din Rumi, or Mevlana, that is set to compositions styled in the tradition of Ottoman secular art music. Raising their arms, holding their right palm upward toward heaven and their left palm downward toward earth, they gradually begin whirling in a counterclockwise direction.

Only rarely do most of us encounter dance as a private act of surrender to the divine. And so the Islamic ceremony of *sema*... demands a shift in aesthetic sensibility. The seemingly endless rotations of its dancers are intended not for us but for Allah. Twirling 20 to 30 times a minute, with the right hand turned heavenward to receive God's grace and the left turned down to convey that grace to Earth, the nine dervishes, their eyes half-closed, seemed oblivious... after a time their movements also seemed to melt into one another. The mild tedium of watching the dervishes gradually turned into meditation. Their dance became a prayer, and we were all part of it. (David O'Reilly, Philadelphia Inquirer, Wednesday, February 5, 1997)

It is interesting to note that many of the goddesses which were connected with performative public ritual, such as Isis, Astarte, Diana, Hecate, Demeter, Kali and Inanna, had in common the three basic identities of a Mood Goddess archetype: the young girl on the verge of sexual awakening, the mature woman who represents the bounty of nature and the earth, and the elderly woman who faces death as her powers decline. These three

aspects are known collectively as the Triple Goddess, also known as the Maiden, Mother and Crone, a pagan counterpoint to the Christian Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The Idea of Symbolism

The incorporation of performance in religious ritual continued with the spread of Christianity during the first millennium CE. Worship of the Christian god was an illegal activity under Roman jurisdiction until the Emperor Gallienus passed a law in 261 CE which removed the threat of persecution. Gallienus was not so much supporting the Christians as he was disinterested in all forms of religious practice. The Christians therefore benefited from his apathy. As a result, public Christian churches were constructed and regularly scheduled public services were held. This relaxation of religious restriction did not last, and for the next fifty years the Christians found themselves forced to return to clandestine practices of worship.

Constantine became the emperor of Rome in 306 CE, and his conversion to Christianity had far reaching effects on the common practice of the religion. His conversion happened during a war against his brother-in-law and co-emperor, Maxentius. Before the crucial battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 CE, Constantine prayed for divine assistance. God sent him a vision of a cross of light at midday, bearing the inscription *in hoc signo vinces* (in this sign you will be victorious). That night he had a dream that reaffirmed his earlier vision. God told him to use the sign he had been given as a safeguard in all of his battles. Constantine converted to Christianity and ordered the symbol to be painted on his army's shields. Constantine was victorious in the battle of

the Milvian Bridge, and he continued to wear the cross against every hostile power he faced.

Once the Empire officially recognized Christianity, the growth and influence of the movement increased rapidly. Following the footprint of the empire under which it began, Christianity spread through Europe and into the British Isles within several centuries. Clovis, king of the Franks, converted in 496 CE; the Visigoths converted in 587 CE and, by 604 CE, St Augustine had established a firm presence in England. St. Patrick had already converted most of Ireland by the time of his death in 461 CE. The cities and towns being presented with the news of Christianity were usually open to the suggestion of a conversion. The rural areas, on the other hand, were often more hostile to the idea of changing religious practice. This may have been due to the close relationship between religion and agriculture, which had been recognized and followed for centuries. In order to make the transition easier for the rural people, the Christian church would occasionally adopt the older, pagan practices or locations.²⁸ Thus, Christian churches were constructed at or near locations which had traditionally been visited as religious sites such as a holy hill or a sacred tree or spring. Pagan deities and their mythologies were occasionally incorporated into the Christian theology, making the transfer of religious practice as subtle as possible. Neo-pagans note the transformations of the Irish goddess Brighid into St. Brigit, Wotan into St. Michael, and the Aztec earth-mother goddess Tonantzin into the Virgin of Guadalupe.

In the nineteenth century in Europe an artistic form arose which echoed the practices of pagan religious sects in its attempt to create a “paraconscious” rather than

²⁸ The word “pagan” comes from the Latin *paganus* (*pl. pagani*) meaning one who lives in the country, a peasant.

conscious reaction in its audience. It was the reawakening of the sense that the nature of the human being was more than the conscious, rational mind. This new movement, of prehistoric origin, was a reaction to and rebellion against the primacy of egocentric humanist thinking which had held sway since the Renaissance. It was an instinctual attempt to transcend the foundational precepts of humanism, that is, that Man is the fulcrum of the universe, with an as-yet undefined concept of a greater reality than had heretofore been imagined, a reality which was at the same time literally universal and yet intensely personal. It was an artistic form which addressed issues so complex that language alone was insufficient to the task of expressing them. As a result, these artists created a form with which they hoped to stimulate not merely the conscious areas of the brain but also areas which might unconsciously create meaning for the audience. This was not the linguistic imagery of Shakespeare, but an imagery which transcended language and conscious thought. It was a language of Symbolism.

The essence of the Symbolist movement in the nineteenth century was the desire to communicate with a part of the human mind that is beyond the consciousness. As Antoine de Saint-Exupery wrote in *The Little Prince*, "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." The early symbolists were presupposing a psychological construct which would not be proposed by Freud or Jung until decades later, that the human mind was comprised of more levels than mere consciousness, and that these other levels were equally valid avenues for communication and the creation of meaning out of perception.

Symbolists sought to clothe the idea in perceptible form. This was a recognition that it was not always possible to verbalize or illustrate an idea itself. In such cases it

becomes necessary to express the idea through the influence it would have on its surroundings. An analogy might be made by using an invisible man as an example. While the man himself is not visible, he may yet be perceived by his wearing of clothes. Although his arm may not be visible, its action and position may be observed via the movement of the sleeve. And yet while that clothing may be “perceptible,” the ability to see the sleeve does not always equate with an ability to perceive the arm beneath. Seeing the sleeve gives little indication as to the race, age, or gender of the invisible being. As a result, both the medium and the message faced a constant risk of misinterpretation and rejection. Part of the fault for misinterpretation must be laid at the feet of the symbolists themselves. In striving to expand the language of poetry, art and music, the Symbolists often trapped themselves in ambiguity to the extent that their point was lost on their audience. Symbolist artists felt, as Artaud would echo decades later, that the ideas which they were addressing were too complex to be communicated through mere language. Messages and concepts of the heart and spirit needed more subtle means of communication. This was attempted through abstraction, metaphor, and suggestion.

At the heart of the Symbolist message lies a message of spirituality. It is an attempt to use art as a means to transcend the societal fragmentation which had taken hold since the development of the industrial revolution, and to counter the growth of that materialistic philosophy which, in turn, had counterbalanced the rise of Romanticism at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Symbolist Poetry

The origins of the symbolist movement are as difficult to pin down as the origins of almost any other movement. While it is often identified as spanning the years 1885 to

1895,²⁹ it is just as often claimed that the father of the symbolist movement, at least as far as literature is concerned, and at least in France, was poet and critic Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867). Considering the influence that Edgar Allan Poe had on Baudelaire, it might just as well be argued that Poe is the genesis of literary symbolism, and so on back through the literary influences which created Poe. Fluent in English, Baudelaire began his literary career as a translator of Poe’s novels and short stories, and eventually became so associated with Poe that he was later accused of plagiarizing the American writer. His defense was indignation.

Do you know why, with such infinite patience, I translated Poe? It was because he was like me! The first time I ever opened a book by him and discovered, with rapture and awe, not only subjects which I had dreamt, but whole phrases which I’d conceived, written by him twenty years before (Starkie 218).

The discovery of this kindred spirit was based in part on the two men sharing a recognition of mankind as possessed of a “perpetual inclination to do evil” (Hyslop 75) which was tempered by a desire to find and/or create beauty and perfection.

The parallels between the lives of Baudelaire and Crowley are interesting to note. Both were only children born to older fathers: Baudelaire’s father was sixty-one when Charles was born, Edward Crowley was forty-six at the time of his son’s birth. As a result of this, both lost their fathers at an early age. Aleister Crowley was eleven when his father died. Charles Baudelaire was five. Both came from wealthy backgrounds and received large inheritances upon achieving their majority, yet squandered the money and spent most of their remaining years in financial desperation. Both were involved with numerous mistresses, experimented with drugs, and were condemned by the public for composing pornographic and satanic literature.

²⁹ See Deak, 3. Cf. Gassner and Quinn (1969, 828) who claim 1870-1920.

Crowley's admiration for Baudelaire began while he was an undergraduate at Cambridge, and continued throughout his life. In Paris in November 1913 he wrote a prose poem titled *Charles Baudelaire* which was later published in his collection of poetry *The Giant's Thumb* (1915):

TOUSSAINT. I have walked through the garden of the Luxembourg. It is like one's dancing-girl in the morning. The fallen leaves, the tangle of her dyed orange hair; the flowers agonizing, and monitorial. Ah me!

I stand now by the tomb of my father --- of Charles Baudelaire. Reverence I bring, and memory, and that seed whereof I am generator and guardian.

Flowers I bring --- flowers of that South windless and sea-washed and sun-embraced whereof He knew in manifold unique vision.

Oh! my father! my father!

Thou art dead: I die: that liveth and shall live for evermore while Our Father the Sun nourisheth Earth with His bounty. Thou didst understand all things, thou least understood of all men! Thou sawest all things beautiful --- as they are: thou didst repine at all the futile restlessness of those things.

No aim! No purpose! No will! Scarce one man in ten million with aspiration of cosmic scope. All waste. All loss. All fatuity --- the sacred fire but ignis fatuus --- the sun but limelight of how sorry a stage! Thou hadst that infinite distaste for the relative, that infinite craving for the absolute that is the mark (is, for the two are one) of all the saints. Saint, though what sins who knows or cares? "The chief of sinners is the chief of saints." I no longer remember what poet, what creator of truth from illusion, said this.

My father saw all things very good, as God upon His Sabbath of Creation. Only he could not understand why they should seek evermore to be other than they are. He could not conceive change as stability, could not understand that constancy of energy is rest. Therefore my little finger is thicker than my father's loins. But, O my father, it was Thou that didst inspire me, Thou that didst bestow upon me the Unique Inheritance, Thou that didst instill in me the Hunger of the Infinite, Thou that didst beget me, after Swinburne thy first-begotten that died at his puberty, Thou that didst bestow on me the chieftest of all gifts, never to be satisfied with whatever attainment might be mine (Crowley, 1915:314).

It is typical of Crowley that although this work is ostensibly a paean to Baudelaire, it is Crowley who becomes the ultimate subject. Nevertheless, his admiration for Baudelaire is obvious and genuine. When Crowley created his magical

organization, the AA, in 1907, the required reading list included his translation of Baudelaire's *The Poem of Hashish*.

While Baudelaire expressed an interest in theatre, he did not live to complete a script and see it performed. He began four works, *Ideolus*, *La Fin de Don Juan*, *Le Marquis du I-er Houzars*, and *L'Ivrogne*, but they are little more than fragments (Deak 16) While he was capable of envisioning a theatrical form which would "fuse the literary element with the pleasure of great spectacle" (Baudelaire, 1975, I:1441), the capability to create that form was beyond his grasp. Roland Barthes, in his *Critical Essays*, attempted to analyze the reasons behind Baudelaire's failure and concluded that Baudelaire did not recognize the symbiotic relationship between theatrical spectacle and dramatic (plot) construction. For Barthes, while Baudelaire was capable of setting scenes during battles, in dance halls, and in gypsy camps, he was incapable of rising to the literary occasion in such a manner that these environments would not only please the populist audience, but would make a significant or necessary contribution to the plot.

The primary problem in identifying the origin of the symbolists is that symbolist art is found in all artistic media of the late nineteenth century, and each medium had its own independent development during the course of its individual timeframe. Although the poetry of the above-mentioned Baudelaire and Poe, as well as that of Stephen Mallarmé (1842-1898), Flaubert (1812-1880), Rimbaud (1854-1891), and Verlaine (1844-1896), may be identified within the context of "nineteenth century" poetry, this span of time also includes the work of Byron (1788-1824), Shelley (1792-1822), and Keats (1795-1821), the standard-bearers of the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century. Clearly no one form of expression may be identified as emblematic of this time.

Symbolist Music

To the symbolist composer music is the creation of a mysterious state of the soul, its source inaccessible to any ordinary linguistic description. Some musicologists, such as Dr. C. Patrick Woliver, have argued that the symbolist movement in music lasted a mere twelve years, from 1885 to 1897³⁰. There are, however, a number of nineteenth century composers who can be identified with the symbolist movement, including Frederick Chopin (1810-1849), Robert Schumann (1810-1856), Claude Debussy (1862-1918), Richard Strauss (1864-1949), and two composers as closely associated with symbolism as they are with each other: Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and Franz Liszt (1811-1886). Liszt is possibly the most indicative of the symbolist movement in addition to making the most important contributions to the development of the form. While Schumann felt that music could symbolize and communicate generalized forms of feelings, or what he termed "the morphology of feeling," Liszt went so far as to create a new musical form in which to express his artistic concepts. The symphonic poem, or "tone poem," of Liszt was a work unlike any other in music. Liszt invented the term 'sinfonische Dichtung' ('symphonic poem') for orchestral works that did not obey traditional forms strictly and were based on a literary or pictorial concept. They were an attempt to translate works of literature into the medium of music. The best known of these include *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*, based on Victor Hugo, *Les préludes*, based on Lamartine, works based on Byron's *Tasso* and *Mazeppa*, and *Prometheus*, the *Faust Symphony in Three Character-Sketches* after Goethe and the *Symphony on Dante's Divina commedia*. In these last two works Liszt uses the term "symphony" loosely, as

³⁰ This was stated in a conversation with the present writer held April 10, 2003.

neither work follows the standard structure of a symphony. Just as the Symbolist artists and poets of the nineteenth century laid the groundwork for movements such as expressionism and surrealism, so too did the symbolist musicians, Liszt especially, foreshadow the development of such schools as the atonality, or “pantonality,” as he preferred to name it, of Arnold Schoenberg.

One of the identifying features of symbolist art is its attempt to transcend media, to take a work presented in one form and try to recreate it in another. Thus, for example, we see Liszt creating musical interpretations of works of literature by Shakespeare, Byron, and Dante. Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) created through musical composition a walk through an art gallery in his *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874), based on ten drawings and watercolors produced by his recently deceased friend, the architect and artist Victor Hartmann. Debussy, highly influenced in his compositional development by Liszt, adapted Mallarmé’s *Prélude à 'L'après-midi d'un faune'* (1894). Originally begun by Mallarmé as a poem in June, 1865, the work took him ten years to complete. It found a third medium for fame in 1912 when Vaslov Nijinski, aged twenty-two, starred in a version of it which he had choreographed for Diaghilev’s *Ballets Russes* in Paris. Debussy also turned to Maeterlinck for inspiration in the opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*, dating in large part from 1893-5 but not completed until 1902. Liszt’s influence may also be seen in the works of Richard Strauss. Strauss’s *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1896) is a musical interpretation of Nietzsche’s book of the same name. Nietzsche’s belief in life, creativity, health, and the realities of the world we live in, rather than those situated in a world beyond, is expressed in this work. Strauss

transformed other literary works into musical compositions, notably *Macbeth* (1890) and *Don Quixote* (1897).

Richard Wagner

Springing from the combination of the emotion of romanticism and the imagination of melodrama, the mythic theatre of Richard Wagner may be identified as one of the first examples of symbolist thought and imagery produced on the stage. Wagner's prime contribution to the development of the theatre of the nineteenth century was his belief in *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total unification of all aspects of the creative and artistic process as experienced by the audience. His incorporation of mythic and ritualistic themes was subordinate to his belief that music was of greater importance than spoken drama. Baudelaire wrote several works of criticism about Wagner, and saw Wagner's music as a form of poetry, transcendent of its medium, that communicated on a multitude of levels: aurally, intellectually, and spiritually. Wagner, through his incorporation of legendary subjects and mythic themes, became a primary influence on playwrights such as Villiers de L'Isle-Adam (1838-1889), Maeterlinck (1862-1949), Strindberg (1849-1912), Yeats (1865-1939), and Claudel (1868-1955), as well as designers Appia (1862-1928), Craig (1872-1966), and Robert Edmond Jones (1887-1954). In 1911 Yeats was in frequent communication with Craig and composer Franco Leoni attempting to produce a fully operatic version of *Countess Cathleen* (Foster, 1997: 210).

While recognizing Wagner's abilities as a composer and poet, Adolphe Appia condemned his limited staging concepts and techniques. He felt that Wagner was not only mistaken in believing that naturalistic scenes could be staged realistically, but that

Wagner was making the wrong artistic decision to attempt to do so. Wagner's technique, as evidenced by contemporaneous production photographs of his original stagings, created what has been termed an "actor vs. scenery" image wherein the performer is placed in front of a painted backdrop, or other two-dimensional representation of a set piece. Appia advocated an expressive rather than naturalistic design, and three-dimensional construction of set pieces. Appia, although a set designer, felt the musical composition should serve as the basis from which all other artistic decisions should grow. In this he echoed Wagner's desire for *Gesamkuntswerk*, the unification of the artistic message throughout the various media employed by the theatrical artists.

It is also understandable why Appia would attach himself so strongly to Wagner as the prime representative of art at the end of the nineteenth century. Unlike a poem, or a painting, a musical composition evolves through time during the experiencing of it. When one looks at a painting one is seeing a specific moment, a singular image. It may be thought of as a kind of Rorschach test whereby the receptor interprets the work through their personal filters of meaning. Unlike a poem or a novel, music does not communicate through a language of words. Unlike painting or sculpture, music does not communicate through visual images. The regular rhythms of music reflect the rhythms of the heart and lungs, thus making music an almost tactile and invasive physical experience. Appia's scenic designs created a mystic as well as mythic locus, indistinct enough that the real set was created in the mind of the audience.

Symbolist Theatre

When the idea for the creation of a theatre which would be primarily dedicated to symbolist works was still in the planning stages by Stephen Mallarmé, Maeterlinck, and

others, Gustav Kahn was asked to write an essay by *Revue d'Art Dramatique* "so that the 'eclectic editors and readers' of the review would understand the symbolist theatre that was to come" (Deak, 29). The resulting essay, published in September, 1889, was titled *Un Théâtre de l'avenir: Profession de foi d'un moderniste* (Theatre of the Future: Profession of Faith of a Modernist), and outlined a new dramatic form based on a combination of musical and theatrical practices resulting in a style which incorporated a heightened sense of involvement on the part of the audience and a more extremely unrealistic performance style.

Symbolists, through the incorporation of dream imagery and mythology in their work, anticipated the theories of Freud and Jung, and, while prefiguring later movements such as surrealism, impressionism, and art nouveau, built on principles of romanticism which encouraged emotional reaction, at the same time creating a unique methodology of expression which was capable of transcending media. Designed to create impressions through suggestion and implication rather than direct statement, the work of the symbolists was a direct descendant of the Romanticism which had preceded it, and was diametrically opposed to the realism of authors such as Ibsen who were emerging at the same time. And yet, the symbolists and the "naturalists" such as Ibsen had in common a fixation for minutiae as the basis for their drama. For the naturalists, dramatic conflict did not come in the form of barbarians arriving at the gates, nor was it dependant upon the latest pyrotechnical theatrical technology. It lay in the actions of everyday people pursuing their everyday lives. The symbolists eschewed the *sturm und drang* of the popular melodrama as well, preferring to evoke their message through a more subliminal means of presentation. As a result the incidents of greatest import in symbolist drama

were not directly connected with events on stage but, rather, suggestive of spiritual crises or events which were represented by the actions on stage.

Live theatre was the ideal medium for the Symbolist movement. One of the primary principles of Symbolism is the commingling of media. This amalgamation of art recognized the differences without setting one above the other. Thus, the look of a production, established by the scenic and costume designs should compliment sound of the production. That combination of sight and sound should also be harmonious with the subject matter. The lighting should be synchronous with the action. All should work together, as members of an orchestra blend together to create one harmonious, unified work.

By the end of 1892 the Théâtre d'Art in Paris had established itself as the leading proponent of symbolist works on the stage. Originally founded in June 1890 as the Théâtre Mixte by eighteen-year-old Paul Fort, the Théâtre d'Art was the first major venue for the symbolist playwrights.

Maurice Maeterlinck, Belgian-born playwright, essayist and poet, won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1911. His plays reflect his vision of man as a being eternally separated from his fellows; even the titles of his earlier works suggest an introspective estrangement: *L'intruse* (*The Intruder*, 1890), *Les aveugles* (*The Blind*, 1890), *L'interieur* (*The Interior*, 1894). His characters seem driven by a fatal destiny, existing in a static dream world far removed from that of the audience. It was during this period in the 1890s that he found himself the source of contention between André Antoine (representing the Théâtre Libre) and Paul Fort (representing the Théâtre d'Art).

Maeterlinck had recently been proclaimed the exciting new voice of the French theatre, and both establishments were eager to associate themselves with his work.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Maeterlinck began experimenting with a new form that combined mysticism with sexual suggestiveness. *Monna Vanna* (1902), *Joyzelle* (1903), and *Mary Magdaleine* (1910) all reflect this forced commingling of the temporal and the spiritual. It was during this period, in 1908, that Maeterlinck wrote what was to become his most popular play, *The Blue Bird*. *The Blue Bird* was first produced by Stanislavski at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1909. That Maeterlinck wrote this play at this time is an odd event in that *The Blue Bird* is very much a symbolist-styled play, but it was written at a time when Maeterlinck was moving away from the form.

Maeterlinck's career may serve as a cautionary tale to other artists who lack the courage of their convictions. He began as an exciting new voice in the theatre, boldly offering a unique methodology of plot and character construction and staging theory but, at the end, abandoned the very theories that might have given him a more important place in theatrical history.

Symbolism arose in Great Britain through the works of William Butler Yeats and John Millington Synge. Yeats developed his symbolist interest through a study of the works of William Blake. He had edited and written a commentary for a three volume edition of Blake's works in collaboration with Edwin Ellis in 1893, and Blake's influence moved in and out Yeats' work for the rest of his life. Mary Catherine Flannery argues that the primary aim of Yeats studying Blake was to find a method of integrating occult study into an effective poetic form (Flannery, 37). What Yeats did find in Blake was not only a fellow qabalist, but specifically a Western European occultist with whom he could

relate. Yeats became involved with the Theosophical Society several years before discovering Blake, but had begun to retreat from his interest in Eastern philosophical systems by the time of his collaboration with Ellis.³¹

Symbolism and Psychology

Among the many deities who inspired cultic and ritual activity during the past five thousand years, Egypt's Hathor is particularly relevant to Crowley's *Rites of Eleusis*. In the Egyptian religion Hathor was both the goddess of fertility and also a primary curator of the dead once they passed to the afterlife. This dual role is significant because it illustrates the connection between generation and destruction, the one leading from the other and to the other in an endless cycle and, appropriately, both overseen by the same deity. Hathor was often represented iconographically as a wild cow, symbolic of fertility. It was a common practice for those followers of Hathor who were confronted with some problem to gather at one of her temples and be allowed to sleep inside. The dreams which would come to them while asleep within the temple would then be examined, analyzed, and interpreted by the priests for their hidden meanings. It is striking that one of the oldest examples of the connection of religion and theatre is also one of the oldest examples of the use of dream interpretation to address conflicts in everyday life.

The rise of symbolism as a recognized branch of the arts in the nineteenth century preceded the birth of modern psychology and psychoanalysis, yet the latter would not be what it is today had it not been for the influence of the former. The concept of allegorical symbolism whereby one image or action represents another is at the heart of dream analysis spearheaded by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). It is also the foundation of the

³¹ See Chapter Two for a more detailed accounting of Yeats's metaphysical involvements.

archetype developed by Carl Jung (1875-1961). In artistic expression as well as psychoanalytical practice, the idea that one image or situation may represent another is not unusual. Yet it should not be assumed that this is mere semiotic role playing, for example, the red stripes in a costume serving as a semiotic representation of scars or flowing blood caused by the evil character wearing them. Symbolist imagery references more than a specific character trait just as psychoanalytic or archetypal imagery references more than a specific relationship or attitude. It is used when we discuss subjects which we cannot fully comprehend or consciously define. The connections between our knowledge and our mystic or metaphysical subjects are often multilayered and complex, and require an expansion of communication techniques. It makes perfect sense to look at the theatrical symbolists of the nineteenth century and, from our current vantage point, be able to foresee the development of Artaud and his dissatisfaction with and rejection of the usual means of communication in theatre.

One of the most important contributors to the development of the concept of symbolism as a source of communication and meaning was Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. Unlike most of their contemporaries, and even unlike most people today, Crowley and Jung believed that consciousness was multidimensional.

The experience of North Americans . . . typically tends toward monophasic consciousness; namely, ego identification with experience derived from a single range of phases that excludes other alternative phases. For North American culture, the only “real world” experienced is that unfolding in the sensorium during the “normal” waking phase (which includes many subsidiary phases like “high,” “sleepy,” “drunk,” and the like), and is thus the only phase appropriate to the accrual of information about the self and the world (Laughlin, 155).

While the common view of consciousness is singular, that is, one is either conscious or not, both Crowley and Jung believed that it was possible to experience

multiple, or polyphasic, types of consciousness. That Jung would demonstrate an interest in the occult as well is not surprising. During the period of his youth occultism was enjoying one of its periodic renaissances.³² This will be examined in more detail in Chapter Two. Jung came from a family which accepted without question the existence of a spirit world. Jung's interest in the occult and paranormal activities began in his childhood, but was revealed when he was a medical student. His dissertation, *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena*, examined his firsthand accounts of observing mediumistic phenomena such as what would today be termed "channeling," or the demonstration of multiple personalities within a single physical body. Jung came by his interest in parapsychology honestly.

Jung's mother, Emilie Jung, (nee Preiswerk, 1849-1923) left a diary in which she recorded ghostly phenomena, presentiments, and other "unusual occurrences." As a child, she recalled, she had "helped to protect" her father, Samuel Preiswerk, administrator of the Reformed Congregation of Basle, from ghosts; when he wrote his sermons, she had to sit behind him, so that the "ghosts" would not disturb him . . . His wife, C. G. Jung's grandmother, Augusta Preiswerk (née Faber, 1805–1862) was also a "ghost-seer." The family attributed this talent to the fact that, as a girl, she had been seemingly dead for thirty-six hours. Her abilities were remarkable, even in the light of careful judgment. She saw apparitions of persons unknown to her, but whose historic existence was later proven (Fodor, 218).

Additionally, the teenaged medium who was the primary subject of his dissertation was, in fact, his own fifteen-year-old cousin. It was this early exposure to the idea that there were possibly more levels of existence than the temporal "conscious" world that led Jung to the creation of his theory of multiple personalities.

Many of Jung's practices, such as using archetypes to demonstrate aspects of the nature of consciousness, and the incorporation of alchemical symbols, terminology, and

³² Since Jung and Crowley were born in the same year it is not surprising that a movement contemporaneous to them both would influence each.

allegory in assisting to explain methods of spiritual development, were and are commonly followed by practicing occultists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The employment of an archetype is one methodology through which the mind organizes its content (Fodor, 164). It is, in a sense, a means of identifying characteristics of universal behavioral patterns through mythological representation and, as such, is not unlike qabalistic correspondences. The Jungian concept of archetypes, while not always couched in that nomenclature, is a basic premise of ceremonial magicians, and the idea and practice were in place in occult practices long before Jung adapted it as part of his philosophical/psychological system.³³

Archetypes are also the basis for a performance technique developed by Michael Chekhov during the 1930s and 1940s. In *To the Actor* (1953), Chekhov suggests that actors must be in deep communication with their bodies in order to present the appearance they wish during a performance. He further states that there are basic physical positions which serve as the basis for what he calls an “archetypal gesture,” that is, a position of the body that illustrates a mental state (Chekhov, 76). It might be said that the physical body is giving a silent voice to the emotions of the mind. Out of these archetypal positions develop what Chekhov calls Psychological gestures. As an example, if we consider the figures illustrated on page thirteen, we see in Figure Two the representation of Osiris slain. The arms are extended from the body in an attitude of surrender, the palms facing up, and the face slightly raised, exposing the neck. It is a position of total surrender, of complete vulnerability. A similarity is noticeable between

³³ See Chapter Two for an example of how archetypes are employed during a meeting of the Golden Dawn.

this posture and the illustration marked “Drawing Two” in Chekhov’s *To The Actor* (see Figure 11)

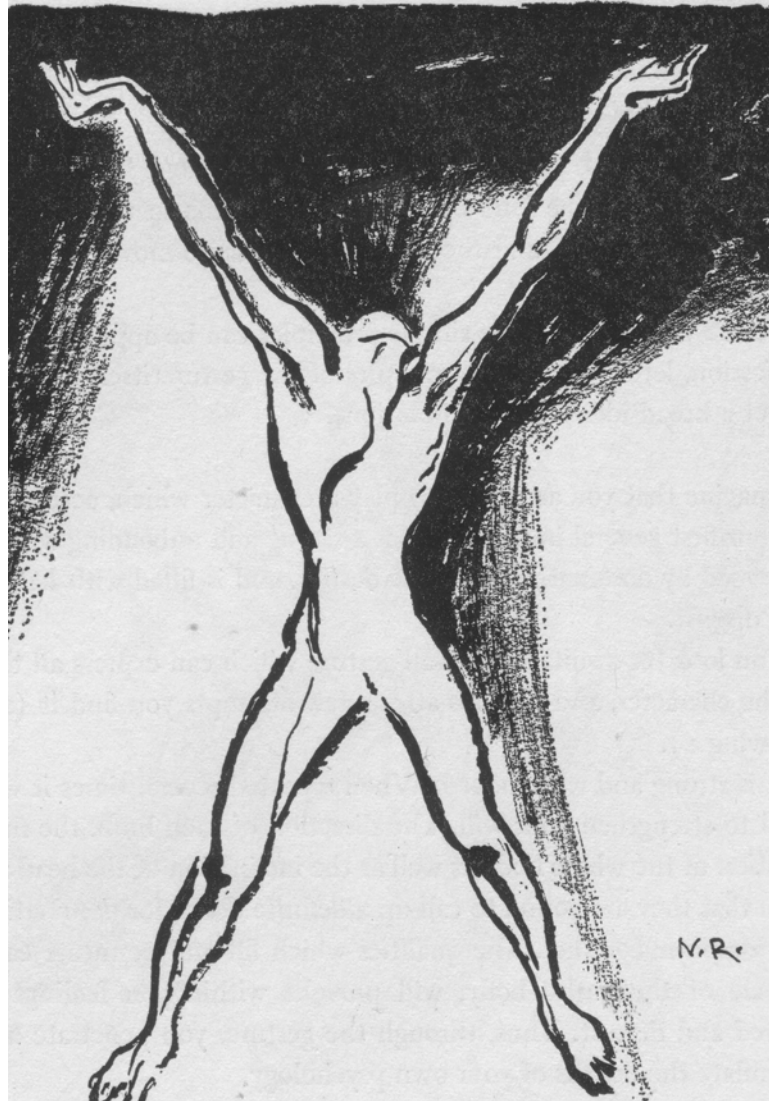


Figure 11: “Drawing Two” from Chekhov

This position is described by Chekhov as

completely open to the influences coming from “above,” and is obsessed by the desire to receive and even to force “inspirations” from these influences. It is filled with mystical qualities but at the same time stands firmly on the ground and receives equally strong influences from the earthly world. Consequently, it is a character which is able to reconcile within itself influences both from above and below (Chekhov, 68).

Perhaps intentionally, perhaps unconsciously, Chekhov employs the “above and below” connection prevalent in occult theory.

When the psyche splits into several self-contained, self-reflexive states, neurosis is often the result. The best known fictional representation of this bifurcation is Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) in which the split of the psyche is physical as well as mental/spiritual. This notion of the duality of man presages Jungian psychology, and also references the symbolist construct of a reality beyond the reality of man’s consciousness, where two diametrically opposed truths may be equally valid, where two objects can occupy the same space at the same time. This idea of a “reality beyond reality” is as old as Plato and is as basic a paradigm for the magician as it is for the actor. Two years after first appearing as a novel, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* was brought to the stage by Richard Mansfield (1857–1907).

The story of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is not merely about a scientist who uses himself as a test subject for an experimental drug. The story by itself may serve as the basis for any number of interpretive applications. One might be the reading of it as a cautionary tale about alcohol or drug addiction, i.e. the person who unwittingly falls victim to their own weakness or inability to resist temptation.³⁴ As such it has served as

³⁴ As Lord Darlington says in Act I of Wilde’s *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, “I can resist everything except temptation.”

the basis for any number of later works fashioned on the same theme, for example *Altered States* (1980), in which William Hurt plays a scientist who becomes increasingly addicted to the use of a sensory-deprivation tank in his search for the ultimate origin of mankind. Another interpretation might be that the story serves as an echo of the distrust by society of the fruits of science and/or technology. In this guise it is not unlike the moral of *Frankenstein*.

Although wrapped in the guise of a tale of horror, it is also a story which posits that mankind is more than it appears to be. It is not the tale of two individuals, but one, Dr. Jekyll **and** Mr. Hyde, the very title telling us that the title role is a duality, one man attempting to live two lives. It is also a story which illustrates an urge for release, a story that speaks of an inner existence struggling to be released. That the “inner” existence is one of bestiality and horror is a reflection of the Victorian fear of the subconscious

Another example of a literary display of the duality of man is Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, first published in *Lippincott’s Magazine* in 1890. In this novel, the consequences of sin are recorded in an ever-changing portrait, while its subject remains youthful and attractive. The moral is not merely one of an experience of Faustian damnation, nor even the whimsical “be careful what you ask for,” but one which illustrates the idea of the duality of existence, the outer life and the inner life. If one does not heed the needs of the inner life or the soul, no amount of success in one’s outer life can protect or nurture it, and one is doomed to destruction. It is an illustration of the occult concept of spiritual symbiosis, wherein each aspect of the individual is reliant on the other for completion and success

Conclusion

The construct of duality in religion, acting as a macrocosmic representation of the duality within man, is not unusual. It is as basic as God and the Devil. Crowley writes of one type of this duality in a footnote to his *Tannhauser*: “It is a tradition of magic that all words have a double effect; an upright, and an averse. See the shadow of a devil’s head cast by the fingers raised in blessing as figured in Eliphaz Levi’s *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magic* and elsewhere” (Crowley, *Collected Works*, 1:227). It is the foundation for the use of man as the microcosmic model of the universe as well as the basis of philosophical polarity found in many religious systems. The yin-yang of Taoism, the lingam and yoni of tantric Hinduism, the God/Goddess construct of neopaganism, the animus and anima archetypes of Jungian psychology, even representations of various death and resurrection motifs, are all variations of this concept. It is the spiritual equivalent of Newton’s Third Law of physics, that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. And it is this perceived duality within man, half corporeal creature of the earth and half spark of divine fire of heaven, and the urge to unite the two, that lies at the heart of Crowley’s *Rites of Eleusis*. *The Rites of Eleusis* presented mankind with the proposition that the presumed division within man did not exist at all. The *Rites* told its audience that they did not have to seek after God. They *were* God.

CHAPTER 2

THE THEATRE OF THE GOLDEN DAWN

The performer is always in a state of trance (Beck, 1972:62).

Introduction

The supernatural, the occult, the existence of realms beyond daily consciousness and the five senses are areas of interest which have ebbed and flowed throughout time, enjoying periodic popularity only to fall once more out of favor or the public interest. These are areas of study which are beyond the philosophical purview of established religious movements, but which have, nevertheless, addressed fundamental issues of life and death, the power of individuals to control their world, and the nature of good and evil. Like their more conventional counterparts, such as some extremist religious denominations, these subjects occasionally have been used by entrepreneurial individuals to further their own agendas.³⁵

The decade of the 1960s was the last great resurgence of occult interest. That development has lasted into the twenty-first century, although it may be observed that the growth of interest has abated over the course of the past ten years. As in the 1960s, the late nineteenth century was a hotbed of activity for occultism. This chapter will address

³⁵ In this context, the “conventional counterparts” would include the Branch Davidians under David Koresh and the People’s Temple followers of Jim Jones.

several varieties of occult activity in the nineteenth century in order to understand the soil in which were planted the seeds of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Aleister Crowley, and, ultimately, the *Rites of Eleusis*. This will be followed by a brief history of the Golden Dawn and the relationship between its occult teachings and the members who used those teachings in their theatrical practice.

The Occult World of the Nineteenth Century

Occult and pseudo-occult organizations and interest proliferated during the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the United States and Great Britain it was not uncommon to belong to several fraternal organizations such as the Masons, the Odd Fellows, or the Ancient Order of Druids simultaneously. These were groups, almost always comprised of an exclusively male membership, which clothed their social aspects in mystic garb, both figuratively and literally. They were organizations that were primarily interested in developing business contacts, performing charitable work within their community, and developing a higher moral standard among their membership. By the early twentieth century there were no less than five organizations extant in Britain alone claiming ancient roots in Druidism. None of these were more than fifty years old. In the United States, the first Grove of Druids was instituted in the City of New York in 1830. During the next several decades the Order branched out into different parts of the United States. In 1858, California Grove Number One was instituted at Hangtown, now known as Placerville, under the leadership of the founder of California Druidism, Past National Grand Arch Druid Frederick Sieg. California Grove Number One of Druids is still active today, and a Druidic monument honoring PNGAD Frederick Sieg adorns the main street of Placerville.

In addition to the proliferation of fraternal organizations, nineteenth century interest in the mystical or the occult is seen through the increase of public demonstrations of occult activity. The scientific positivism, which had seen the explosion of the Industrial Revolution and the scientific revolution detonated by Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), was counterbalanced by a growth in the search for a greater "personalization" of the universe. This was evident in a number of ways, all of them supporting the idea that the individual human being was special and had powers or abilities which elevated them above any invention which might be created through scientific discovery or development which might lessen mankind's station in the universe. This search for a reinforcement of human supremacy was reflected in the rise of obscure religious sects, mystical societies, and paranormal demonstrations. It also saw the development of a theatricalization of spiritual pursuit which was later to be recognized as little more than magic tricks wrapped in a supernatural setting.

In *Mediums, Mystics and the Occult* Milbourne Christopher claims that the spiritualist movement in America began in a Hydesdale, New York farmhouse on the evening of March 31, 1848 (Christopher 2). Previous occupants of the farmhouse had been troubled by mysterious knocks in the night. With the encouragement of their older sister Leah, two young sisters, Margaret and Kate Fox, their ages unrecorded, allegedly challenged the spirit responsible for the knocks to rap as many times as they snapped their fingers. This the spirit did, and eventually a code of raps was established. The entity was dubbed "Mr. Splitfoot" by the sisters, an obvious nickname for the Devil, referencing the cloven hoofs of the common image. Over the next several years the girls created a sensation, being tested by several committees comprised of doctors, lawyers,

judges, influential businessmen, and at one point, the vice-chancellor of the state of New York. It might be said that with fame came imitators, but it might also be argued that the celebrity gave courage to others with the same gift. In any event, within ten years the reports of spiritualist and mediumistic experiences had grown so numerous that in 1857 the *Boston Courier* offered a \$500 prize to anyone who could produce an authentic spiritualist event.

The entrants in the contest included the Fox sisters; a Mrs. Kendrick and Mr. Mansfield, who specialized in causing written spirit communications to occur; George Redmond, who was versed in several areas of spiritualist communication; and the Davenport brothers from Buffalo. The brothers were supposedly able to produce sounds from musical instruments which were hung near them in a darkened room while they were tied up with heavy ropes. In later displays the brothers were tied hand and foot at opposite ends of a giant box. When the doors of the box were shut, bells were heard to ring, musical instruments inside the box were played and disembodied 'spirit hands' appeared at an opening in one of the doors. The brothers continued to perform for half a century, including a four-year tour around the world.

At the *Boston Courier* contest, three Harvard professors and an astronomer, who lived near Cambridge, served as judges. The demonstrations lasted three days, at the end of which it was determined by the judges that none of the contestants had demonstrated any "force which technically could be denominated 'spiritual' or which was hitherto unknown to science, or a phenomenon of which the cause was not palpable to the committee" (Christopher, 4). This judgment irritated the mediums until they realized the sizable increase in the demand for their appearances. People wanted to see for

themselves what happened during a séance. Séances were sometimes called 'circles,' because participants, called 'sitters,' sat around a table or on chairs arranged in a circle in order to link hands, in the belief that this boosted the psychic forces which encouraged paranormal manifestations. Generally séances involve a medium who enters a trance-like state and contacts a 'spirit guide.' The spirit then communicates with the gathering through the medium, either mentally or directly using the medium's vocal chords. In the nineteenth century, séances were dominated by physical manifestations such as strange smells, rappings, levitations, or materializations of disembodied body parts. Automatic writing, where the spirit possessed the hand of the medium and wrote messages, and voice communications through the medium, were also common phenomena.

Support for the spiritualist movement continued to grow throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1883 Henry Seybert, a Philadelphia philanthropist, donated \$60,000 to the University of Pennsylvania with the proviso that it use the money to establish a chair “to make a thorough and impartial investigation of all systems of Morals, Religion, or Philosophy which assumes to represent the Truth, and particularly of Modern Spiritualism” (Christopher, 4). Other believers included Horace Greeley and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who, in the 1920s, had an ongoing feud with Harry Houdini, who was one of the foremost debunkers of spiritualist activity.

In the September 24, 1888 edition of the *New York Herald*, Margaret Fox admitted that her older sister Leah had forced the two younger girls to continue the deception for years in pursuit of fame and fortune. She also described how she created the mysterious rappings by cracking the first joint of her big toe. This revelation was

followed a month later by a public demonstration at the New York Academy of Music on October 21. Margaret performed many of the standard spiritualist feats, such as table tilting, having written messages appear on blank slates, and discarnate rappings, and clearly demonstrated how each was accomplished.

Daniel Douglas Home was another famous spiritualist performer. Home was born near Edinburgh, Scotland on March 20, 1833. Orphaned at an early age, he was adopted by an aunt, who brought him to the United States in 1840. He claimed in his autobiography that his earliest recollection of psychic experiences dated from a vision in his fourteenth year of a deceased schoolmate. At seventeen, he became celebrated as a "medium." He moved around New England frequently as a young man, living at various times in Lebanon, Connecticut, Newburg and Troy, New York, and Springfield, Massachusetts, where the most remarkable of his spiritualistic manifestations took place. Besides table tilting, automatic writing, and causing musical instruments to play while bound, his abilities included the materialization of spirits, the elongation and shortening of his own body, and his handling of fire without pain (Hill, 115). He claimed to have performed remarkable cures, and to be impervious to disease. In 1853 he went to New York to study medicine, but did not practice. Traveling to London, he remained there several years, making frequent visits to the continent, where he was presented at the courts of Russia, Germany, the Vatican, and France. In 1856 he united with the Roman Catholic Church, but was expelled in 1863 for spiritualistic practices. He died harmlessly insane in Auteuil, France, on June 21, 1886. Robert Browning's poem entitled *Mr. Sludge, the Medium* is thought to be a study of Home.

In 1882 the Society for Psychical Research was founded at Cambridge, partly in answer to Oxford having created the Ghost Society several years earlier. Unlike the Ghost Society, which was more of a social club, the purpose of the SPR was to examine allegedly paranormal phenomena in a scientific and unbiased way. Former Presidents of the Society include philosophers Henry Sidgwick and Henri Bergson, Prime Minister A.J. Balfour; psychologists William James and F.W.H. Myers, classicist Gilbert Murray and zoologist Sir Alister Hardy.

In contrast to the Spiritualist movement, which became more openly theatrical as time went on and evolved into side show curiosities functioning for entertainment purposes only, other groups began to claim spiritual guidance from entities beyond the material world and organized themselves as alternative religious movements. Although developing at the same time as the Spiritualists, these groups were more mystical in nature, presenting to their members not mere parlor tricks but substantive philosophical constructs upon which to fashion a rational understanding of the universe.

The most influential of these was the Theosophical Society, founded by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Henry S. Olcott, and William O. Judge in New York City in 1875. Blavatsky was born August 12, 1831 in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, to Colonel Peter von Hahn and his wife Helena. As a child and adolescent she demonstrated remarkable psychic ability in addition to unusually high intelligence and physical courage. In 1849, she married Nikifor Blavatsky, a middle aged Vice-Governor of the Province of Yerivan. In all likelihood, she did this in order to escape a strict household. Within a few months of the marriage, Madame Blavatsky, as she came to be called, left her husband and began

traveling through the Middle East on money supplied by her father. After the birth of a crippled child that died at the age of five Blavatsky wrote:

When awake and *myself*, I remembered well *who* I was in my second capacity, and what I had been and was doing. When *someone else*, i.e., the personage I became, I know I had no idea of who was H. P. Blavatsky! I was in another far-off country, a total different individuality from myself, and had no connection at all with my actual life. (http://www.themystica.Org/mystica/articles/b/Blavatsky_helena_petrovna.html)

This sounds very much like Jung's description of a disassociative personality experience, where a person experiences their own reality objectively, as though removed from themselves. Similar to out-of-body experiences reported by people close to death, these experiences raise questions of the nature of consciousness and the source of identity. Two years later Blavatsky published her first book, the two-volume *Isis Unveiled*, which described the inadequacies of contemporary scientific thought in addressing the spiritual needs of the nineteenth century. The Theosophical Society was Blavatsky's second attempt to create a working organization. It was preceded by the Miracle Club. This was a club where members were admitted to séances conducted by the club medium David Dana, brother of Charles Dana editor of the *New York Sun*. Members were forbidden to disclose their experiences or the address of the meeting place. The club only lasted a few weeks because David Dana wanted to be paid for his services and Blavatsky refused. In 1879 she founded *The Theosophist* magazine, as a means of encouraging the West to study the Qabalah, Gnosticism, Rosicrucianism, and Freemasonry. Blavatsky sought to reintroduce the concept of a living universe governed by cause and effect, or karma, in light of recognized scientific principles of the day. Her second book, *The Secret Doctrine*, is subtitled "The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy." This is similar to Crowley's motto for his periodical *The Equinox*, which

was “The Method of Science, The Aim of Religion.” *The Equinox* began publication in 1907 and, considering the common ground and positions taken by Blavatsky and Crowley, it is probable that Crowley appropriated the motto for his own use. In his *Confessions* Crowley states that he “agreed with much of Blavatsky’s teachings [. . .]” (Crowley, 1970:582). He went so far as to republish her *Voice of the Silence* (originally published in 1889) in his *Equinox*, III, 1, with an extended valuable commentary. In his autobiography, in typical Crowleyan fashion, he vacillates when passing judgment on Blavatsky’s work. He states that “*The Equinox* was the first serious attempt to put before the public the facts of occult science, so-called, since Blavatsky’s unscholarly hotch-potch of fact and fable, *Isis Unveiled*” (Crowley, 1970:604). On the other hand, when explaining why he republished *Voice of the Silence*, he offers condescending forgiveness:

My purpose was to bring back Theosophists to the true principles of their founder; principles which have been shamelessly abandoned by her successors – to the utter ruin of the society, either as a nursery for adepts or as a civilizing influence in barbaric Christendom. (Crowley, 1970:842)

Blavatsky died on May 8, 1891 during a flu epidemic in London. The Theosophical Society is important because it is a nineteenth century movement which still exists around the world today, over one hundred twenty-five years after its founding. It is also important because it was the original introduction to the occult for Yeats, Horniman, Mathers, and Westcott.

The Masonic Connection

The early history of the fraternal organization known as the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons is open to speculation. Actual historical documentation may be traced back to the fourteenth century. Extant from that time there are over one hundred parchment rolls, extending up to nine feet in length, on paper sheets formed into

notebooks, which contain a legendary history of the mason trade and charges reciting the duties of a Mason to his God, his master, his craft and his fellows. The earliest evidence of the 'making' of an English non-operative Mason is that of Elias Ashmole, made in a Lodge called for that purpose at Warrington, Cheshire, on October 16, 1646. He recorded this event, and a later visit to a London Lodge in 1682, in his diary.³⁶ A “non-operative” Mason is one who enters the organization although his trade is not specifically masonry. Masonic lodges differentiate between “operative” and “speculative” Masonry, hence the term “accepted” Masons. By 1686, Freemasonry was well enough known to warrant a mention in Robert Plot's *Natural History of Staffordshire*. The Grand Lodge of England was formed, as the first Grand Lodge in the world, by the coming together of four London Lodges at the Goose and Gridiron Tavern, St. Paul's Churchyard, on June 24, 1717.

Masonic ritual work has always been an important aspect of the organization. This work is highly theatrical in nature, especially when one considers the degree work of the Scottish Rite or York Rite. These are the two branches which a Mason may pursue once he has completed the first three degrees, known as the Blue Lodge. The Blue Lodge consists of the Entered Apprentice degree, the Fellowcraft degree, and the Master Mason degree. After completing the third, or Master Mason degree, a member is considered to be a fully-fledged Mason. Current membership in a Blue Lodge is required to continue on to Scottish Rite or York Rite affiliation. These other degrees are usually conferred at large gatherings where the members enact symbolic plays not unlike medieval morality plays, wherein the lesson of each degree is portrayed. The incorporation of ceremonial

³⁶ This is a technical term. Reference is made throughout the various degree rituals of being “made” a mason, which references the initiation experience.

dress, which is worn by members during these rituals, aids in semiotic identification of the roles being performed. Specific movements to various locations around the temple at precise moments during the rituals are established blocking. The rituals are scripted in such a way that each member knows precisely what is to be said at what time.

Additionally, set pieces, backdrops, and, occasionally, complete stage sets are incorporated into the rituals. These performances are played out not only for the benefit of the other members sitting along the sidelines of the temple, but also for the member undergoing the initiatory experience, which the degree work represents.

The *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglica* (SRIA), is an organization which was created by Robert Wentworth Little and Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie in 1865 following the discovery of unknown manuscripts and rituals in the archives of Masonic Grand Lodge in London. It was an organization created by Masons for Masons. The SRIA is based upon symbolism and traditions of a much earlier Society known as the Fraternity of the Rose and Cross, which in turn claimed its origin from an immortal character, real or mythical, known as Christian Rosenkreutz. This organization derives much of its symbolism from the higher degrees of Masonry, which also alludes to the myth of Christian Rosenkreutz. The organization is highly involved in the study of rare books and arcane documents, and is comprised of a series of degrees which later contributed to the degree structure of the Golden Dawn. Although not active in the performance of occult work, the members follow the Masonic tradition of incorporating costumes, ritualistic dialogue, and properties in their meetings. On its official web site, <http://members.tripod.com/~jomastes/orders/infosria.html>, the Society describes itself as follows:

Its members should be prepared, not only to take part in its ceremonies, but to listen and learn and, by study and giving to others the results of that study, to take an active part in working out the great problems of life and understanding the wisdom, art and literature of the Ancient World. Thus the object of the Society is to bring together Freemasons of philosophic outlook in order that they may afford aid and encouragement to each other in the pursuit of their own studies in the field of philosophy and scholarship in the widest sense. Ultimately, its object is to bring its members a few steps nearer to wisdom and an understanding of the true nature of reality.

The degrees worked in the SRIA are:

I° - Zelator

II° - Theoricus

III° - Practicus

IV° - Philosophus

V° - Adeptus Minor

VI° - Adeptus Major

VII° - Adeptus Exemptus

VIII° - Magister

IX° - Magus

As will be shown later, the Golden Dawn borrowed heavily from this structure, as did Crowley himself when reconstructing the OTO. The High Council of the SRIA is currently located at Stanfield Hall, 88 Hampstead High Street, London NW3 1 RE. The Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis (Rosicrucian Society of the United States) was formed September 21, 1880 via a charter granted by the SRIA. There are also branches of the organization in Scotland and Canada.

The Golden Dawn

The charter of the Isis-Urania Temple of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was signed by its three founders on March 1, 1888. Three weeks earlier, on February 12, the group's mission statement had been created:

For the purpose of the study of Occult Science, and the further investigation of the Mysteries of Life and Death, and our Environment, permission has been granted by the Secret Chiefs of the R. C. to certain Fraters learned in the Occult Sciences (and who are also members of the Soc. Ros. in Ang.) to work the Esoteric Order of the G. D. in the Outer; to hold meetings thereof for Study and to initiate any approved person Male or Female, who will enter into an Undertaking to maintain strict secrecy regarding all that concerns it. Belief in One God necessary. No other restrictions.

N. B. This Order is *not* established for the benefit of those who desire only a superficial knowledge of Occult Science. (Gilbert, 1997:21)

There are several interesting aspects to this statement. The first is the use of the term "Fratres." The Latin for "Brothers," this is a title still used today in the SRIA. Since it is not used in Masonry, nor in Theosophy, it may be assumed the Golden Dawn founders (who, as is noted within the statement, were also members of the SRIA), found this an attractive appellation and adopted it for their new organization. Also of note is the inclusion of women in the organization. While women had been accepted into the Theosophical Society, they were not allowed to become Masons.³⁷ The thought of men and women working as equals in search of knowledge and truth appealed to the original Golden Dawn founders. It is clear that the Golden Dawn was intended to be a continuation of the work pursued by both the SRIA and the Theosophical Society, but in a more concentrated and broader manner.

³⁷ There is a Masonic-related women's group, the Order of the Eastern Star, founded in 1850 by Dr. Rob Morris. Although it is sponsored by Masons and Masons may join the Eastern Star, women are still prohibited from becoming Masons.

This initial statement was followed by a draft of the Preliminary Pledge which was to be signed by the intending candidate before admission to the Order.

I the undersigned do hereby solemnly pledge myself:

1. That I am above the age of 21 years.
2. That I join this order of my own free will and accord.
3. To keep secret this Order, its Name, its Members, and its Proceedings, from every person outside its pale; and even from Initiates unless in actual possession of the Pass-Word for the time being. I further promise to keep secret any information relative to this Order which may become known to me before my admission; and I also pledge myself to divulge nothing whatsoever to the outside World concerning this Order in case either of my Resignation, Demission, or Expulsion therefrom.
4. I undertake to prosecute with zeal the study of the Occult Sciences.
5. If accepted as a Candidate, I undertake to persevere through the Ceremony of my Admission. (Gilbert, 1997:21)

In his *Confessions* Crowley reflects with some disdain on his own admission to the Neophyte grade in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn on November 18, 1898.

At my initiation, I could have believed that these adepts deliberately masked their majesty; but there was no mistaking the character of the “knowledge lecture” in which I had to be examined to entitle me to pass to the next grade. I had been most solemnly sworn to inviolable secrecy. The slightest breach of my oath meant that I should incur “a deadly and hostile current of will, set in motion by the Greatly Honoured Chiefs of the Second Order, by the which I should fall slain or paralysed, as if blasted by the lightening flash.” And now I was entrusted with some of these devastating though priceless secrets. They consisted of the Hebrew alphabet, the names of the planets with their attribution to the days of the week, and the ten Sephiroth of the Qabalah. I had known it all for months; and obviously, any schoolboy in the lower fourth could memorize the whole lecture in twenty-four hours. (Crowley, 1969:177)

Although Crowley looked back with some amusement at his humble beginning as a magician, the sacredness of the information imparted to him should not be devalued. It must be remembered that at this time Hebrew was, essentially, a dead language. It was not possible, as it is today, to purchase a Hebrew dictionary from the corner bookshop, nor was an astrology column *de rigueur* in the daily newspaper. The information given

to Crowley at his initiation may have been easily learned, but it was not necessarily easily obtained. It was truly occult knowledge.³⁸ Nor was Crowley alone in his low estimation of his fellow magicians. Maude Gonne described them as “the very essence of British middle-class dullness. They looked so incongruous in their cloaks and badges at initiation ceremonies” (MacBride, 248).

The history of the founding of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn has been disputed almost from its inception. According to the organization’s own published documents, the Golden Dawn was founded in 1887 by three high-ranking London freemasons, Dr. William Wynn Westcott (1848-1925), Dr. William Robert Woodman (1828-1891), and Samuel Liddell Mathers (1854-1918), under the direction of Fraulein Anna Sprengel of Ulm, Germany. Dr. Westcott (see Figure 12) had been born at Leamington Spa (coincidentally, Crowley’s place of birth) on December 17, 1848, the youngest of six children. He was orphaned as a child and raised by his uncle, a medical doctor. He was educated at University College, London, and served as a physician in Martoc from 1871 until 1879. He became a Mason in 1875, and was also a member of the Theosophical Society and the SRIA. In 1887 he moved to Camden and became the Coroner for Central London. He retired in 1918 and moved to South Africa in 1921, where he died on July 30, 1925. An interesting footnote in the life of Dr. Westcott, aside from his medical pursuits and occult activities, is that he has recently been presented as a possible suspect in the notorious Jack the Ripper murders of 1888 (Begg *et al* 476).

Dr. Woodman began his medical career as a volunteer surgeon during Louis Napoleon Bonaparte’s *coup d’etat* in 1851 which ushered in the dictatorial Second

³⁸ Defined in Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary (1973) as meaning concealed, secret, or abstruse.



Figure 12: Dr. William Wynn Westcott holding a Golden Dawn Fire Wand



Figure 13: Dr. William Woodman in Masonic regalia

French Empire. He later pursued an unremarkable career as a general practitioner and police surgeon (Grant, 72). One of the first members of the SRIA, he was widely respected as a scholar of Hebrew and the qabalah. His interest in occult activities was purely theoretical, and his involvement in the creation of the Golden Dawn was more as an instigator than nurturer.

According to the “Historical Lecture” presented to new members, the Golden Dawn had its origin in a German magical order named *Die Goldene Dämmerung* which had ceased to exist due to the deaths of its Chiefs. Despite the obfuscation of the London founders, more recent scholarship³⁹ has led to the belief that the organization is based on a paper trail of documents which serendipitously came into the right hands at the right time. Yeats wrote in the Notes to his *Autobiographies*, “The foundation of this society, which took place some forty years ago, remains almost as obscure as that of some ancient religion” (Yeats, 341). Fraulein Sprengel was represented to the membership by Westcott as a Secret Chief. This is one who is acting on the material plane of existence as a representative of the spiritual beings who control events related to the spiritual evolution of human beings. Despite Westcott’s claims, no documentation has been found to verify her existence. It has been posited by Donald Michael Kraig (Kraig, 1989) that she was a high-ranking Rosicrucian connected with a German co-Masonic lodge.⁴⁰

Another theory claims that the original cipher manuscripts, which were the foundation of the first rituals of the Golden Dawn, were discovered by the Reverend A. F. A. Woodford in a locked cupboard owned by the late Kenneth Mackenzie, a leading Masonic figure of

³⁹ See Kraig (1989),

⁴⁰ Co-Masonic organizations are differentiated from standard Masonic lodges by their acceptance of women as full members.

the time and author of *The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia*. A variation of this theory has Woodford discovering the manuscripts in “an old bookstall in London in 1884” (Harper, 1974: 9). Woodford then supposedly showed the manuscripts to Woodman and Westcott, knowing the latter’s reputation as a scholar of esoteric lore and bibliophile, who then passed them along to Mathers for translation. Upon completion of this task Woodman, Westcott and Mathers looked at the materials and realized they had information coherent enough to serve as the basis for the creation of an esoteric order. It should be remembered that all three were Masons, and all three were members of the SRIA.

The philosophical basis of the teachings of the Golden Dawn is grounded in the study of the qabalah, an ancient Hebraic mysticism which posits the interconnection of all things in the universe. The universe may be understood by the study and interpretation of the various symbols through which the universe reveals itself.

There are ten degrees, or levels, in the Golden Dawn system, each corresponding to a sephira of the Tree of Life. The grade structure is as follows:

Third Order: The Secret Chiefs:

10 = 1 Ipsissimus

9 = 2 Magus

8 = 3 Magister Templi

Second (Inner) Order: Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis:

7 = 4 Adeptus Exemptus

6 = 5 Adeptus Major

5 = 6 Adeptus Minor

First (Outer) Order: The Golden Dawn:

4 = 7 Philosophus

3 = 8 Practicus

2 = 9 Theoricus

1 = 10 Zelator

0 = 0 Neophyte

The Golden Dawn proper, that is, the first or outer grades of the order, was never, in fact, a magical order *per se*. The first four grades which comprised the Golden Dawn limited themselves to the study and explanation of basic occult information such as Crowley received at his initiation. These included investigation into areas such as astral projection (or “traveling in the Spirit Vision”), astrology, numerology, gematria, alchemy, and the philosophical concepts behind ceremonial magic. The actual practice of magic was not addressed until a student was elevated to the second order, that of the *Rosae Rubae et Aurea Crucis*, or RR et AC: The Red Rose and the Gold Cross. It was at that point that the student began to practice and experience first hand the altered states of consciousness which were generated by following the various instructions set forth in the advanced teachings. This was achieved through a variety of techniques including breath control, visualization, mental “rehearsals” and yogic exercise. The third level, the Secret Chiefs, was reserved for those who had achieved an advanced stage of enlightenment and technical capability. The final grade, that of Ipsissimus, was achieved after one had “crossed the abyss,” which is to say, had eliminated their own ego and passed beyond human existence, ceasing to function in the mundane world. This is not to say they physically disappear, but rather that they no longer consider the mundane world to be, as it were, their primary place of residence. They are forced to continue to function in the

physical world, but their minds and spirits have developed to a higher plane. Crowley claimed to have achieved his Magister Templi degree in the Sahara in 1909, and achieved the grade of Ipsissimus in Sicily in 1921.

Pranayama, or breath control, is a yogic technique used in conjunction with mantrayoga (speech control) to create a relaxed mental state thereby better enabling the practitioner to experience alternative information about the world. This ability to consciously abdicate control over the decoding of sensory information, and to obtain data or mental sensations external to the five senses, was sought in order to experience an alternate or heightened reality. It also places the practitioner, either performative or magical, in a state of readiness and concentration necessary for the successful completion of the work ahead. Practically all twentieth century acting instruction, from Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares* to contemporary undergraduate acting classes, stress the importance of relaxation as the priming of the body-canvas upon which the performer will then paint their character. The methodology of these initial relaxation exercises, utilized by both performers and magicians are amazingly similar. An acting student would have little difficulty with the following exercise:

STEP ONE. Sit or lay (*sic*) in a place where you will not be disturbed for at least five minutes. Remember to unplug the telephone. Get comfortable. If you are sitting, your back should be straight. Whether sitting or lying down, your legs and arms should not be crossed. If sitting, rest your hands, palms down, in your lap. Your eyes should be closed.

STEP TWO. Visualize a golden ball of beautiful, warm light surrounding your feet. If you cannot "see" the ball of light when you visualize it, that is okay. Just *know* it is there. Truly know that if your powers of visualization were different you would be able to see it. The ball of golden warm light always brings peace and total relaxation. Wherever the ball of light goes, tension departs. Let it go, and as it goes, feel your feet filled with the warm, golden glow of peace and total relaxation.

STEP THREE. Now allow this ball of light to rise up to your legs and up your torso. Then allow it to go down your arms to your fingers, and finally up your neck and into your head until you are completely covered with the warm, golden glow of total peace and relaxation, and all tension is gone. If you notice tension anywhere, send the ball of light there and the tension will vanish.

STEP FOUR. Stay in this state of deep relaxation for a few moments. Know that you can return to this state whenever you like simply by doing the relaxation ritual. If you are having trouble sleeping, try this ritual when you lay (*sic*) down at night instead of suffering or taking dangerous pills. Be at one with yourself.

STEP FIVE. When you are ready to come out of this state of deep relaxation, take three deep breaths and feel fresh life and energy coming into your body with each breath (Kraig, 1988, 7).

However normal this might appear as an acting warm up, it is actually offered as a preparation for magical work by Donald Michael Kraig, one of the best-known contemporary authors on occult practice in America.

The practice of various physical relaxation exercises is a common beginning to any performance or rehearsal. In addition to stretching muscles and ligaments for the purpose of avoiding injury and allowing the body greater flexibility and more fluid movement, it serves to shift the focus of the mind from the external world to a more sensitized state of self-awareness and a more receptive state of consciousness.

Julian Beck, co-founder of The Living Theatre, has noted the importance of breathing technique in performance activity: “Breathing [. . .] begins to lift the mind out of the lower regions, uprising, it releases imagination, understanding, vision, hope, ingenuity, spirit, strength, physical power, it extends longevity, it is masculine and feminine, this breathing in and out [. . .]” (Beck, 31). Breath control is also necessary for the execution of unnatural projection, a practice common to stage and magical work. On stage, the actor must be able to project his voice without seeming exaggeration in order to be heard by the entire audience. While this challenge is occasionally overcome through

the use of microphones in some of the more technically advanced houses on Broadway, most community, university and outdoor theatre productions still require performers to possess breath control sufficient for the effective projection of their voices. The importance of training in proper and effective breathing and projection techniques is obvious when one considers opera.

In magical work, a vocalization technique known as “vibration” is often required. This involves the intonation of specific words and/or phrases whereby selected words are elongated in their pronunciation to the fullest possible extent while utilizing a resonating vocal tone. An example of this vibratory technique may be found in many Christian churches today. Almost every Christian sect which incorporates hymn singing in its services will end its hymns with the pronunciation of Amen which is monotonal and with each syllable being given equal length: Ahhhhh-Mennnnn. The sound of this final pronouncement is very similar to the sound of vibratory work. The difference is twofold. One is the amount of vocal energy invested in the vocalization. When magical work is being done, the magician must commit unreservedly to the act, just as an actor should be committed to any given performative decision they make.

The second difference is the mental activity behind the creation of the physical sound. This is similar to the technique employed by Laurence Olivier in his production of *Oedipus* at the Old Vic in 1945.⁴¹ Olivier claimed to have read a magazine article about ermine trappers in the Arctic spreading salt on the ice. When the ermine lick the salt their tongues become frozen to the ice rendering them incapable of escaping from the trappers. Olivier used this mental image to create within himself a sense of the panicked

⁴¹ This is the production often referred to as *Oedipuff*, as it was a double bill of the Yeats translation of *Oedipus* combined with Sheridan’s *The Critic* in which Olivier played Mr. Puff.

terror and frustration Oedipus felt at discovering how Fate had trapped him just as the ice had trapped the ermine (Spoto, 193, Holden, 205). When vibrating a sound, the magician should be filled with that sound, visualizing the vibrations placing his or her body in synchronization with the vibrations of the universe. Vibratory invocation is one more way whereby the magician creates within his mind the sense of real and believable connection with the universe around him.

The theory behind vibratory practice is that all matter in the universe is composed of vibrating energy. By establishing a vibratory linking with external matter, the magician is able to influence not only the world around him, but the function of his own mind. This concept of harmonic convergence is not new. It is the phenomenon whereby a trained vocalist is able to shatter a wine glass through the vibrations in the air created by the power of his voice or, if a violin note is played near a piano, certain strings of the piano which share the harmonic attributes of the violin string, will begin to resonate. The occult aspect of this process theorizes that the vibrations sent forth by the human voice will resonate within the mind of the magician and stimulate specific sections of the brain thus linking the conscious will of the magician with the unconscious mental power he is attempting to access. Therefore, the mental state of the magician or actor is crucial for the desired result to occur.

The use of some manner of altered vocalization within the context of religious experience is seen in most societies. Priests celebrating Mass in the Catholic Church will chant or sing specific sections of the liturgy while merely speaking others. Buddhists have incorporated the use of assorted mantras in their meditation practices for centuries, the most famous being the elongated (or vibrated) syllable “Om.”

Visualization is another technique which is utilized by both performer and magician. While the practice may superficially resemble merely the exercise of one's imagination, when used in magical work it requires two levels of proficiency. The first is the ability to focus one's attention on the mental creation of sensory perception so that one is capable of examining the object, setting or sensation to the point that one may, through observation, discover additional information about the subject. For example, if one were to visualize a dungeon cell, one would be expected to experience the specific dimensions of the room, describe the specific temperature and level of humidity, see the variations of formation of the stonework, feel the roughness of the wooden bench, smell the moss and mold and feel any draft which may come through the iron-barred window. Beyond that, one should be capable of moving to the window, looking out, and describing whatever scene might appear to lie beyond. Within the confines of an acting exercise, this data would be purely the manufacture of the actor's imagination. When utilized in a magical context, the data perceived should be able to be corroborated through various qabalistic correspondences which confirm the magician's results.

The specific rituals of the Golden Dawn are very similar in style and content to Masonic rituals. The three founding members were all 32 degree freemasons with intimate knowledge of the Masonic rituals, so it would have been a simple matter to use the Masonic structure as a basis upon which to create a more esoteric organization. In both the Golden Dawn and Masonry, specific officers are located at specific compass directions within the temple. During the opening ritual a short versicle and response identifying each officer's title, location, and duties is exchanged. An example of the opening of the Neophyte Ritual of the Golden Dawn is given here:

Hierophant: Let the number of Officers of the Grade and the nature of their offices be proclaimed once again, that the powers whose images they are may be re-awakened in the spheres of those now present and in the sphere of this Order, for by names and images are all powers awakened and re-awakened.

Honored Hiererus, how many Chief Officers are there in this Grade?

Hiereus: There are three Chief Officers: the Hierophant, Hiererus, and Hegemon.

Hierophant: Is there any peculiarity in these names?

Hiereus: They all commence with the letter "H."

Hierophant: And of what is this Letter a symbol?

Hiereus: Of life, because the letter "H" is our mode of representing the ancient Greek aspirate or breathing, and Breath is evidence of Life.

Hierophant: How many lesser Officers are there?

Hiereus: There are three besides the Sentinel: Kerux, Stolistes, and Dadouchos. The Sentinel guards the Portal of the Hall and has a sword in his hand to keep out intruders. It is his duty to prepare the candidate.

Hierophant: Frater Dadouchos, your station and duties?

Dadouchos: My station is in the South to symbolize Heat and Dryness, and my duty is to see that the Lamp and Fires of the Temple are ready at the Opening, and to watch over the Censor and Incense, and to consecrate the Hall and the Fraters and Sorores and the Candidate with Fire.

Hierophant: Frater Stolistes, your station and duties?

Stolistes: My station is in the North, to symbolize Cold and Moisture, and my duties are to see that the Robes and Collars and Insignia of the Officers are ready at the Opening, and to watch over the Cup of Lustral Water and to purify the Hall and the Fraters and Sorores and the Candidate with Water. (Zalewski, 5-6)

In both the Golden Dawn and Masonic lodges, an opening such as this is followed by whatever specific work the lodge has met to accomplish, such as an initiation, other degree work and voting on lodge business. The meeting is then concluded by another performance of ritual dialogue and actions formally "closing" the lodge.

By 1896, two years before Crowley joined the order, there were over three hundred members of the Golden Dawn. Of these, approximately one hundred advanced to the second order, the RR et AC (Gilbert, 1997:46). Most of the rest were content to take a dilettante approach to magic, theorizing over obscure points of esoteric philosophy, and disinterested in the practical applications of their studies. Of the smaller number,

who were truly dedicated, few were in a position to commit the majority of their time to occult activity. The membership included a number of artists involved with theatrical activity during their membership, and also a number of members who, while not theatrical professionals, became involved in productions. The prime example of this latter type was also one of the founding members of the Golden Dawn, Samuel Liddell Mathers.

Samuel Liddell Mathers and the *Rites of Isis*

Samuel Liddell Mathers was born January 8, 1854 in Hackney, England, the son of William Mathers, a commercial clerk of modest means. As with Crowley and Baudelaire, his father died while Mathers was still a child. Mathers then lived with his mother until her death in 1885. Few details about his early life and education are known. His biographer, Ithell Colquhoun, recounts numerous dead ends in her attempts to trace his roots. Early in his life Mathers developed interests in boxing, fencing, and military strategy and, during his early twenties, he joined the Hampshire Infantry Volunteers. A photograph he had taken depicts him wearing the uniform of a Lieutenant, though in fact he never rose above the rank of private. This is a trait Mathers displays throughout his life: he was constantly reminded of his poverty and dependence on others, and he repeatedly denied his embarrassment at his lowly position through the creation of grandiose illusion. An obvious illustration of this habit is his continued use of the name MacGregor. A devout lover of all things Scottish, Mathers claimed descent from that Scottish clan based on nothing more than a fantasy, and incorporated the MacGregor clan



Figure 14: Samuel Mathers in his Lieutenant's uniform

motto as his magical name when he entered the Golden Dawn: “S' Rioghail Mo Dhrem,” (Royal are my people).⁴² Another alias of which he was fond was the Comte de Glenstræ. The persona of Mathers is similar to that of Aleister Crowley in several key areas. Both these men were social climbers, and both falsely posed as nobility. There is an amusing story of an incident when Crowley, passing himself as the Laird of Boleskine, happened to encounter Mathers in his role as the Comte de Glenstræ. Both were outfitted in full ceremonial Highland dress, although neither had a drop of Scots blood in them.

Mathers was initiated as an Entered Apprentice of Masonry on October 4, 1877, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft on November 15, and raised a Master Mason on January 30, 1878 in Hengest Lodge Number 195 in Bournemouth. In 1882 Mathers demitted from his Masonic lodge and was admitted into the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, where he took up Rosicrucianism with enthusiasm.⁴³ He quickly showed his aptitude for ceremonial magic, occult philosophy and esoteric languages, and within four years had become a member of the society's High Council, where he made the acquaintance of Woodman, Magus of the society, and Westcott, under whose tutelage he continued his occult studies.

In 1887, Mathers met Mina Bergson in the British Museum. There was an instant attraction, and Mina became the first initiate of the newly formed Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn on her twenty-third birthday, less than three weeks after the official

⁴² When he entered the RR et AC his Second Order motto became “Deo Duce Comite Ferro,” or “God my Guide, my Companion a Sword.” This reflected his continued interest in military activities, and was taken from a Mars talisman

⁴³ A demit from a lodge means the member resigns active membership

founding of the order. Mina was born February 28, 1865 in Geneva, Switzerland, the fourth of seven children. Her mother, Katherine Levison, was Irish and her father, Michel Gabriel Bergson, was a Polish musician. One of her brothers was philosopher Henri Bergson, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1927.⁴⁴ Mina had studied art at the Slade School of Art on Gower Street in London from 1880 to 1886 and, instinctively drawn to Egyptian themes, spent much of her time in the British Museum studying and copying Egyptian works. In deference to Mathers's love of Scotland, she changed her first name to Moina when they married June 16, 1890. In 1892, they moved to Paris, where Mathers founded another branch of the Golden Dawn, Ahathoor Temple, in 1894. Paris was Mathers' home for the rest of his life.

Dr. Westcott had been forced to resign from the Golden Dawn several years earlier. While it was not unusual at the time to hold Masonic or any number of other fraternal memberships, the higher levels of London government frowned on the idea that one of their coroners was also a practicing magician. As a result, when Dr. Woodman died in 1891, Mathers assumed the sole leadership of the Golden Dawn.

From about 1898, when he and Moina were living at 87 rue Mozart, in the Paris suburb of Auteuil, Mathers had periodically given performances for friends and students of a number of Egyptian rituals which he translated and adapted from originals he had come across in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. He had decorated the largest room in his apartment as an Egyptian temple. Jules Bois, publisher of the newspaper *L'Echo du Merveilleux*, urged Mathers to expand his venue. On December 1 and December 15,

⁴⁴ Two of his early works, *Matter and Memory* (1896) and *Creative Evolution* (1907) attempt to integrate the findings of biological science with a theory of consciousness. He is often believed to have laid the groundwork for modern scientific theories of psychology. He also served as President of the British Society for Psychical Research.

1900 it published illustrated accounts of these *Rites of Isis*, including photographs of Mathers as “the High Priest Ramses,” wearing a white robe under a leopard skin sash, and holding a lotus wand (see Figures 12 and 13). The *Rites* were an attempt to revive interest in ancient religion and ceremonial magic, and also an attempt to develop economic support from sources closer than England.



Figure 12: Samuel Liddell Mathers in *The Rites of Isis*



Figure 13: Moina Mathers in *The Rites of Isis*

As often happens when the leader of an organization is miles away and out of regular communication, dissatisfaction arose within the Isis-Urania temple. This dissatisfaction was aggravated when Florence Farr, acting as temporary head of the order in Mathers' absence, refused to advance Crowley to the next degree on the grounds of "sexual intemperance." Crowley circumvented this blockade by traveling to Paris and having Mathers perform the ceremony himself. This created an even greater rift between the membership in London, who wanted little to do with either Crowley in their lodge or Mathers in Paris. What followed was what has come to be known as "The Battle of Blythe Road." The Isis-Urania Temple was located on the second floor of the building that currently houses George's Restaurant at 36 Blythe Road, Hammersmith, London (see Figure 17).



Figure 14: # 36 Blythe Road, August, 2000

The events that occurred there in April, 1900 have been reported numerous times.⁴⁵ The following brief summary comes from a document titled *The Second Order's Statement of Recent Events which have lead to the present Constitution of the Second Order in London*. It was the Isis-Urania temple's (and, therefore, Yeats' and Farr's) own record of events. It is history as seen by the winning side.

On April 17th, Aleister Crowley, alias Count Vladimir Svareff, alias Aleister MacGregor, otherwise known as Perdurabo, a member of the 4=7 Grade of the Isis-Urania Temple in company with Soror Donorum Dei Dispensatio Fidelis, 5=6, forced the door of the headquarters of the Second Order, changed the locks, and endeavoured to prevent other members entering.

D. D. C. F. [Deo Duce Comite Ferro, aka Mathers] then summoned the members of the 5=6 Grade to personal and separate interviews, showing a statement by D. D. C. F. concerning the appointment by him of a "Envoy" whose identity was concealed, but who ultimately was proved to be the said Perdurabo; every effort being made to cause the Second Order to believe that the Envoy was some unknown person.

In spite of the reasons given for this concealment by D. D. C. F., it is evident that the true reason was, that Perdurabo has never been legally advanced to the Portal nor admitted to the 5=6 Grade, and D. D. C. F. well knew he was a person undeserving of confidence.

On the day appointed for these interviews, the said Perdurabo arrived at the Second Order rooms. He was dressed in Highland dress, a black mask over his face, a plaid thrown over his head and shoulders, an enormous gold or gilt cross on his breast, and a dagger at his side. All this melodramatic nonsense was of course designed in the hope that it would cause members to sign a pledge of allegiance to D. D. C. F. He was, however, stopped by the landlord, and compelled to leave by the Fratres H. E. S. [Hora et Semper: E. A. Hunter] and D. E. D. I. [Demon Est Deus Inversus: W. B. Yeats] assisted by a policeman

Perdurabo, being unable to interview the members, who declined to be frightened by his mask and the rest of his childish make-up, caused a circular to be printed, still not disclosing his identity with "Envoy," and containing the following statement: - "It should be mentioned that the story of the masked man is altogether untrue" (Gilbert, 1986:75-6).

⁴⁵ See Geer, 1995, Gilbert, 1997, Kaczynski, 2002.

This drastic move on Mathers' part was seen as by the lodge as the final straw. On April 19 a resolution was passed expelling Mathers from the Golden Dawn and replacing him with an Executive Board consisting of a Moderator (Florence Farr), a Scribe (Annie Horniman) and a Warden (E. A. Hunter). After nine years, the Golden Dawn had returned to the triumvirate structure of governance under which it had been founded.

Samuel MacGregor Mathers died in Paris in 1918 of unknown causes. The generally accepted theory is that he succumbed to the influenza epidemic sweeping the Continent at that time. It has also been suggested, most notably by John Symonds, that he fell victim to a curse placed upon him by Crowley. After his death, Moina opined that he died as a result of his many years of intense astral interaction with the Secret Chiefs, which had ultimately sapped from him his life force. Moina returned to London after his death and founded the Alpha et Omega Lodge of the Golden Dawn, which she ran for several years until her own death in 1928.

William Butler Yeats

William Butler Yeats was born June 13, 1865, at "Georgeville," near Sandymount Castle, in Dublin. Yeats was born with a thirst for knowledge and a tendency to discount the opinions of others unless he had found truth within them for himself. By the time he was twenty he had co-founded and was presiding over the Dublin Hermetic Society, a group dedicated to the study of esoteric philosophy. Two years later, when he moved with his family to London, he sought out Madame Blavatsky who enrolled him in the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society "about Xmas, 1888" (Donoghue 281). This association was short-lived, as Yeats found Madame Blavatsky overly controlling and what might today be described as a "micromanager," while the Theosophical Society

found Yeats to be unwilling to accept spiritual answers and philosophical explanations on blind faith alone and without proof or evidence beyond intuition.

It was a mutually agreed upon separation, and convenient for Yeats, as he had discovered a more intriguing group with which to associate. He had been introduced to Samuel Liddell Mathers and William Wynn Westcott when they attended several Theosophical lectures. When the Golden Dawn was formed it was the natural next step for him to take.

Yeats joined the Isis-Urania Temple of the Golden Dawn during the 0=0 Neophyte Initiation ceremony held at 17 Fitzroy Street, on Friday, March 7, 1890. He chose as his magical motto “Demon Est Deus Inversus,” the Devil is God in Reverse. This reflects the occult concept that the universe is constructed through balancing opposing forces, and serves as a reminder that both are necessary for the universe to function. It also refers to the duality of man since, if man is a microcosm of the universe and the universe must contain both balancing halves of good and evil, then so too must man contain within his spirit the balanced positive and negative aspects. Annie Horniman continued to address Yeats by this name, or using variations of it, in her correspondence with him well into the following century. Her salutations are often an indication of the tone of the rest of her letter: friendly communications open with “Dear Demon,” or “My Dear Demon,” and less jocular letters begin “You Demon!” (Colquhoun 161).

Yeats clung to his interest in the occult throughout his life, often employing precepts or constructs as the framework upon which he draped the plots of plays or the themes of poetry. As late as 1930 Yeats was still defending his involvement with

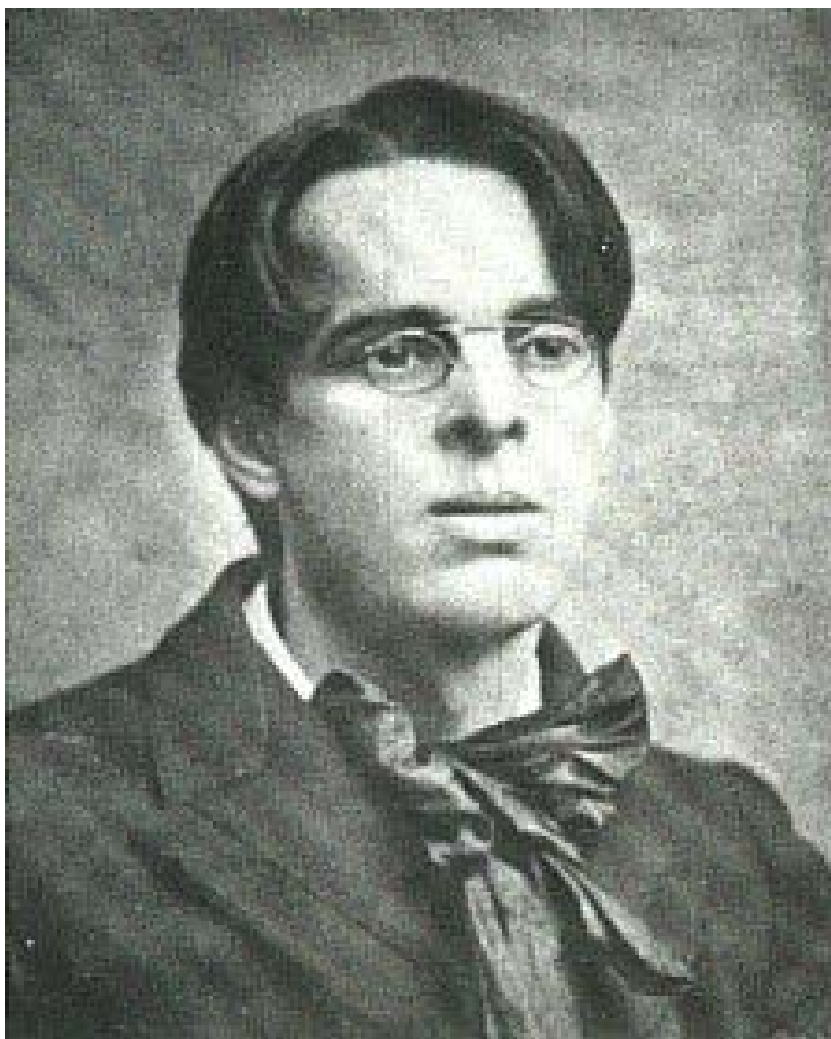


Figure 18: William Butler Yeats about the time of his membership in the Golden Dawn

mysticism and complaining, with some resignation, that this esoteric field of study had yet to find mainstream acceptance. W. H. Auden treated Yeats' occult involvement with disdain: "all those absurd books [. . .], mediums, spells, the Mysterious Orient – *how* embarrassing" (Auden 309, 311), and Harold Bloom's 1970 study *Yeats* has no index listing for either "Golden Dawn" or Theosophical Society. As late as 1990, Adrian

Frazier wrote in *Behind the Scenes: Yeats, Horniman, and the Struggle for the Abbey Theatre* that the Golden Dawn was controlled by “warlocks,” and that

the meetings of secret societies like the Golden Dawn served for at least some of their members the function of an experience of heightened eroticism under the cloak of communication with the sublime. It is true there was more robbing than disrobing, but the meetings in darkened chambers of numbers of female adepts with a few powerful mages, where participants underwent rites of passage from an outer temple to an inner temple, with considerable blindfolding of the women, while male mystagogues sometimes evoked images of fire and spear, cups and water, were an exquisite theatre of the erotic. (Frazier, 158-9)

The term “warlock” was popularly used in the 1960s and 1970s, often by sensationalist writers of fiction, to refer to male witches. It is a term which actually refers to someone of either gender who has been expelled from a wiccan coven for unacceptable behavior. As for the image painted by Frazier of a group of young women being preyed upon by older men, it should be remembered that the genders were about equal in number in the Golden Dawn. One of its founding principles was that the pursuit of esoteric knowledge should be open to all who sought it.

The influence of the Golden Dawn on Yeats’ plays and poetry continued until his death. Although his first play, *The Countess Cathleen*, is a story influenced more by Irish mythology and Christian symbolism than by qabalistic philosophy, it nevertheless displays the fascination for occult themes which Yeats returned to throughout his life.⁴⁶ Images of or references to ghosts and demons occur in many of his plays. Several of his plays, such as *The Unicorn from the Stars* (1908), *The Green Helmut* (1910), and *The Shadowy Waters* (1911), reflect variations on the search for the symbolic Holy Grail. In the first, *The Unicorn from the Stars*, the grail takes the form of a spiritual condition

⁴⁶ Although *The Countess Cathleen* was written in 1892, it was not produced until 1899.

which has been lost. This is the theme of Wagner's *Parsival*. The motif recurs in the ritual work of the Second Order, the RR et AC.

It is interesting to consider these plays as a form of autobiography. Just as Yeats journeyed from Theosophy to the Golden Dawn, with investigations into Catholicism and Hinduism, among other religious systems, on his search for meaning and enlightenment, so do the protagonists of his plays journey on their search for self-actualization. The fact that he felt he was continually seeking answers to questions of philosophy is reflected in several of his characters who may be termed the "Seekers." These seekers include Andrew in *The Unicorn from the Stars*, the stroller in *A Full Moon in March* (1935), and Forgael and Oisín in *The Shadowy Waters*.

When Mathers was expelled from the Golden Dawn in 1900, Yeats was elected to the Executive Board as Instructor of Mystical Philosophy. Yeats continued his association with the Golden Dawn and its members, especially Annie Horniman and Florence Farr, for years. When he moved to Dublin in 1922 he ceased contact with the lodge. He died in 1939, a moderately successful playwright and a world renowned poet.

Annie Horniman and the Abbey Theatre

After considering the several and conflicting theories surrounding the foundation of the Golden Dawn in London, it might well be argued that Annie Horniman was as responsible as anyone else for its creation. The Golden Dawn was initially established and nurtured by the manuscripts translated or written outright by Samuel Liddell Mathers, and Mathers would not have had the time nor the resources to research, translate, and rewrite them had it not been for the financial support given him and Moina by Annie Horniman.

Annie Elizabeth Fredericka Horniman was born October 3, 1860 in Forest Hill, a suburb of London. Her grandfather, John Horniman, was a Quaker who had founded the Horniman Tea Company, the first company to put tea into individual packets. John Horniman married his step-sister, the daughter of his mother's second husband, and had two sons by her. Frederick, the younger of the two sons, was Annie's father. Raised in an environment of affluence, Frederick began indulging his passion for collecting art and artifacts while still in his teens. He married Rebekah Emslie, ten years older than himself, when he was twenty-four in 1859. Annie was born eighteen months later, and, three years after her brother Emslie John was born. The children were raised in an atmosphere which combined wealth and indulgence with typical Victorian values regarding what was socially allowable and what was considered sinful. The children were forbidden, for example, from attending the theatre, and Annie did not see a deck of playing cards until she was almost twenty (Greer, 30; Ervine, 4). Their parents left the responsibility of raising the children primarily to nannies and housekeepers with the result that Annie's strong streak of independence, which she may have inherited from her grandfather, was allowed to develop unchallenged from early adolescence. At the age of seventeen she began smoking cigarettes, a habit she defiantly clung to the rest of her life, despite the social unacceptability of a woman indulging in such an activity. She cared little for social delicacy, preferring to stand up for her ideals which created a great deal of tension at home with her parents.

In 1881, her parents sent the twenty-one year old Annie and her eighteen-year-old brother to Europe for their Grand Tour. This was a common practice among the wealthy



Figure 19: Annie Horniman

where the children would be sent to experience the cultural richness and variety of the Continent. The result of this trip was a resolution made by both children to study art in earnest. Annie began her studies by enrolling in the Slade Art School. It was here she

met and became friends with Mina Bergson. There are suggestions⁴⁷ that during these travels she had fallen passionately in love, which had not been reciprocated or had ended disastrously. Mina (or Moina as she was called by then) and Mathers spent much time helping her through this difficult period, teaching her how to understand her current circumstances through the use of astrology, past-life readings, and psychic techniques for self-protection. In return for these kindnesses Annie found Mathers a job as librarian in her father's extensive private library. For many years thereafter she supported them with quarterly stipends, and frequently became their only source of income.

Through the teaching and support of Mathers and Moina, Horniman developed an interest in the occult. She joined the Golden Dawn in January 1890, taking as her magical motto "Fortiter et Recte," Fortitude and Rectitude. She applied herself diligently to her occult studies, and was the first student to be passed to the Second Order, the RR et AC, on December 7, 1891.⁴⁸ The following year she encouraged Moina to study art in Paris, and funded her move. Horniman did not object when Mathers went with her.

In June 1893, while on a trip to Trondheim, Norway to see several Ibsen plays in their original language, she wrote a paper called "On Progress in the Order." This was instigated by her concern that Golden Dawn initiates felt overwhelmed by the amount of material they were required to learn. She had taken her studies seriously, and felt others should do the same if they expected to gain the benefits. Two months later her grandfather died, leaving her £40,000, the equivalent of several million dollars today. Some of this was used to fund a season of performances presented by Florence Farr at the

⁴⁷ See Greer, 1995, 68-9.

⁴⁸ Florence Farr was the second student admitted. This occurred two weeks later, on the Winter solstice.

Avenue Theatre in London. These productions included the first public production of Yeats' *The Land of Heart's Desire*, a one-act play which served as a curtain-raiser to John Todhunter's *Comedy of Sighs*. The following month the same theatre produced Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.

For the next several years Horniman continued to assail Mathers with complaints about various political intrigues and what she saw as moral irregularities within the Isis-Urania temple. Mathers, running his own lodge in Paris, was alternately indifferent to her complaints and annoyed at her relentless air of superiority. Although he took a "divine right" attitude toward his own superiority over the Golden Dawn, he was also, no doubt, uncomfortable at having to endure rebukes from the person funding him. In 1896 Horniman had had enough and ended her financial support of Mathers. He responded by expelling her from the Order. She returned to the Order after Mathers' expulsion in 1900, but once again became embroiled in political infighting over the leadership of the group. She resigned in 1903 and spent the rest of her life in theatrical pursuits.

She remained friendly with Yeats throughout the Golden Dawn turmoil, as he had supported her in several issues during that time. When he became more involved with the Irish National Theatre Society, she followed him, lending support where she could. On October 8, 1903, Yeats' historical play *The King's Threshold* opened with the costumes designed and constructed by Annie Horniman. She had continued to use the Tarot as Mathers had taught her to discern the implications of events. The day after *The King's Threshold* opened she performed a reading, asking "What is the right thing for me to do in regard to the I.N. Th. now?" The Tarot spread she received told her "Solid materiality needed." Based on her interpretation, she purchased the real estate in Dublin

which became the Abbey Theatre. The building was on the verge of disintegration, and she spent a further £1600 restoring the property and converting it to a functional theatrical space. Expressions of disharmony were heard almost immediately, beginning with the complaint that it was a British woman who was funding the Irish National Theatre. Although there would be contentions with the group, she owned the building until 1910.

In 1907, she had had enough arguments with the Irish National Theatre, and decided to apply her philanthropy in her home country. She went to Manchester where she established the Midland Theatre in the old Midland Hotel.⁴⁹ The following year she purchased the Comedy Theatre in Peter Street and renamed it the Gaiety Theatre. Hundreds of plays were produced there under her auspices. Although the Gaiety's repertoire was extensive, famous for a variety which stretched from Euripides to Shaw, the company was best known for their productions of the so-called "Manchester school" of playwrights. These were local writers such as Harold Brighouse, Stanley Houghton, Basil Dean, and Allan Monkhouse who were creating original works. Dean later found fame as a West End stage producer, and, in the early nineteen thirties, founded Associated Talking Pictures, the company that was later to become Ealing Studios. John Galsworthy, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1932, was another Gaiety alumnus.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ In 2003 its official name is the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza Midland Hotel, but it is still referred to by local inhabitants of Manchester as "the Midland."

⁵⁰ Interestingly, Galsworthy's most famous play, *Justice*, was written in 1910, the same year as Crowley's *Rites of Eleusis*. John Barrymore played Falder, the bank clerk, in the 1916 production at the Candler Theatre on 42nd Street in New York (Atkinson, 146).

Annie Horniman chose her Golden Dawn motto well. She lived her life convinced she was right in whatever she was doing. This resulted in a series of confrontations with fellow members of the Golden Dawn as well as those involved with the theatres she was associated with later in her life. Yet since her death on August 6, 1937, her work in the theatre has been honored, justifying her vision, and she has been called one of the founders of the modern movement in drama

Florence Farr and the Egyptian Plays

Florence Beatrice Farr was born July 7, 1860. Her father was a doctor and personal friend of Florence Nightingale, after whom he named his youngest daughter. As a child she became life-long friends with May Morris, the daughter of William Morris, interior designer, author, painter, and weaver whose company had almost single-handedly revived the art of embroidery in England, and Pre-Raphaelite model Jane Morris.

Through this connection with May Florence became one of the models used in Edward Burne-Jones' "The Golden Stairs" (1880). She was educated first at Cheltenham Ladies College in 1873, and then entered Queen's College in London in 1877. After leaving Queen's College in 1880 Farr took a teaching position, but soon abandoned it for a career on the stage. In 1883 she met Edward Emery, whose father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had been performers on the London stage since the mid-1700s. Farr married Emery December 31, 1884 but within a few years they separated and Emery, with a weakness for horses, cards and drink, left on a tour of America. George Bernard Shaw claims to have been the instigating factor in Farr's decision to divorce Emery for her own security (Bax, viii).



Figure 20: Florence Farr
133

Farr continued to work on the stage and in 1889 met Yeats when her brother-in-law painted Yeats' portrait. Yeats was at that time deeply involved with both the Theosophical Society and editing his three-volume edition of William Blake. In March, 1890 he joined the Golden Dawn and, his memory of her lingering in his mind, convinced fellow member John Todhunter to write a play for her. The following year Farr appeared as the Priestess Amaryllis in *A Sicilian Idyll: A Pastoral Play in Two Scenes*. Yeats, impressed with her beautiful speaking voice and commanding presence on stage, saw her as his poetic muse, the only person capable of effectively reciting his poetry. He also felt her stage presence and performance abilities would be admired and appreciated by his friends in the Golden Dawn. Farr was initiated into the Golden Dawn in July, 1890, taking as her magical motto *Sapientia Sapienti Dono Data*, "Wisdom is a gift given to the Wise."

In December 1892, she starred in Shaw's first play, *Widower's Houses*, at the Royalty Theatre. This was a semi-autobiographical work which painted a unflattering portrait of Jenny Patterson, a woman with whom Shaw was involved at the time. By the beginning of the next year Farr and Shaw were also involved in a relationship. Jenny unexpectedly discovered them together one evening, and the resulting scene was incorporated into Shaw's next play *The Philanderer*. Farr responded via her novel *The Dancing Faun* in which she satirized Shaw's dictatorial approach to "create" her as an actress, and had the satisfaction of "killing" him before the end of the novel (Greer 128).

Shaw saw Farr as an ideal of the "modern woman," but was not impressed with her interest in the occult.⁵¹ On May 8, 1899 she opened in the premiere production of

⁵¹ One of her books, published in 1910 was titled *Modern Woman: Her Intentions*. It was a collection of

Yeats' *The Countess Cathleen*, in the Antient Concert Rooms, Brunswick Street (now Pearse Street), Dublin. In this production she played Aleel, a minstrel with the ability to see into the spirit world.

Farr was the author of several articles published in the *Occult Review*, the *Theosophical Review*, and the *New Age*. She also wrote *The Music of Speech*, which records the attempts she and Yeats made to apply musical notes to poetry for recitals. This theory was grounded in her work in the Golden Dawn, where she expanded the inclusion of “vibrating” during the rituals.⁵² This concept of combining poetry readings and contrapuntal musical selections seems similar to the evening’s entertainment which resulted in Crowley’s *Rite of Artemis*.⁵³ She wrote several of the instructional lectures, or “Flying Rolls” as they were known, for the Golden Dawn, including *Will Power and Hermetic Love* and *Traveling in the Spirit Vision*. Another book, *Egyptian Magic*, showed the parallels between Egyptian magic and qabalistic, alchemical and Rosicrucian works. This was based on Egyptian texts she studied at the British Museum, an interest developed as a direct result of the Egyptian-based rituals of the Golden Dawn.

After Mathers was expelled from the Golden Dawn and Farr was elected to the Executive Board, she found herself involved with further political intrigues within the group. Her friendship with Yeats suffered during this period, as did her relationship with Horniman. In 1902 Farr ended her involvement with the Golden Dawn.

As a final act of magical involvement, she and Olivia Shakespeare co-authored two plays, *The Beloved of Hathor* and *The Shrine of the Golden Hawk*. *The Beloved of*

articles she had written for *New Age*.

⁵² See page 107

⁵³ See Chapter Four, page 204.

Hathor had its premiere performance at Victoria Hall, Archer Street, London, on November 16, 1901. This was part of the celebratory festivities surrounding the inaugural meeting of the London Egyptian Society. The President of the Egyptian Society, Marcus Worsley Blackden, was a fellow member of the Golden Dawn whose magical motto was Ma Wahanu Thesi. According to Darcy Kuntz, this is an Egyptian phrase the meaning of which is unknown (Kuntz, 180). Blackden had been initiated into the Isis-Urania Temple on August 27, 1896.

The Beloved of Hathor is short, roughly thirteen pages. The play is set on the roof of the Temple of Hathor, in c.1500 BCE. Its plot addresses the struggle of earthly love set against the desire for spiritual wisdom. Farr wrote “The play is to be acted against a plain white back-cloth with pale brown hangings on either side, striped to resemble the decoration of a papyrus roll” (Farr, 2001:7).

Hathor was a pre-Dynastic goddess whose name is interpreted as “The House of Horus,” which may be a reference to her as the embodiment of the sky in her role of the Celestial Cow, a representation of the space which surrounds the hawk-deity, Horus, when he takes wing. While Horus was the god associated with the living king, Hathor was the god associated with the living queen. In a Freudian sense this may be interpreted by seeing Hathor as representing the feminine/queen/goddess void into which the male/king/god inserts himself. In earlier periods she was often depicted as an entire cow with the sun disk between her horns, or as a slender woman wearing the horns/sun disk combination headdress. She was also shown at various times as a hippopotamus, a falcon, a cobra, or a lioness. The cow image represents the nourishing and generosity of

the goddess which is always readily available. Hathor embodies abundance in beauty, wealth, security and justice.

Hathor's symbology included such items as a type of rattle called a sistrum, the horns-and-sun disk headdress which in much later times was incorporated into the attire of Isis, the menat (a style of ritual necklace that may have been used for percussive music), and mirrors. Many ancient mirrors and sistra decorated with smiling, often nude Hathors, have been uncovered at archaeological excavations throughout Egypt. Hathor's visage complete with cow ears commonly appears at the top of stone columns in Egyptian temples.

Two months after the premiere of *The Beloved of Hathor*, it was coupled with a new work from the two playwrights, a second Egyptian-influenced work titled *The Shrine of the Golden Hawk*. This is an even shorter work, merely ten pages. The two plays were presented together on January 21 and 22, 1902, again in Victoria Hall. Yeats reviewed this double bill in *The Star* on January 23, 1902. He was more impressed with “the scenic arrangements, which did not grossen the imagination with realism,” the “symbolic costumes,” and “the half-chanting recitation of phrases of ritual” than he was with the scripts themselves. He criticized the “too realistic” acting styles, and found that “neither play stirred in me a strictly dramatic interest” (Farr, 2001:47). Considering the uncomfortable triangle of Farr-Horniman-Yeats, his critique may have been a combination of artistic evaluation and political expediency. Yeats, afraid of losing Horniman’s support in the efforts to establish the Irish National Theatre, sided with her against Farr in several Golden Dawn disputes. What Yeats did find effective was the production concept itself, “an attempt to do a new thing.”

The plays were revived August 21, 1993 at the Rudolf Steiner Theatre in London. Performed by the Company of Hathor and directed by Caroline Wise, of Atlantis Books, this revival was in response to a séance at which Farr had communicated her wish to Wise that they be produced, with all profits going to a breast cancer charity. The Rudolf Steiner Theatre, at 35 Park Road, NW1, close to regent's Park, currently serves as a venue for a variety of classes, workshops, lectures and art exhibits. It is named for author and philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), the Austrian-born founder of a spiritual philosophy called "anthroposophy." This movement, which today has branches throughout the world and its own publishing house, is based on Steiner's efforts to create a universal "science of the spirit" which encouraged personal development. During the latter part of his life, Steiner saw the arts as crucial for translating spiritual science into social and cultural innovation. He wrote a series of plays between 1910 and 1913 which expound on his philosophical views. The Mystery Drama Acting Group in New York City and Spring Valley, New York produced these plays frequently in the 1980s and 1990s. This is an anthroposophical group interested in theatrical performance as a means of philosophical discourse.

Farr continued with her acting career after leaving the Golden Dawn. She toured America in 1907 with a recitation of poetry while she accompanied herself on the psaltery. In 1912 she moved to Ceylon where she became the Principal of the Ceylon College for Girls. She died in Ceylon of cancer on April 29, 1917, and her ashes were scattered in a sacred river.

Conclusion

Among the membership of the Golden Dawn from its formation in 1888 through the schism of 1903 were W. B. Yeats, Florence Farr, Annie Horniman, Constance (Mrs. Oscar) Wilde, authors Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, Dion Fortune, Israel Regardie, and Louis Wilkinson, Christian mystic Evelyn Underhill, and artists W. T. Horton and Sir Gerald Kelly. There were also fourteen medical doctors in addition to Westcott and Woodman, over a dozen members listed as “Reverend,” and several counts, countesses, barons, ladies, and colonels. It is a curious fact that so many talented, intelligent, and high-profile people should be attracted to what was certainly a fringe organization. The answer to why they were attracted may be found in the charter of the Isis-Urania Temple. The Golden Dawn was founded “for the purpose of the study of Occult Science, and the further investigation of the Mysteries of Life and Death, and our Environment . . . This Order is *not* established for the benefit of those who desire only a superficial knowledge of Occult Science.” It attracted scientists, philosophers, and artists, who engaged in the common pursuit of a deeper knowledge of the universe and the role of humanity within it.

There were numerous artistic aspects of the rituals and practices of the Golden Dawn. The theatrical rituals, the colorful costumes and set pieces, and the sense of performance experienced during ritual work were attractive to the creative individuals involved. People joined the Golden Dawn primarily because they were seeking a methodology of exploring and celebrating the nature of the universe and humanity. For individuals of an artistic bent, this methodology would have to include a strong element

of creativity and experience. It was a matching of metaphysical artists and metaphysical artistry which continued to influence them and their work for many years.

CHAPTER 3

THE THEATRE OF ALEISTER CROWLEY

Every man and every woman is a star (Crowley, *The Book of the Law*, 1:3).

Introduction

When Mohandas Gandhi was assassinated in January, 1948 (just a month after Aleister Crowley's own death) Albert Einstein wrote of him: "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this in flesh and blood actually walked the earth" (<http://www.engagedpage.com/gandhi.html>). While the term "larger than life" has been used to an extent that it is now more a cliché than a description, in some cases the phrase is still applicable. Crowley's own life was one of extremes and opposites. Born to wealth, he died in abject poverty. An avid sportsman, he spent forty years of his life abusing all manner of drugs. Possessed of a superior intellect and a university education, he only held one job in his life, a position which lasted for one year. Aleister Crowley was, during his lifetime and for many years after his death, a figure of legend, someone, for better or ill, larger than life. Einstein's assessment of Gandhi might well be applied to him.

This chapter will present a biographical background of Aleister Crowley in order to understand how the life experiences of the man influenced the work of the artist. His

interest in spirituality as the major focus of his life is better appreciated when one considers his childhood exposure to the success a similar pursuit brought to his father. His rebellious actions against a strictly structured morality are better understood when one considers his motivations for performing such rebellions. The biographical survey is followed by a simplified explanation of his magical/philosophical system, his appearances in the works of other authors of fiction, and an overview of his works for the stage, both closet drama and those with a production history. The conclusion locates Crowley's significance in the realm of twentieth century occultism.

Biographical Background

Aleister (*nee* Edward Alexander) Crowley was born October 12, 1875 at 30 Clarendon Square, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, to Edward and Emily Crowley. Crowley's father's family had made a small fortune through the establishment of a number of inns scattered throughout England which sold Crowley Ale.⁵⁴ These were establishments catering to both the rising middleclass who were able to leave their offices for a sandwich and a draft beer at lunch, and also to travelers attracted by the idea of a familiar place away from home. This family business was well established by the time of Crowley's birth, leaving his father free to pursue his primary interest of spreading the teachings of the Plymouth Brethren sect of Christianity throughout England. This was an especially devout and rigorous group that had been founded in 1827 in Dublin, by a Protestant minister of the Church of Ireland, John Nelson Darby, and a "lapsed Roman Catholic" named Edward Cronin (Hutchinson 21). The small sect considered its members to be the Elect of God. The Bible was to be interpreted literally, and the second

⁵⁴ Vincent Beardsley, the father of Crowley's fellow Decadent during the 1890s, Aubrey Beardsley, was the manager of the London branch of Crowley's Brewery 1882-1884 (Sturgis, 19).



Figure 21: Crowley in his early teens.

coming of Christ was thought to be imminent. This belief was so firmly held that the Brethren felt that to sign a lease or life insurance policy “might be held to imply lack of confidence in the promise ‘Behold I come quickly’” (Crowley, 1970:38). The celebration of Christmas was banned as a pagan festival, and the only books permitted in the house were the Bible, which was read aloud daily, and “one or two books by Scott and Dickens” (Crowley, 1970:78). One of Crowley’s tutors

read ‘The Ancient Mariner’ aloud after dinner one night and my mother, after delivering a stormy tirade, snatched me from the contamination of his presence. The reason was that when the Ancient Mariner saw the water snakes playing around the ship, he ‘blessed them unaware.’ An outrageously blasphemous act, for snakes are cursed in Genesis! (*ibid*)

Crowley recalled in his autobiography that he accompanied his father as the latter preached to “vast crowds, all over the country” (Crowley, 1970:39), and it is this memory of his father which may have formed in young Crowley’s mind the attractive image of the religious/cult leader which he himself sought to become later in life.

Edward Crowley died of cancer of the tongue on March 5, 1887, when his son was eleven years old. The young Crowley reacted to this death through a series of rebellious schoolboy incidents which, although insignificant in their severity, prompted his mother to place him in the hands of a series of public schools (among them Malvern and Tonbridge) noted for their discipline. It was she who, upon the discovery of one of his youthful escapades, accused him of being the Great Beast mentioned in the Book of Revelation, an association with which Crowley became fascinated. He was ultimately removed from these schools and tutored privately.

Crowley always had a keen intellect. He remembered in his memoirs joining in at the daily readings of the Bible from age four. When he was eighteen he interrupted a

skiing trip on the continent when his mother wrote him a letter stating he had a week to prepare for his entrance exams to Trinity College, Cambridge. He returned home, spent the week cramming, and won a scholarship. He was fluent in French, German, Italian, Hebrew, Latin, Arabic, and Greek. He would occasionally use mathematic equations to illustrate points of logic in philosophical treatises.

He entered Cambridge in 1895 with plans to join the Diplomatic Service and obtain an ambassadorship, but his primary interests were literary. Upon his arrival at college he presented himself as “Aleister” rather than by his given names “Edward Alexander.” This began after reading that the most propitious name for becoming famous is one comprised of a dactyl followed by a trochee (e. g. “Jefferson Davis” or “Algernon Swinburne”). “Aleister” was also the Gaelic form of “Alexander,” and was much preferred by him over “Aleck,” his family nickname.

In his late teens and early twenties Crowley became an accomplished amateur mountain climber, and made scores of successful climbs in England, Scotland and the Swiss Alps, including the Eiger. This was a passion that was to last into his forties. A handwritten letter from 1921 is reproduced in his *Confessions* which details how he and fellow writer William Seabrook planned to climb Mount Everest. Although a logical and practical plan, it never materialized due to a lack of available funds and the poor physical condition of the planners.

It was also in his late teens that Crowley developed a lifelong interest in chess. At seventeen he edited a chess column in the *Eastbourne Gazette*. During his first term at Cambridge he beat the president of the Cambridge Chess Club, and ultimately became the club’s president himself. H. E. Atkins, one of the few opponents to defeat him during

his undergraduate years, was the future seven-time amateur champion of England. An article appeared in the December 1997 issue of the magazine, *Chess Monthly*, which reproduced several of his games and concluded that “he had successes against some starry names to his credit” (25). The article goes on to list a series of names “all of them strong players. Crowley’s record against such opponents was respectable” (*Chess*, 62:9, 28). Israel Regardie, Crowley’s secretary from 1928 to 1932, recalled how Crowley would play Regardie and, on occasion, other after-dinner guests, by setting up two chess tables, taking a seat in an adjoining room and playing both games simultaneously without looking at the boards. “More often than not he was able to beat us both” (Regardie, 1970:15). In the 1930s one of his regular opponents was William Winter, amateur grand champion of England at the time.

On his twenty-first birthday, Crowley came into an inheritance from his father of £60,000. This would have, in the currency of 2003, the purchasing power of roughly \$4 million dollars. During breaks from school Crowley continued to indulge himself in frequent mountaineering expeditions around Europe, and had begun to question what it was he wanted to do with his life. In October 1896, he became seriously ill and began to contemplate his own mortality. Aspiring to achieve more with his life than would be forgotten soon after his death and, perhaps remembering the influence of his father on large numbers of people, he began to explore spirituality and the occult as a means of influence. Among the books he read at this time was *The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary* by Councillor von Eckartshausen, a work that suggests that behind organized religion there lies another secret organization that truly controls many world events. Crowley began to search for this hidden group.

Crowley had been writing poetry since the age of ten and, upon acquiring his inheritance, began to publish his works in expensive private editions. In 1897 he issued his first publishing effort, *Aceldama, A Place to Bury Strangers In* by “A Gentleman of the University of Cambridge.” This nom de plume is either homage to or plagiarism of Percy Bysshe Shelley who had published his *The Necessity of Atheism* in 1811 under the title of “A Gentleman of the University of Oxford.” Another reference to Shelley occurs in Crowley’s life when, in later years, Crowley referred to himself in diary entries and letters as “Alastor, the Spirit of Solitude.” This is the title of a poem written by Shelley in 1815 and published the following year.

A chance meeting in Switzerland in 1898 with a chemist named Julian Baker provided Crowley with a lead to the secret group for which he had searched ever since reading Eckartshausen. Back in London, Baker introduced him to another chemist, George Cecil Jones, who had joined the Golden Dawn in July, 1895. This group appeared to Crowley to be the organization for which he had been looking, and he was soon introduced to Samuel Liddell Mathers, one of the three founding members. Mathers was impressed with Crowley’s self-taught knowledge of occult subjects, and initiated him into the Order on November 26, 1898.⁵⁵ Also initiated that evening were Alice Maude Stracey (Lozal je serai), Fanny Beatrice Hunter (Beata est veritas), and Lizzie Morris (Ex oriente lux). Crowley took as his magic motto “Perdurabo” (I Shall Endure). Crowley’s impressions of his initiation have been discussed in Chapter Two. When Crowley discovered the Golden Dawn his formal education at Cambridge ended, and he left the

⁵⁵ In his *Confessions* Crowley gives November 18. See Crowley, 1970:176; cf: Gilbert, 1986:156.

university without a degree. Yet, for the rest of his life, he referred to himself as a “Cambridge man.”

The following month, Crowley took his second degree, that of Zelator, and in January and February of 1899 he underwent the third and fourth degrees. Following this rapid ascension, the Order required a three-month waiting period before further advancement, so Crowley was not able to take the fifth degree, that of Philosophus, until May. It was at this point that Florence Farr and Yeats refused to advance him, and so Crowley went to Paris and had the degree conferred under Mathers’ personal supervision. Yeats, in a letter to Lady Gregory dated April 24, 1900, offered an explanation of these events of 1899 and of Crowley’s delay in advancement in the order:

I have had a bad time of it lately. I told you I was putting MacGregor out of the Kabbala [the Golden Dawn]. Well, last week he sent a mad person whom we had refused to initiate to take possession of the rooms and papers of the Society [. . .]. The envoy is really one Crowley, a quite unspeakable person. He is I believe seeking vengeance for our refusal to initiate him. We did not admit him because we did not think a mystical society was intended to be a reformatory. (Symonds, 1989: 36).

Crowley held an equally low opinion of Yeats, reflected in an anecdote published in Crowley’s *Confessions*:

I had a set of paged proofs in my pocket one evening, when I went to call on W. B. Yeats. I had never thought much of his work; it seemed to me to lack virility. I have given an extended criticism of it in *The Equinox* (1:2, 307). However, at the time I should have been glad to have a kindly word from an elder man. I showed him the proofs accordingly and he glanced through them. He forced himself to utter a few polite conventionalities, but I could see what the truth of the matter was.

I had by this time become fairly expert in clairvoyance, clairaudience and clairsentience. But it would have been a very dull person indeed who failed to recognize the black, bilious rage that shook him to the soul. I instance this as a proof that Yeats was a genuine poet at heart, for a mere charlatan would have known that he had no cause to fear an authentic poet. What hurt him was the knowledge of his own incomparable inferiority. (Crowley, 1970:166)

Yeats also appears in Crowley's novel *Moonchild* (written in 1917, published in 1929) as "Gates":

The third commissioner was the brains of the business. He was a man highly skilled in black magic in his own way. He was a lean, cadaverous Protestant-Irishman named Gates, tall, with the scholar's stoop. He possessed real original talent, with now and then a flash of insight which came close to genius. But though his intellect was keen and fine, it was in some way confused; and there was a lack of virility in his make-up. His hair was long, lank and unkempt; his teeth were neglected; and he had a habit of physical dirt which was so obvious as to be repulsive even to a stranger.

But there was no harm in him; he had no business in the Black Lodge at all; it was but one of his romantic phantasies to pose as a terribly wicked fellow. Yet he took it seriously enough, and was ready to serve Douglas in any scheme, however atrocious, which would secure his advancement in the Lodge. He was only there through muddle-headedness; so far as he had an object beyond the satisfaction of his vanity, it was innocent in itself - the acquisition of knowledge and power. He was entirely the dupe of Douglas, who found him a useful stalking-horse, for Gates had a considerable reputation in some of the best circles in England. (Crowley, *Moonchild*, 152-3)

The "habit of physical dirt" referred to is repeated in Crowley's *Confessions* where he remembered Yeats as "a lank disheveled demonologist who might have taken more pains with his personal appearance without incurring the reproach of dandyism" (Crowley, 1970, 177). The "Gates-Yeats" connection was not the only veiled reference to associates of Crowley in *Moonchild*. "Douglas" was a thinly-veiled representation of MacGregor Mathers. "Lavinia King" was Isadora Duncan, and Lavinia's brother was Duncan's brother Raymond. "Lisa de Giuffria" was Mary d'Este, a mistress of Crowley's who was the traveling companion of Isadora Duncan at the time Crowley became involved with her in 1911.⁵⁶ "Sister Cybele" was Leila Waddell, Crowley's mistress at

⁵⁶ Her full name at the time of her involvement with Crowley was Mary D'Este Sturges. Her son Preston, later became a well-known film director in Hollywood.

the time the novel was written. Crowley's sense of humor is revealed not merely through the disguised inclusion of real acquaintances of his in the novel, but also through the names by which they were known in the book. "Miss Badger" was Gwendolen Otter, a friend of Crowley's in London famous for her salons. "Arthwait" was Arthur Edward Waite, a fellow member of the Golden Dawn and the author of several books on the tarot and Masonry. Dr. Victor Vesquit was Dr. W. Wynn Westcott, one of the founders of the Golden Dawn, and "Lord Antony Bowling" was Hon. Everard Fielding, who had joined Crowley's AA as one of its first members in 1909. The "Black Lodge" with which Douglas is involved is a fictionalized version of the Golden Dawn.⁵⁷

At the time of his early initiations Crowley was living in a spacious upstairs apartment at 67-69 Chancery Lane with a fellow member of the Golden Dawn, Allan Bennett. Bennett was a chemist by trade, and acknowledged by many in the Golden Dawn to be one of the more talented magicians, but he suffered from debilitating asthma. He tutored Crowley in magic during their time together, and Crowley eventually organized the means to send Bennett to Ceylon for his health and to study Buddhism. Crowley then sought a secluded home suitable for his attempt to contact his Holy Guardian Angel. This is a magical operation which requires six months to prepare and perform, the object of which is to come into conscious contact with one's Higher Self, Holy Guardian Angel, or the Freudian Superego, depending on what terminology one wishes to apply. The specific procedure may be found in *The Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*, a work which had been discovered in the Bibliothèque d' Arsenal by Mathers and subsequently translated by him. The requirements for the operation

⁵⁷ See the cast list of *Ali Sloper; or the 40 Liars* for further examples of this practice.

included performing the specific rituals in a secluded place which had a terrace facing north. Crowley found the ideal location on the southern shore of Loch Ness. He had gone to Scotland to climb the rocks which overlook the Loch. He noticed a rambling, single-story, U-shaped lodge named Boleskine. Located on the B852 road, between Fort Augustus and Inverness, which is seventeen miles away, the name adds up to 418, the number of Aiwass and Abrahadabra.⁵⁸ Boleskine House was built in the late eighteenth century on land acquired from the Church by the Honorable Archibald Fraser, a relative of Lieutenant General Simon Fraser, the Lord Lovat at the time. Archibald Fraser reputedly chose this site for a house in order to irritate the current Lord Lovat, whose lands surrounded the property, in retribution for Lord Lovat's ancestor, the 11th Lord Lovat, also named Simon, supporting the English during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. The entire estate totaled approximately forty seven acres, and Crowley made arrangements to purchase the property, which included a gatehouse, formal gardens, and the Frazer family cemetery, by offering the owner £2000, double the value of the property at that time.⁵⁹

After taking the Philosophus degree in Paris, and after the Blythe Road incident, Crowley decided to remove himself from the contentious atmosphere engulfing the Isis-Urania Temple. He sailed to New York, and then traveled to Mexico where he was met by a mountaineering friend, Oscar Eckenstein. He stayed in Mexico for nine months, climbing mountains and writing poetry, traveled to San Francisco, and then to Hawaii

⁵⁸ Boleskine = בולשכין = Beth-Vau-Lamed-Shin-Kaph-Yod-Nun = 418. See Table 1, page 31.

⁵⁹ In May, 1914, Crowley deeded the house to the OTO (in effect to himself) for £500. In 1918 the OTO sold it to Dorothy C. Brook for £2500. It was bought by Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin in the early 1970s. In 1991 Page sold it to a Mr MacGilvary for £250,000.

and Ceylon, where he stayed with Allan Bennett and studied yoga and Buddhism. He traveled through India staying at ashrams and studying with Hindu gurus, and co-sponsoring the first expedition to Mount Godwin Austen, also known as Chogo Ri or K2, the second highest mountain in the world.⁶⁰ Although they survived at an altitude of 20,000 feet for 68 days, a record that would stand for decades, they were ultimately defeated by the inclement weather and did not reach the summit. That accomplishment would not be achieved until 1954.

Crowley continued on his way back to London, with a short stay in Paris. Here he met Somerset Maugham (1874-1965), and the two took an instant dislike to each other. Maugham later used Crowley as the basis for the character Oliver Haddo in his novel, *The Magician* (1908). Crowley also met August Rodin and collaborated with him to produce *Rodin in Rhyme*, a series of poems inspired by the work of the artist.

He returned to Boleskine in 1903, after almost eighteen months abroad, and met and married Rose Kelly, the sister of his friend Gerald Kelly.⁶¹ Rose, already a widow, had become engaged to two men at the same time, and was interested in neither of them. Crowley offered her a marriage of convenience which would extract her from the social awkwardness and allow her the freedom to pursue life as she wished. Much to her family's disapproval, she and Crowley eloped and were wed in the office of the justice of the peace in Dingwall, Scotland on August 12, 1903.

Their honeymoon took them to Paris, Naples, Cairo, India, and then back to Cairo in the spring of 1904. Rose, who had exhibited neither talent nor interest in magic up to

⁶⁰ A play based on a fictional ascent of this mountain, *K2*, was written by Patrick Meyers and produced at Arena Stage in 1982.

⁶¹ Kelly became a well-known portrait artist, was knighted in 1945, and became President of the Royal Academy in 1949.

this point, began experiencing trances, announcing that “they” were waiting for Crowley. Following the instructions given by Rose during one of these trances, Crowley entered a room of their hotel suite precisely at noon for three consecutive days and, for one hour, on April 8, 9, and 10, 1904, wrote down the dictation he was given. This record, known as *The Book of the Law*, became the most influential event in Crowley’s life.

Crowley believed *The Book of the Law* was a message from his Holy Guardian Angel, a praterhuman (his word) intelligence named Aiwass, announcing the next evolutionary step for mankind. According to Crowley’s explanation, there had been to date two spiritual aeons. At the beginning of the world was the aeon of Isis, the Mother, represented by various forms of Gaia or goddess worship. This was followed by the aeon of Osiris, the Father, which brought forth the Old Testament Jehovah, the supremacy of Odin, Zeus, Ra, and other male deities. Aiwass was announcing the beginning of the third aeon, that of the Child, represented by the Egyptian god Horus. Horus was the son of Isis and Osiris, and represented the combination of kingship and divinity. Just as the living pharaoh was a Horus, when he died, his successor became the new living image of Horus and the dead king became Osiris, Horus' father. The pharaoh was his own father and his own son, the embodiment of the cycle of death and rebirth. The cyclic renewal of creation was thus ensured by the constantly renewing monarchy, and the cyclical rebirth of the god. In such a system, Horus is a representation of the duality of existence: the mortal who is simultaneously a god. Horus himself is a deity of duality. Ra-Hoor-Khuit is the active form of Horus, hence the name of the current Aeon, while the passive form is Hoor-Paar-Kraat. Horus thus manifests in two ways, active and passive, male and female. In Crowley’s mind, he had been chosen by the Secret Chiefs to be the Prophet of

the New Aeon and to carry this message to the world. It does not take a deep insight into Freudian psychology to recognize the parallels between this and Crowley's father. But Crowley was simultaneously emulating and rejecting his father. At the heart of Crowley's philosophy was the belief that Man is about to enter a new stage of evolution in which he must take responsibility for the godlike powers he is developing. These are not to be construed as godlike powers in the sense of a comic book hero, but by recognizing our technological and extrasensory powers, developing them, and applying them judiciously. It also means we as a species are developing spiritually, and that the morality appropriate for past aeons must be jettisoned in favor of a more advanced ethos befitting our new development. Man is the embodiment of the Child-God represented by Horus. Mankind is its own progenitor and its own creation. This is the essence of the message founding the *Rites of Eleusis*. It is a concept of personal responsibility and self-reliance on a cosmic scale.

Book one, verse 39 of *The Book of the Law* says: "The word of the Law is **Θελημα**." 'Thelema' means "will" in Greek. The central doctrine of *The Book of the Law*, and the phrase that became synonymous with Crowley, occurs in verse 40: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." This is not, as is often believed, a license to do whatever one feels like doing. Rather it is an instruction to each individual to discover their purpose in life and then to follow it. When Crowley initially read through what he had written he was confused by some parts and put off by others. He packed the manuscript in his trunk and continued with his trip.

His wife Rose bore him a daughter later that year (1904) but at the age of two the child died of typhus in Rangoon. Crowley joined another major mountaineering

expedition in 1905 to Kanchenjunga. This is the third highest peak in the world, 100 feet shorter than K2. It ended in disaster when several of the group deserted the climb and died in an avalanche. Kanchenjunga remained unconquered until 1955.

In 1906, Rose and Crowley walked across the southern half of China from Burma into what is today Viet Nam and Cambodia while Crowley studied Buddhism and Hinduism at various Indian and Southeast Asian Temples and ashrams. In 1907, a second daughter was born. For five years following the reception of *The Book of the Law*, Crowley continued his world travels, his writings on the qabalah, his magical operations, and the gradual fermentation in his mind of the concept of a comprehensive magical system which would incorporate universal precepts from numerous religions, yet be based on a system of scientific inquiry. In 1907, Crowley founded his own magical organization, the AA,⁶² in collaboration with fellow ex-Golden Dawn member George Cecil Jones and two new students of magic, Captain J. F. C. Fuller and the poet Victor Neuburg.⁶³

In 1909, while in his attic at Boleskine looking for a pair of skis, he re-discovered the lost manuscript of *The Book of the Law*. He reexamined it and, in the light of his training in various philosophical and esoteric spiritual systems, began to identify teachings and implications. He ultimately wrote two commentaries on the *Book of the Law*, both much longer than the original work, in order to explain it to himself, but died with many verses and references still ambiguous in his mind.

⁶² See Introduction, page 33.

⁶³ For more detailed biographical information on Fuller and Neuburg see Chapter Four.

By 1909, Rose had become an incurable alcoholic, and they divorced. Crowley was spending the last of his inheritance on the publication of volume one of his periodical the *Equinox*. True to its title, issues were published in March and September from 1909 through 1913, and contained short stories, poetry, plays, and reviews. It also contained an enormous amount of occult teaching, much of it the theory and methodology he had learned in the Golden Dawn. As a result of what was perceived by Mathers to be a violation of Crowley's oath of secrecy, Mathers sued him to keep the material from being published, and the case went to trial on March 21, 1910. Mathers lost, and the resulting publicity brought more new members to the AA. There had been 19 new applicants in 1909, but the following year the number rose to 26, among them Commander G. M. Marsten, and Leila Waddell, both instrumental in the creation of the *Rites of Eleusis* later that year.⁶⁴

It is interesting to note the flood of plays which followed the production of the *Rites of Eleusis*. Although Crowley would not have considered "playwright" to be on the short list of phrases he would have used to describe himself, his literary style seems to have been influenced significantly by the activities in which he was involved the year before. Beginning in January, 1911, he wrote seven plays over the course of the calendar year. Certainly his close association with Waddell at this time also contributed to this new-ignited interest.

In 1912 Crowley was approached by Theodore Reuss (1855-1923), the Outer Head of the Ordo Templi Orientis, and accused of divulging secrets of that order. Crowley was baffled by this accusation, having no knowledge of this organization, until

⁶⁴ See Chapter Four.

Reuss showed Crowley examples of how the secrets could be discovered through the study of some of Crowley's works. It occurred to Crowley that, through his poetry and "received books," he had been unknowingly communicating magical information. Reuss, keeping in mind the legal outcome experienced by Mathers two years earlier, saw no other option than to issue a charter to Crowley, appointing him National Grand Master General X° of the OTO for Great Britain and Ireland. Later, when Crowley's reputation would become fodder for the British tabloids, he would be accused of declaring himself "King of Ireland." That accusation stems from his title in the OTO which included the phrase "King of Ireland, Iona, and all the Britains in the Sanctuary of the Gnosis." Crowley's appointment included authority over an English language rite of the lower degrees of the OTO, which was given the name "Mysteria Mystica Maxima," or MMM. Ultimately, in 1925 Crowley became the International Head of the OTO, a post he would hold until his death.

In 1913 Crowley took Leila to Russia with a group of female violinists which he called the "Ragged Rag-Time Girls." During this trip he composed two of his best-known literary works, the Gnostic Mass and the ecstatic poem *Hymn to Pan*. At the outbreak of World War I, Crowley, claiming the Foreign Office had no use for his services, sailed to New York, where he resided for the duration of the war. While there he became contributing editor for *The International* magazine. The editor, George Sylvester Viereck (1884-1962), was deeply involved in the movement to bring the United States into the war on the side of Germany. His preoccupation with these endeavors often left Crowley in complete control of the content of the magazine. Crowley took



Figure 21: Crowley wearing his “solar-phallic” forelock, about 1912.

advantage of this situation by writing most of the content himself under a variety of pseudonyms, a freedom he had previously enjoyed with the *Equinox*. Since Viereck was pro-Germany, Crowley wrote a number of articles which later brought accusations that he was a traitor. He was never officially charged, and claimed that his articles were parodies written to provoke a pro-British attitude. One incident may be used to understand why the accusation was more than unsubstantiated mudslinging. It also demonstrated his deep drive for personal publicity.

In New York on July 3, 1915, Crowley, Leila Waddell, and several others went out in a motorboat to the Statue of Liberty where Crowley made a brief speech in which he renounced his British citizenship and swore “to fight to the last drop of my blood to liberate the men and women of Ireland,” tearing up what he claimed was his British passport. Leila then played *The Wearing of the Green* on the violin (Symonds, 1989: 207). This event was reported by the *New York Times*, which included this amusing anecdote:

A touch of comedy to the ceremonies over which Crowley and his companions laughed themselves the next day was that the party had intended to go through their ritual on the steps at the base of the Statue of Liberty, but, giving more mind to the vision of the Irish Republic than to practical details, those who arranged the journey neglected to obtain Governmental permission to land on Bedloe's Island. When the launch stopped at the dock, therefore, a stolid watchman who displayed neither Irish nor English sympathies, but who had fluent command of New York's most emphatic language, refused to let the patriots set foot on the "land of liberty." So the ceremonies were held in the boat while it drifted near the island. (*New York Times*, July 13, 1915)

The question of patriotism comes into play when one realizes that there was strong Irish support for Germany during the first World War, a political connection which

was influenced by the growing movement to create an independent Ireland.⁶⁵ The Easter uprising was less than a year away at this time, and Crowley's declaration would seem to foreshadow the Proclamation of the Irish Republic which was published and distributed on Monday, April 24, 1916. Since Crowley's statement was so vehemently pro-Irish, it was not difficult to link the pieces together: pro-Irish meant pro-German; since both Ireland and Germany were at odds with England, and Crowley supported them both, Crowley must be a traitor. Evidence which disputes his role as a German or Irish spy or traitor includes the fact that, at the end of the war, Crowley and his entourage, which by now included two mistresses and several of their children, returned to England without incident.

In 1920 he rented an old farmhouse in Cefalu, Sicily and created the Abbey of Thelema, ostensibly a school for the propagation of *The Book of the Law* and his brand of magic. Raoul Loveday, a young Oxford student, came to the abbey to study with Crowley and died of enteritis in February, 1923. The British tabloids energetically pursued the story, and two months later Crowley was expelled from Italy by Mussolini.

For the remainder of the 1920s, Crowley traveled through France, Germany and North Africa and, apart from several important publications, the rest of his life was a slow spiral downward. 1929 saw the publication of the first two of six projected volumes of his autobiography, or autohagiography, as he called it. He also published that year what is considered to be his most important work on magic, *Magick in Theory and Practice*. This is actually the third part of a larger work which was planned to contain four sections. The first section, *Mysticism*, was published in 1912, and part two,

⁶⁵ Much of the arms and munitions used by the various republican Irish groups were purchased from or supplied by Germany.

Magick:Elementary Theory, in 1913. Part four, *The Equinox of the Gods* (*Equinox* 3:3), an analysis of *The Book of the Law*, was published in 1936. The publication plans for the four volumes is a good example of how qabalistic correspondences and meaning pervaded every aspect of Crowley's actions. The work was planned in four parts, relating to the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. The books were to be 5-5/16" square, and were to be priced at 4 groats, 4 tanners, 4 "Lloyd George groats," and 4 shillings, respectively.⁶⁶ The color schemes for the four books was to correspond with the traditional color associated with the cardinal directions, thus: yellow (corresponding with the direction East), blue (West), red (South), and green (North).

In October, 1930 he met Aldous Huxley, and the two continued a sporadic correspondence. It has been conjectured that Crowley was the person who originally sparked Huxley's interest in mescaline, culminating in his *The Doors of Perception* in 1954, but there is no substantive proof of this. He was able to publish several more books, notably *The Book of Thoth* (1944), his explanation of the correspondences within the Tarot including his own designs for the cards incorporating his specific symbolism, and *Olla: Sixty Years of Song* (1947), a final anthology of his poetry. He was declared bankrupt in 1935 and died in Hastings on December 1, 1947 of myocardial degeneration complicated by bronchitis.

Crowley wore many masks during his life. As a child, he was "Aleck" to his family. At Cambridge he became "Aleister." When he rented his flat in Chancery Lane he did so under the name "Count Svareff." When he moved to Scotland he became the Laird of Boleskine. In Cairo with his wife he passed himself as Prince Chioa Khan,

⁶⁶ See Crowley, 1997:lxxiii

“Chioa” translating into “Beast.” When he translated the Tao Te Ching of Lao-Tsu he issued the work under the name Ko Hsuan. The masks were not merely noms de plume. At various times in his life Crowley was a Victorian explorer cut from the same cloth as one of his heroes (and one of the listed saints in his Gnostic Mass) Sir Richard Burton, and an athlete of recognized endurance. Yet his reputation was also one of profligacy, vice and indulgence. His personal correspondence throughout his life casually reflects the racial bigotry prevalent in his class and time, yet he took lovers of both sexes and of all races. He considered himself a cultured man of letters and a member of the ruling class, yet much of his life was spent in poverty and drug addiction.

He was also a tireless self-promoter. While in New York during the war, he gave a series of interviews to newspapers and magazines such as *The World Magazine*, attempting to create interest in his latest paintings which were then on display in a local gallery. He was quoted as saying he was not sure what type of artist he was, but “offhand, I’d say I was an old master.” In order to demonstrate the depth of his feeling for a current relationship, on September 21, 1930 Crowley left a suicide note in Cintra, Portugal and, through the intervention of friends, made sure his disappearance was reported in two prominent Portuguese newspapers, *Diario de Noticias* and the *Noticias Ilustrado*, as well as by the French publication *Detective*, and in Britain by *The Empire News*.⁶⁷

His contributions to twentieth century occultism include creating a new and original system of ceremonial magic which combines western ceremonial methods with

⁶⁷ For further examples of Crowley’s penchant for publicity see the *Crowleyana* website at <http://www.crowleyana.co.uk> which archives a decade-by-decade collection of contemporaneous newspaper and magazine articles about Crowley’s activities.

oriental yogic, meditative, and tantric techniques; codifying, cross referencing, annotating and, to a great extent, demystifying the qabalah, and acting as the spiritual precursor of many of the occult-oriented organizations in England and the United States today.

Gerald Gardner, widely recognized as the father of the neo-pagan movement in the 1950s, met Crowley on several occasions and Crowley's influence is more than evident in several of Gardner's rituals. Crowley was also the first person who kept a record of performing the Enochian magical techniques taught by the Golden Dawn.⁶⁸

Crowley was the head of two separate magical organizations at the time of his death. The OTO and the AA. The OTO is a more Masonically-oriented organization which involves group rituals and meetings, and has a much more public face than does the AA. The AA is structured such that anyone involved should know only two other people in the organization: their immediate superior (i.e. the person who initiated them) and the student they themselves have. There is a structured dues system for the OTO, but members of the AA are not supposed to charge for their tutelage. Both organizations take *The Book of the Law* as their philosophical basis, and it is not unusual for memberships to be held in both organizations simultaneously.

Crowley's Magick

Crowley's system of magic had several fathers. It owed a great deal to Samuel Mathers' love of ritual and Egypt; it owed even more to Crowley's father's evangelical spirit, and the religious fervor and King James language young Crowley grew up

⁶⁸ The system of ceremonial magic recorded and performed by Dr. John Dee (1527-1609) and Edward Kelley (1555-c.1595). Dee was a mathematician and astrologer to Elizabeth I. It has been claimed that he was the model for Prospero and King Lear. Kelley was a psychic who acted as the medium during their rituals. Kelley supposedly contacted the angel Uriel, who taught him Enochian, the language of the angels. The language is so named because it was first given to Enoch, the Biblical figure who "walked with God" and was taken directly to Heaven without experiencing death. Crowley claimed to be a reincarnation of Kelley.

witnessing. Finally, it is the result of Crowley's ability to synthesize a variety of philosophical, spiritual, metaphysical, and scientific systems from all around the world into a workable and, at least internally, logical whole. The central doctrine of *The Book of the Law* can be stated simply. First and foremost is the commandment "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law"(1:40), also reiterated as "Thou hast no right but to do thy Will." This does not give one license to do whatever one wants to do irregardless of temporal or moral law. It means that within each individual is a True Will, an ability or reason for which they are here on this plane of existence, something which they can do better than anything else. But half the road to success is discovering that "something." *The Book of the Law* therefore states that "every man and woman is a star" (1:3), and just as each star has it's separate orbit, each man and woman has their separate True Will and the only serious business of life is to discover one's True Will and then do it. As was inscribed at the Delphic Oracle, "Know thyself."

In the Introduction to *Magick in Theory and Practice* Crowley outlined his vision of magic being incorporated into everyday life:

This book is for

ALL:

for every man, woman, and child.

My former work has been misunderstood, and its scope limited, by my use of technical terms. It has attracted only too many dilettanti and eccentrics, weaklings seeking in "Magic" an escape from reality. I myself was first drawn to the subject in this way. And it has repelled only too many scientific and practical minds, such as I most designed to influence.

But

MAGICK

is for

ALL.

I have written this book to help the Banker, the Pugilist, the Biologist, the Poet, the Navvy, the Grocer, the Factory Girl, the Mathematician, the Stenographer, the Golfer, the Wife, the Consul - and

all the rest - to fulfil themselves perfectly, each in his or her own proper function... I must make

MAGICK

the essential factor in the life of

ALL . (Crowley, 1929:xi)

Magic being “for All,” Crowley leaves unexplained why he then proceeds to write a book, ostensibly aimed at Factory Girls and Pugilists, which repeatedly incorporates phrases and passages in Latin, Hebrew and classical Greek. Methodology aside, Crowley’s stated aim is quite clear. Magic, specifically Thelemic Magic, is to be the daily practice of those who aspire to self-actualization. It is, as the motto of the AA says, “The method of Science, the Aim of Religion.”

Crowley in Fiction

It is clear that Crowley enjoyed incorporating fictionalized versions of real people in his writings. But, that road goes both ways. A number of other writers have found Crowley’s life and/or personality so interesting they have adapted aspects of him into their writings. Crowley has been presented in fictionalized form in a number of works and in a variety of media. The first appearance of a character based on him was in Somerset Maugham’s *The Magician* (1908), where he appeared as the evil magical Oliver Haddo. Maugham (1874-1965) went so far as to name Haddo’s home “Skene,” but placed it in Staffordshire instead of the Scottish highlands.⁶⁹ Crowley also appears in a short story entitled *A Visit to Anselm Oakes* which is found in Christopher Isherwood's book *Exhumations* (1966). M. R. James (1862–1936) used him as the model for Karswell in his classic short story of the supernatural, *Casting the Runes*, which later became a cinematic cult classic under the lurid title *Night of the Demon* (1957). H. R.

⁶⁹ Crowley wrote a review of the book for the December 30, 1908 issue of *Vanity Fair* titled *How to Write a Novel! After W. S. Maugham*, and published the article under the name “Oliver Haddo.”

Wakefield (1888-1964), British writer of supernatural and detective/crime fiction, is often ranked among the best ghost story writers. Aleister Crowley appears as Oscar Clinton in his *He Cometh and He Passeth By*, and also as Apuleius Charlton in the same author's *A Black Solitude*.

Dion Fortune was the name adopted by Violet Firth (1891-1946) when she entered the Golden Dawn in 1919. It was derived from her magic motto, "Deo Non Fortuna," (By God, not Chance), which became shortened to Dion Fortune. She studied under J. W. Brodie-Innes and had classes with Moina Mathers. She left the Stella Matutina in 1929 in order to found her own group, the Community (later Fraternity) of the Inner Light. At first the order was part of the Golden Dawn, but later separated from it. She became one of the best known occult authors of the twentieth century, and used Crowley as the basis for the character Hugo Astley in one of her later novels, *The Winged Bull* (1936).

Manly Wade Wellman (1903-1986) used Crowley as the model for Rowley Thorne in *Thorne on the Threshold*, published in *Weird Tales*, January, 1945. Colin Wilson, in addition to dedicating a chapter to Crowley in his book *The Occult* (1971), and later writing a full-length biography of him, *The Nature of the Beast* (1987), also used him in fiction. His Caradoc Cunningham in *Man Without a Shadow* (1963) is a thinly-veiled Crowley sketch. Novelist Dennis Wheatley (1897–1977), known for numerous works with occult themes, fashioned his villain Mocata on him in *The Devil Rides Out* (1934), as did science fiction writer James Blish (1921-1975) with a character appearing

in his *Black Easter* (1968) named Theron Ware. The first name is, not coincidentally, very close to the word *Therion*.⁷⁰

In 1974 fact and fiction began to blur when British playwright Snoo Wilson's *The Beast* was produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company at The Place, Euston, on November 18. The play, a fictionalized adaptation of highlights of Crowley's life, was directed by Howard Davies, and received generally favorable reviews. The small cast of nine performed twenty-seven roles. Richard Pasco played Crowley, and the script included appearances by characters based on Maude Gonne and W. B. Yeats.

A Crowley-based character appeared on stage again in August, 1990 in Grant Morrison's *Depravity* at Oxygen House, Edinburgh. Morrison, known primarily for his work in the adult comic-book (or "graphic novel") format, has written several plays featuring characters based on real persons. *Red King Rising* has Charles Dodson (Lewis Carroll) in a dialogue with Alice, and *Lovecraft in Heaven* presents the American writer in a purgatory "submitting the chaos of existence to the gridlock of reason." *Depravity* depicts the magical and personal relationship between Crowley and poet Victor Neuburg.

Crowley and Film

Maugham's *The Magician* was adapted for the screen in 1926 by Rex Ingram. Paul Wegener, most famous for having played the title role of *The Golem* in three films of that name, played Oliver Haddo. Ingram's wife, Alice Terry, played Margaret Dauncey, the heroine. The film was made in Germany, where Ingram had gone to make films after a fallout with his employer, MGM.

⁷⁰ See note 13, page 26 of the Introduction.

In 1932, Crowley was living in Berlin and was approached by German film director Max Ophuls, who was interested in adapting some of Crowley's occult work for the screen. Nothing came of this initial contact, and in retrospect it seems to have been a harbinger of things to come in relation to Crowley getting his works filmed.

Kenneth Anger (born Kenneth Anglemyer in 1927) is an independent underground filmmaker best known for authoring the two *Hollywood Babylon* books, gossipy revelations and insinuations about the private lives of Hollywood celebrities. His *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954) is a reinterpretation of Crowley's Gnostic Mass in which Samson De Brier plays The Great Beast, and Marjory Cameron (widow of Jack Parsons and mistress of L. Ron Hubbard) is The Scarlet Woman. Others of note who appear in the film include Anaïs Nin (who had met Crowley during her time with Henry Miller) and Anger himself, who appears as the goddess Hecate. Appearing at first glance to be a hallucinogenic masquerade party, the film's deeper message is the portrayal of magicians practicing the assumption of god-forms during a ritual. The use of psychedelic color, surreal sound effects and exaggerated costume and make-up designs heightens the subjectivity of the experience. It is another example of the connection of Crowley and the symbolists.

In 1955 Anger traveled to Cefalu as a guest of Dr. Alfred Kinsey, noted for his *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Kinsey was fascinated with Crowley and viewed Crowley's farmhouse/Abbey as a model of a "sex cult" (Landis, 89). Anger began a restoration of the building and filmed a half-hour sound documentary of the process, *Thelema Abbey*, which was sponsored by the British *Picture Post* and shown on the BBC.

The film later disappeared from the archives of the BBC, and the only known copy currently resides in the Kinsey Institute.

Anger has continued to make short, independent films throughout the decades following his journey to Italy. *Lucifer Rising* (1980) is an even more blatant example of Anger's fascination with Crowley, reflecting his vision of the dawning of the Aeon of Horus. Set in Egypt, *Lucifer Rising* is a thirty-eight minute invocation of Lucifer by Isis, Goddess of Life and Nature, and Osiris, God of Death and Resurrection. The gods appear at magical sites such as Karnak, Luxor, Avebury and Stonehenge to call forth explosive forces of nature (storms, fires, volcanic eruptions, a solar eclipse, among other things) during a summoning of Lucifer. Although often viewed as a personification of evil and a rebellious fallen angel, the actual name "Lucifer" means "Bearer of Light." Anger's Lucifer is linked to the illuminating gods of pagan religions, most notably Horus. A glowing pink flying saucer floats over the Sphinx at the climax of the film, signifying that humanity can embrace the ancient gods of its past as well as its future: past, present and future are shown to be one and the same. Anger worked on the film for over twenty years, beginning in the mid-nineteen-sixties. Jimmy Page, guitarist for Led Zeppelin and extremely interested in Crowley and his work, was engaged by Anger to compose the soundtrack for the film, but disagreements between the two ended the relationship. The film currently has a soundtrack composed and recorded in prison by Bobby Beausoliel, one of Charles Manson's original "Family."

A collection of Anger's films are available through Magic Lantern Video, and it was announced late in 2002 that he was in the process of creating a multi-million dollar cinematic version of Crowley's Gnostic Mass.

Crowley's Essays on Theatre

Crowley left only two pieces of writing which refer specifically to theatrical theory. An essay from the March 1918 issue of the *International* titled "Good Hunting" is a satire subtitled "An essay on the Nature of Comedy and Tragedy." In it he describes his ideas of good and evil as being tied to the view mankind has of itself in relation to the natural world, and how the idea of hunting lies at the heart of every play. Some of the examples he cites include:

Ajax – the hunting of Ajax by Ulysses
Agamemnon – Agamemnon by Aegisthus
Oedipus – Oedipus by Fate
Hamlet – Claudius by Hamlet
Othello – Othello by Iago
Ghosts – Oswald by Heredity
Brand – Brand by the Hawk (*International*, March, 1918, XII:3, 69)

While it is a clever exercise in humor, it does not necessarily give the reader any firm logic or evidence upon which to hang an argument.

And yet Crowley recognized a link between theatre and religious practice. Chapter nineteen of *Magic in Theory and Practice* is titled "Of Dramatic Rituals." In this chapter he writes of rituals being created for the purpose of invocation of a God, and that rituals of this type are "well suited for such persons as are capable of understanding the spirit of Magick as opposed to the letter" (Crowley, 1929:177). It is in this chapter that Crowley reveals a symbolist approach to the Art of magic. This approach supports the idea that what is done during a ritual is not as important as how it is done, and that it is the "how" that ultimately dictates what result will be achieved.

As is noted on the website of Darkwood Oasis, an OTO affiliate in Australia:

Darkwood Oasis has great interest in utilizing dramatic ritual to achieve ecstatic union, whether the vehicle be initiation rite, Gnostic Mass, Rites of Eleusis or

other magical workings we undertake. The magical technology employed to this end works through the Theory of Magical Correspondences, employing such things as form, colour, scent, number, objects etc. to flood (and - by using such things with the same vibration under the correspondence formula - at the same time to focus) the normally unfocused conscious mind and magically penetrate the unconscious mind. Combining this technology with well performed dramatic ritual is highly effective and Darkwood Oasis prides itself on its ability in this area. Naturally, this has focused an interest in all Thespian activities, arts, poetry, performance, etc, that combines with our Magick. Those with similar interest that fraternally interact and are interested in the quest of Peace and Wisdom and are prepared to contribute time, money and effort will find welcome as a member of our Oasis and a share in the Karma of our work in dispensing Light, Life, Love and Liberty through the Law of Thelema and the vehicle our Holy Order.
(<http://www.otoaustralia.org.au/darkwood/>)

This description illustrates the importance of ritual in magic, a brief background in the relationship between psychology, performativity and ritual, and the flexibility of magic to incorporate assorted variations and/or nuances in performance to achieve the same goal.

Crowley's Other Works for the Stage

As has been seen, Crowley grew up in a highly restrictive environment dictated by religious zeal which was motivated by denial of the worldly self for the benefit of one's spiritual salvation. Although a dilettante at poetry from childhood, Crowley did not experience a rush of literary creativity until he arrived at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1895 and began to settle in to his independence. There he experienced his first homosexual affair, with Herbert Jerome Pollitt, a female impersonator who often worked the music halls of London under the stage name of Diane de Rougy, in honor of the famous French performer and courtesan of the time, Liane de Pougy (1870-1950). Pollitt was also a close friend of Aubrey Beardsley's, and Crowley and Beardsley may have met.

Although considering himself primarily a poet, Crowley occasionally dabbled in playwriting. Most of his plays were written in poetic styles which incorporated rhymed

meter and adherence to strict rules of construction. As a result, while the themes were usually classical, the plots of his early works are often convoluted, the characters two-dimensional, and the language is observably straining to break free of the shackles forced upon it by the author.

The Poisoners - This was the first example of Crowley's attempt at a verse drama. He began working on it early in 1897, but later it was "discarded as over-Tourneresque" (Crowley, *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 35). This is a reference to the decadent and artificial style of the Elizabethan revenge plays such as *The Revenger's Tragedy* (published 1607) and, especially, *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611), both written by Cyril Tourneur (1575-1626). Although there is some debate over the assigning the authorship of *The Revenger's Tragedy* to Tourneur, *The Atheist's Tragedy* is usually accepted as being his work, and is also more in line with the subject matter Crowley would find attractive. Elizabethan revenge tragedy, which flourished in Britain during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, is identifiable by the inclusion of a quest for vengeance, mad scenes, a play within a play, and a display of carnage. *The Poisoners*, unpublished, is no longer extant.

The Alchemist - This single scene play was written as the dramatic prologue to *The Poisoners* (c.1897), and was first published in Crowley's anthology *Songs of the Spirit*. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1898). It was later republished in the *Collected Works* (1905, vol. 1). The story begins in an isolated tower filled with books and alchemical instruments. A man identified in the script as "The Philosopher" muses to himself on the emptiness of the universe and how that emptiness is reflected back on his existence. He sees no meaning to life. A voice interrupts his musings with the

command “Stand still and see salvation in Jehovah’s hands.” Almost simultaneously, a messenger appears commanding the Philosopher to the King’s court to assume a place of power second only to the King himself, the better to control the other statesmen who the King fears may lead the nation into war. The Philosopher agrees to leave on the Messenger’s boat at dawn. When the Messenger leaves the Philosopher begins a prayer asking God to listen to his prayer. The light fades to darkness and the scene ends before the actual request of the prayer is spoken.

The Poem: A Little Drama in Four Scenes – This play was dedicated “to the gentleman who, on the evening of June 28, 1898, turned back in Shaftsbury Avenue to give a halfpenny to a little girl, and thereby suggested to me the idea here rendered” (Crowley, *Collected Works*, 1,57). The opening stage direction reads: “Shaftsbury Avenue, 8:30 p. m.” (ibid). Crowley goes on to say in a footnote that “Like all plays of this form it may be read as a delicate idyll or a screaming parody, according to the nature and mood of the reader” (ibid). It was first printed privately in a limited edition of ten copies, and then later republished in the *Collected Works* (1905: vol I). It is a prose play set in modern London, that is, the London of 1898, and concerns the familial conflicts and struggles for independence of a young artist named Percy Brandon. It may be interpreted as autobiographical if one associates Percy with Crowley. Percy is a writer who does not have long to live. The second scene is a year later. Percy is married but suffering from writer’s block and living with his wife Esmé in the home of a man named Vaughan. Scene 3 is six months later. Percy is just about to finish his most important poem. The three are at dinner when Percy’s father bursts in. A scuffle ensues in which Percy and his father are both killed. Scene 4 is the next morning. Vaughan enters

Esmé's room where she awakens to find she has completed the poem during the night without remembering she did so. The entire play is presented in six pages in the *Collected Works*.

Jephthah (A Dramatic Work) was originally published in 1898 as a substantial single-scene verse drama written in the classical Greek manner. The original publication was a privately printed edition limited to twenty five copies, and was dedicated to "Gerald Kelly, Poet and Painter." Kelly would become Crowley's brother-in-law in 1903. This edition, like his *Acelandama* the same year, was printed anonymously "By a Gentleman of the University of Cambridge." In 1899 Crowley republished *Jephthah* through his favorite publishing house of Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company. In the 1899 edition Crowley dedicated the work to Algernon Charles Swinburne. He later included it in his three-volume edition of *Collected Works*, dedicating the work to Kelly, and the "Preliminary Invocation," which appears before the play proper begins, to "A. C. S."

The inspiration for the story comes from the biblical Book of Judges, Chapter Eleven verses 34-39 wherein Jephthah makes a promise to God that if he, Jephthah, is successful in his fight against the Ammonites, he will sacrifice the first person to greet him upon his return. He is victorious, and when he comes back he is met by his daughter and is compelled to carry out his vow. Shakespeare references the story in *Hamlet* (II, ii) when Hamlet, responding to Polonius' description of the imminent players ("pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral," etc.) changes the subject to Ophelia with the line "O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!" Polonius asks "What treasure had he?" to which Hamlet replies with a quote from an old ballad: "One fair daughter and no

more/ The one which he loved passing well.” The story of Jephthah had been adapted for the stage numerous times before Crowley’s work.⁷¹ With Crowley’s extensive biblical knowledge, combined with his penchant for the bizarre, it is not surprising that this story would appeal to him. Crowley expressed some measure of satisfaction with the play in his *Confessions*, stating “weak as the play is, I was really taking an interest in other people. The characters are not wholly corrupted by self-portraiture” (Crowley, 1970:165).

The Fatal Force - This was written in the spring of 1899. Set in Egypt, the story concerns a High Priestess (Ratoum) who has the idea to procreate with her own son (Khomsu) and then with the son of that union, ultimately resulting in the birth of a Pharaoh “who would be seven-eighths herself” (Crowley, 1970:189). The grandson/son, S’afi, kills her and then himself. Crowley inserts a footnote that “S’afi” means “fear” in Egyptian. Meanwhile, the King of Syria has invaded Egypt. A leper/prophet attached to the Egyptian court assumes the identity of the Pharaoh and is killed by the King of Syria while attempting to defend the throne. The final image is of the King of Syria sitting on the Throne of Egypt muttering “unclean, unclean” to himself, victorious in battle yet aware that he is now a leper. This play was published only once, in the first volume of the *Collected Works* (1905).

The Mother’s Tragedy – This was also written in 1899, and Crowley considered it to be a companion piece to *The Fatal Force*. Like *The Fatal Force*, it is a single scene in verse, and also addresses a son’s resistance to his mother. In this work, however, the

⁷¹ The Variorum edition of *Hamlet* states that according to Philip Henslowe’s *Diary* of 1602, Dekker and Chettle were paid for a tragedy they were writing based on the story of Jephthah, and that the story had previously been exposed to the public through ballads and other works for the stage. See Furness (1963:174).

mother is a sympathetic character and the setting is modern. Crowley considered the theme to be one of “love not as an object in itself, but on the contrary, as a dragon ready to devour any one less than St. George” (Crowley, 1970:557). He also states that “*The Mother’s Tragedy* seems to have been influenced by Ibsen, with a touch of Bulwer Lytton” (Crowley, 1970: 190). Originally, five hundred copies were published in a miscellany volume for private distribution, *The Mother’s Tragedy and Other Poems* (London, 1901). The majority of the other poems were incorporated into *The Temple of the Holy Ghost* when it appeared in the *Collected Works*. The play reappeared in the first volume of the *Collected Works* positioned between *The Fatal Force* and *The Temple of the Holy Ghost*.

Tannhauser: A Story of All Time - This play was written in Mexico City early in 1900 after Crowley had begun his world tour as a result of the Blythe Road incident. Crowley claimed that it was written in sixty-seven continuous hours inspired by his involvement with a Mexican woman he had picked up. He was pleased with the resulting work, writing in his autobiography that “This play marks the climax of the first period of my poetry” (Crowley, 1970:205). *Tannhauser* is in five acts, the longest play Crowley had written to date. Although the work was termed by Crowley an allegorical drama concerning the progress of the soul, it is the familiar Tannhauser story slightly remodeled. In the four-page Introduction which he wrote in Ceylon, he acknowledges the assistance of Oscar Eckenstein, Gerald Kelly, and Allan MacGregor, a pseudonym for Allan Bennett, whom he was visiting at the time. In addition to addressing his literary sources and his motivations for writing the work, Crowley makes an offer to future critics:

You are perfectly welcome to do with my work in its entirety what Laertes did with his allegiance and his vows: but do not pick out and gloat over a few isolated passages from the Venusberg scenes and call me a sensualist, nor from the Fourth Act and groan “Mysticism!”; do not quote “Two is by shape the Coptic Aspirate” as a sample of my utmost in lyrics; do not take the song of Wolfram as my best work in either sentiment or melody. As a quid pro quo I give you all full permission to conclude your review of this book by quoting from Act III. “Forget this nightmare!” (Crowley, *Collected Works*, I:225)

Tannhauser was first published in 1902 as a separate volume by Kegan Paul, Trench, Truber & Company, London. This was a limited edition of 506 copies. It was later reprinted in volume One of the *Collected Works*.

The God Eater: A Tragedy of Satire – A verse play in two scenes which Crowley called “singularly unsatisfactory as a work of art, but extremely significant as a piece of autohagiography” (Crowley, 1970:360). The play was written in July, 1903, in Edinburgh, where Crowley had gone to stock up on wines, engage a housekeeper, and meet Gerald Kelly, who was spending the summer at Strathpeffer. It was the following month, August, 1903, that Crowley was to meet and marry his future first wife, Rose, Gerald’s sister. The play takes place in the twenty-first century in an ancient remote Scottish hall, no doubt the influence of his having spent the preceding several months alone in his Scottish home Boleskine.

Charles Watts & Company of London published three hundred two copies of *The God Eater* as a separate volume in 1903. In 1906 it was included in volume two of the *Collected Works*.

The Argonauts - Originally intended as an insertion in his epic poem *Orpheus, a lyrical legend* (1905), it was ultimately published separately. It is verse play in five acts, ostensibly relating the classical story of Jason and Medea. There are numerous

references to the sacred literature of ancient India, reflective of Crowley's recent travels there. Reviews of the work were mixed, citing good lyrics but an uneven plot. Privately published in a limited edition of 202 copies in 1904, it later was incorporated into the second volume of the Collected Works in 1906

Orpheus - Book One was written during a stay at Waikiki Beach in May, 1901. In it, Orpheus invokes the forces of nature and time. Books Two through Four would be sporadically written over the course of the next three years, composed wherever Crowley happened to be in the course of his travels. Book Two is a monologue by Orpheus in which he describes his winning of Eurydice. Book Three describes Orpheus in Hades, and Crowley includes invocations of various deities and their responses. He was especially pleased with the invocation to Hecate, which he occasionally incorporated into magical rituals at this time. This Book also includes an invocation to Persephone via the commemoration of her accomplishments. In the *Confessions*, Crowley claims he was encouraged to attempt this as a result of reading *The Bacchae* by Euripides (Crowley, 1970:273). Book Four relates the death of Orpheus.

Why Jesus Wept: A Study in Society and the Grace of God – This is a dramatic poem in thirteen scenes. The title comes from the biblical Book of John, 11:35, the shortest verse in the Bible: “Jesus wept.” It was written in two days in Kanday, Ceylon in January 1904, during Crowley's honeymoon around the world with Rose. The plot tells of “a romantic boy and girl ambushed and ruined by male and female vampires,” and may have been partly inspired by an incident which had occurred in the Golden Dawn several years earlier. In 1901 a Mr. And Mrs. Horos, members of the Golden Dawn at the time, were charged with several counts of fraud, indecency, and kidnapping.

The publicity announcements for *Why Jesus Wept* displayed Crowley's unique approach to advertising:

WHY JESUS WEPT

By

Aleister Crowley

Who has now ceased weeping

With the original dedication;

With the advertisement which has brought Peace and Joy to so many a sad heart!!

With the slip containing the solution of the difficulty on pages 75-76!!!

With the improper joke on page 38!!!!

With the beetle-crushing retort to Mr. G. K. Chesterton's aborted attack upon the *Sword of Song*!!!!!!

With the specially contributed Appeal from the Poet's Mamma!!!!!!

Look slippy, boys! Christ may come at any moment. He won't like it if you haven't read the book about His melt.

[. . .] I say Buy! Buy Now! Quick! Quick!

My Unborn Child screams "Buy!"

Why Jesus Wept was published in a limited run of 100 copies in 1904. It then appeared in volume three of the *Collected Works* (1907).

The Sire de Maletroit's Door – Based on a short story originally published by Robert Louis Stevenson in *New Arabian Nights*, this play was co-authored by Crowley and his brother-in-law, Gerald Kelly. It is set in medieval Paris and tells the story of the uncle of a young woman who resorts to unusual means to find her a husband. It is one of the few examples of a theatre work by Crowley which was produced on stage during his lifetime, and has the additional difference of being one of only a handful of works with a happy ending. Crowley and Kelly publicly produced the play in 1906, and it was then published in the *Collected Works III* (1907).

Ali Sloper; or the 40 Liars (A Christmas Diversion) - The genesis of this play was a manuscript Crowley wrote December 18, 1906 entitled *Amath* (Hebrew for Truth). It is a delightful tongue-in cheek farce spoofing the major players of the Golden Dawn of

Crowley's time. The Dramatis Personae listed at the beginning include "Boley" (Crowley), "Bones" (George Cecil Jones), "Dr. Waistcoat" (Dr. William Wynn Westcott), "Florrie Farr" (Florence Farr), "Yonly Yeats," listed above the parenthetical question "What *are* Yeats?" (W. B. Yeats), and "Tabicat as The Horny Man from Mazawattee" (Annie Horniman, who was known to her closest friends for most of her life as "Tabby").⁷² The play is constructed as a music hall variety show, opening with "The Mysterious Mathers in his great sketch The Family Vault." This is a reference to Samuel Mathers and the Vault of the Adepti, a setting used in the Second Order rituals. A group called "The Order of the Tin Sunset," an obvious parody of the Order of the Golden Dawn, is also mentioned.

The Suffragette: A Farce by Lavinia King – Published in the *New Age Magazine* in May, 1908, the alias used by Crowley is the same name later to appear as a character in his novel *Moonchild* who was based on Isadora Duncan. It is a satire on the feminist movement.

Aha! (Liber CCXLII) - Crowley writes that this piece is an "exposition in poetic language of several of the ways of attainment and the results obtained." Written in September 1909, it is an extended philosophical dialogue in verse. It was written at a time when Crowley was rededicating himself to *The Book of the Law*. He described it as "my greatest magical poem [. . .] in which the Cairo working is restored to its proper place in my life." It is constructed as a dialogue between a Master and a Student, not unlike Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares* or Gordon Craig's *On the Art of the Theatre*, and is essentially an exposition in poetic language of several paths of enlightenment which

⁷² See Greer, 31.

Crowley had explored to that point and a report of the results he obtained. *Aha* was first published in the *Equinox* 1:3 (March, 1910). It has been posthumously republished several times.

Mr Todd, A Morality – Crowley wrote this one-act prose play in Paris in July 1908. The scene is a sitting room in Grosvenor Square inhabited by the Ossory family. Mr. Todd, a personification of Death, makes recurring appearances throughout the play, during which he first “whispers in the ear” of one character, and then another. The audience never hears him speak. When he whispers to the other characters, they experience an epiphany and joyously accompany Mr. Todd out the door, never to be heard from again. The play was first privately printed in the miscellany *The Winged Beetle* (London: Weiland, 1910) and then republished in the *Equinox*, 1:4 (September, 1910).

The World’s Tragedy — This is a five-act play written in February, 1908. Later that summer, in Paris, Crowley wrote a lengthy Preface which is equal parts autobiography and vehement attack on Christianity. In the Preface, he gives information about his childhood, examples of the narrow-mindedness of the Plymouth Brethren, his adolescence (which he titles “A Boyhood in Hell,”) and, among others, brief essays on Adolescence, Pornography, Sodomy, Christianity, and The English Spirit. Israel Regardie, in his Introduction to the Falcon Press 1985 edition, calls the work “one of the most bitter and vicious diatribes against Christianity that I have ever read” (vi). The work itself presents Jehovah of the Old Testament as an old vulture named Yaugh Waugh. This is a play on the Hebrew word “Yahweh,” meaning “Lord.” Yaugh Waugh’s son in the play is named Yaugh Shaugh Waugh. Crowley continues his name

playing here. This is a homonym for Yeshuah, the Hebrew for Joshua, or Jesus. The son is also referred to in the script as The Lamb and the Holy Ghost, and is represented by a dove-like character named Pigeon. These three, concentrated on their own intrigues, interact with little interest in the numerous pagan characters who are enjoying life in the natural surroundings. The Prologue is set in the garden of Eros, where Satyrs (Marsyas, Silenus, Chiron), Men (Anamimander, Lsyander, Anaxagors), Nymohs (Chrysis, Doris, Atthis), Hermaphrodites (Rhodon, Salmacis, Erotion), Girls (Rhodope, Erinna, Evadne), Fauns (Heliorus, Hyacinthus, Olympas), and Young Boys (Antinous, Giton, Hylas) drink, laugh, dance, wrestle, kiss, and indulge in other diversions. It is interesting to note Crowley's return to the names Marsyas and Olympas, which also appeared in *Aha*. In that work Marsyas was the Master who taught the student Olympas. In *The World's Tragedy* Marsyas is a satyr and Olympas a faun.

Following the Prologue are five acts, The Red Star, The White Ward, The Blue Dwarf, The Black Bean and The Grey Night. The plot relates the story of Issa, born of Miriam, who is expected to become the Messiah, but ultimately is a precursor to the beginning of the Aeon of Horus. Crowley privately published *The World's Tragedy* in Paris in 1910. It contained the notice "Privately printed for circulation in free countries: Copies must not be imported into England or America."

The Scorpion – A Tragedy – Written in three acts, it is based on the 30th degree of freemasonry. The play addresses the origins of the OTO tradition in Jerusalem during the crusades. It was written in a hotel in El-Kantara in Algeria in January 1911, and among the characters is "Laylah," one of Crowley's names for Leila. The scene is a

desert, with palm trees and a well. It was published in the *Equinox*, 1:6 (September, 1911).

The Blind Prophet: A Ballet – Attempting “a combination of ballet and grand opera,” this is a verse play with music set in an ancient Egyptian temple, supported by two pillars. It was written while Crowley was traveling from Algiers to Marseilles with Victor Neuburg in the early spring of 1911. Originally published in the *Equinox*, 1:5 (March 1911), it was later intended to be included in the anthology *The Giant’s Thumb* in 1915, but that work was not issued until First Impressions published a posthumous copy of the galley proofs in 1992. The Magick Theatre, the performance group associated with Thelema Lodge in California, presented *The Blind Prophet* as a dramatic reading at 8:00 p.m. on July 19, 1988 in combination with a performance of Crowley’s *His Majesty’s Fiddler*.

The Snowstorm: A Tragedy – Set in the fictitious principality of Fiordland, this is a prose play in three acts, written in Eastbourne in the spring of 1911. Crowley noted in his autobiography: “Leila Waddell was to play the part of the heroine, but as she was incapable of speaking on the stage, I had to write her part as a series of violin solos” (Crowley, 1970:658). The role Crowley wrote for her was that of Nerissa, a blind violinist. She plays twice in the first act (*Abendlied*, and a love song), twice in the second act (a Serenade and a jig), and once at the end of the third act (*Abide With Me*). Crowley does not explain why, if he had such a low opinion of Waddell as an actress following the Rites of Eleusis, he would bother to write a speaking part for her at all. “Snowstorm” is actually Nerissa’s nickname. After being discovered by her lover’s wife and being chased into the woods wearing only a nightdress during a blizzard, Nerissa’s hair turns

white and she goes blind. *Snowstorm* was first published in the *Equinox*, 1:7 (March, 1912).

His Majesty's Fiddler: A Sketch - Another play which he wrote for Leila Waddell, this piece has not been published. It was written in Paris in the summer of 1911. The title is listed in Crowley's essay *Energized Enthusiasm* (*Equinox*, 1:9) as one of a number of plays "written straight off, one after the other."

Elder Eel – Published in *The International*, XII:3 (New York, March, 1918) as "a sketch by Lord Boleskine," this single scene in prose was written in Paris in the summer of 1911, and is another of those works written for Leila Waddell. It is set in the marketplace of the village of Houghmagandie, which, in Crowley's mind, was apparently in Scotland, as all the characters speak with a thick, phonetically-indicated accent. This is reminiscent of works such as Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan*, Shaw's *Pygmalion*, and even Eugene O'Neill's *Bound East for Cardiff*, where the performers are specifically instructed on how words should sound by their spelling. *Elder Eel* is dedicated to Tom Bond Bishop, Crowley's maternal uncle, making it no coincidence that the theme of the play addresses religious hypocrisy. Crowley wrote in his autobiography that his Uncle Tom "devoted the whole of his spare time and energy to the propagation of the extraordinarily narrow, ignorant, and bigoted Evangelicalism in which he believed" (Crowley, 1970:54). The play begins immediately following the Sunday Service, when a number of townsmen are told by Elder Eel of the new member of their community who moved in the evening before: an actress from Paris. It is later revealed to Eel she is actually Russian, a friend of the wife of the town doctor, who is visiting them for a while. Eel then encounters her and, without speaking a word but using the selection of musical

pieces to make statements for her, she plays a number of tunes for him on her violin. He ultimately falls under the spell of the music and begins dancing wildly. The rest of the town follows suit, dumping Eel into the town fountain and then forcing him to marry a local girl he's been not-so-secretly involved with. The play ends with everyone happily dancing to the violin music. It was first published in the *Equinox*, 1:8 (September, 1912).

The Ghouls: A Satire – This prose play in two scenes was inspired by a chance meeting between Crowley and Fenella Lovell, a “consumptive-looking model” (Kaczynski, 188) at the Café Dôme in Montparnasse in August, 1911. Dedicated to Gwendolen Otter, it was written just prior to *Adonis*, during a 43-hour writing marathon. The first scene is a bedroom in the hotel at Foyers, the small town closest to Crowley's Scottish home, Boleskine. The violin virtuoso, Waska, is lying on his deathbed, while Fenella discusses with the local doctor just how long Waska has to live. When the doctor leaves, Waska wakes and makes Fenella swear to bury his Stradivarius with him. She does and he dies. She goes to the window and calls to her lover, George, to come up. They make plans to rob the corpse of the valuable violin after it is buried. Scene 2 is the Boleskine graveyard. George digs up the grave of Waska as Fenella tells him several ghost stories. One of these is the story of the 11th Lord Lovat (1667 - 1747), who was beheaded after backing the Jacobites in the 1745 uprising.⁷³ In his *Confessions* Crowley reported hearing the sound of Lovat's head rolling down the corridor of Boleskine (Crowley, 1970:359). Crowley himself makes an appearance in the play as M^r Alister, the Laird of Boleskine, who comes across the two ghouls and invites Fenella to lunch the following afternoon. Workmen come past the graveyard and Fenella plays the violin,

⁷³ This was the last public beheading at Tower Hill in London.

hoping to make them believe ghosts are there. Waska rises from his coffin, strangles George, ravishes and kills Fenella and then lies back down in his coffin. The M'Alister, hearing the activity, returns to see what is happening and, finding the bodies, takes the Stradivarius for himself and exits whistling.

In his *Confessions* Crowley quotes criticism of *The Ghouls* from the *Poetry*

Review:

The Ghouls is possibly the most ghastly death-dance in English literature. If Oscar Wilde had written it (but he could not have) everyone would know it. It is the very pith and marrow of terror. Cynical it may be, but I defy the lord of dreams to send any more plutonian nightmare to haunt our mortal sleep (Crowley, 1970:669).

Although Fenella may have been inspired by Crowley's chance encounter with Fenella Lovell, the inclusion of scenes of violin-playing reveal that Crowley was still attempting to create vehicles suitable for Leila Waddell. She was certainly on his mind at the time of his writing this play, August, 1911, since it was her birthday and in this same month Crowley also wrote *A Birthday – August 10, 1911*, a poem to Waddell published in the *Equinox*, 1:7.

Adonis, an Allegory - Written immediately following the composition of *The Ghouls*, *Adonis, an Allegory* is a lyric ritual drama constructed in five scenes, and set in the gardens of ancient Babylon. Crowley writes that this piece "gives an account in poetic language of the struggle of the human and divine elements in the consciousness of man, giving their harmony following upon the victory of the latter." It was published in the *Equinox*, 1:7 (March, 1912), and, in 1915, was intended for inclusion in Crowley's anthology *The Giant's Thumb*, but that publication was not realized.

Doctor Bob: A Sketch – A collaborative effort by Crowley and Mary D’Este written in 1912. The sketch is set in the waiting/examining rooms of Dr. Roberts’ house. It is 2:30 on a winter’s afternoon. The doctor, his wife and a friend, Dr. Fielding, discuss Roberts’ reputation as “Dr. Doom’em,” earned when other doctors send their patients to Roberts, and he tells them the truth: in most cases the patient is terminal. Dr. Roberts has had a minor cough, but before Fielding can look at it several patients in succession enter in good spirits and exit in extreme depression. Fielding and Mrs. Roberts concoct a scheme, to tell Dr. Roberts the tickle in his throat is really throat cancer, to show him how his cold heartedness is felt by others. Dr. Fielding finally examines Roberts just as Mrs. Roberts enters, and a footnote by Crowley reveals “Dr. Bob has really cancer; this is the tragedy of the joke. Dr. F. must indicate this by his manner. But he daren’t break it to Mrs. Bob, who thinks throughout that he is acting” (*Equinox*, 1:8, 75). Fielding tells him he has a month to live, and Roberts injects himself with cobra venom, insuring his death within ten minutes. He confesses to his wife, who tries to tell him of her and Fielding’s plot, but Roberts will not believe her. He dies and Fielding tells Mrs. Roberts that Roberts did, in fact, have cancer and at least he did not suffer through his final month. Mrs. Roberts, believing she has inadvertently tricked her husband into committing suicide, refuses to believe him: “You can’t lie to me!” This sketch was published in the *Equinox*, I:8 (September, 1912), along with the following, an adaptation of a work by Edgar Allan Poe.

The Tell-Tale Heart – Based on the short story by Edgar Allan Poe, the scene of the play is set in “the interior of a cottage of some pretensions, though poorly furnished.” Old Martin has raised young Jack as his own son, but Jack hates Martin, and seems to be

more than slightly crazed as well. Martin goes out for a night-cap at a local pub and Jack has a soliloquy addressing his obsession with Martin's eye, just as in the Poe story. The play then follows the short story fairly closely, even to the verbatim use of the final lines: "Villains! Dissemble no more! I admit the deed! Tear up the planks! Here! Here! It is the beating of his hideous heart!"

Mortadello, or The Angel of Venice: A Comedy – Weiland, 1912; a five-act play set in Venice. Monica causes her black lover to murder his other mistress, the daughter of the Doge. The crime is concealed and the dead woman is hidden as the guest of Monica, who dresses up the corpse and tricks Mortadello into marrying it. Monica's black lover is slain and Monica's hysteria produces a stigmata, which proves her sanctity to the authorities. She touches the leader of the police with the tip of a poisoned crucifix, and he dies instantly. His followers fall in supplication at her feet, but she insists on being arrested. Having forced Mortadello to marry her, she disguises herself as a Saharan dancer and drugs him with hashish. She then discloses her identity; and he, in the madness of the drug, attacks the Papal legate. She follows and, defending the old man, kills Mortadello.

The last scene, the dressing up of a man as a king or god, and inducing him to preside at a hunting of which he is in reality to be the quarry, is an echo of pagan sacrifice. This same theme is the basis of the film *The Wicker Man*, in which a police inspector is lured to a Scottish Island to investigate the disappearance of a child, only to find that he is the intended sacrifice of the pagan community. Crowley wrote in his essay "Good Hunting!" (*The International*, March 1918) that this central idea of hunting is universal in all the best comedy and tragedy from the *Bacchae* of Euripides, the story of

Esther, the Crucifixion and the murder of Hiram Abif (an aspect of Masonic mythology), to the plays of Shakespeare, Ibsen and many others. This would remain one of Crowley's favorite pieces. He tried sporadically throughout his life to have it produced. In the autumn of 1936 he made advances to Paul Robson (1898-1976), who was then in London starring in the stage production of *Toussaint L'Overture* and filming *Song of Freedom* and *King Solomon's Mines*, about producing and possibly starring in the play. Robson declined, later writing to Charles Cammell "There are certain lines and gestures which the British public would not ache to see enacted between a Negro and a white woman. As for the American stage, why, if I were to produce it there, somebody in the audience would stand up and shoot me with a revolver."⁷⁴ In the autumn of 1944 a member of the OTO living in California, Jean Schneider, was working as Orson Welles' housekeeper. She sent Crowley a copy of the script of *Citizen Kane* and intimated that Welles had a passing interest in the occult. That December she wired Crowley that she had managed to give Welles a copy of *Mortadello*, but nothing resulted from this (Kaczynski, 439). On May 10, 1988, at 8:00 p.m. The Magick Theatre performed a public reading of *Mortadello*.

Household Gods: A Comedy – Staying at the Hôtel Pallanza in Lago Maggiore while on a trip to Venice in May, 1912, Crowley wrote what he described in his *Confessions* as "a poetical dramatic sketch. It is a sort of magical allegory, full of subtle ironies and mystifications; almost the only thing of its kind I have ever done – which perhaps accounts for my having a sneaking affection for it" (Crowley, 1970:629). It was dedicated to Leila Waddell, and is one of Crowley's most openly erotic plays. According

⁷⁴ C. R. Cammell's recollections of Crowley, Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute. Also Crowley to Gerald Yorke, September 3, 1936, Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute.

to Crowley's friend, author Louis Wilkinson, it also contains "one of the most humorous exclamations in literature" (Marlow, 61). It was privately published in Italy in 1912, and posthumously published by First Impressions in 1993.

The Ship – While Crowley was in Moscow in the late summer and early autumn of 1913 he wrote what is considered to his most important ritual, the Gnostic Mass. *The Ship* is a ritual drama in two scenes, which acts as both a companion-piece to the Mass and also *The Scorpion*, an earlier play that echoes similar antecedents in freemasonry. *The Ship* includes the original version of the Gnostic anthem, a portion of which appears in the Gnostic Mass. This was another of Crowley's favorite pieces, and contained the "Quia Patris," a poem addressed to the Higher Self, which begins "Thou who art I." The play is set in the Temple of the Sun, and tells the story of the resurrection of John the Priest. It was originally published in the *Equinox*, 1:10 (September, 1913). It has been presented several times over the past decade, including a performance at the OTO convention in Long Beach, California in 2001. The local OTO Lodge, 93 Lodge, later distributed videocassette recordings of the performance.

The Tango: A Sketch – This is another short work co-authored by Crowley and his then-mistress, Mary D'Este. Set in a Paris nightclub called Fischer's Cafe, the plot concerns Jaja (a footnote says the name is pronounced "Zhá-zha"), a tango dancer once involved with a bully named "Negro," but now engaged to a Lord, who has come to say good-bye. She and the Lord are marrying the next day. Negro arrives with Lillie, his new girlfriend, to whom he has been trying to teach the Tango. Jaja insists on dancing the Tango one more time, to the dismay of the Lord, and begins to dance by herself. Negro and Lillie begin to dance but Lillie cannot keep up and, in a fit of jealousy, stabs

Jaja, who dies in Negro's arms. It was published in the *Equinox*, 1:9 (March, 1913).

Wieland and Company, publisher of many of Crowley's books at the time, also published the song, "Tango," written for this piece. The music was by Bernard F. Page and the lyrics by Crowley.

The Saviour, A Drama in One Scene – Crowley notes at the beginning that time and place should not be too strictly denoted in a production of this work, "lest in future ages some historian or other mentally defective person should desire to ruin the design of the author by 'accuracy'" (*The International*, XII:3, March, 1918, p. 75). He also notes that the two factions should be identifiable as two separate races, with different speaking inflections and appearances. The play opens as a council of elders of the city of Blabre discusses the consequences of continuing to resist the siege they have been enduring at the hands of the Gnogues. The Herald of the Gnogues arrives to offer surrender terms, presenting them with a communication from the Emperor that he will be unable to bring an army to save the city and that they are on their own. The Fool immediately attacks this as a forgery and a ploy on the part of the Gnogues to trick the city into surrender. The elders reflect on prophecies which have foretold for four thousand years a savior arriving in a time of crisis to save their city, yet they see no hope that he will choose this crisis as the instigation of his appearance. The Savior is physically described in the prophecies, as is the time of day of his arrival. They are chastised by the Fool, "Oh, triple fools! Rummaging antiquity for the rags and bones of folklore when you should have been taking measures for the defense of the city!" (p.79), who leaves in disgust. Just as the elders are about to surrender the keys of the city, the Prophet experiences an epiphany and announces the imminent arrival of the Savior. The elders immediately accept this

and eject the Herald of the Gnogues, and soon a courier arrives with the message that the Emperor is six hours away and they will soon be saved. The fool returns to report the Gnogues are ransacking the city. When all seems lost, the Savior enters the chamber. Great rejoicing is followed by horror when the Savior removes his helmet to reveal himself as the King of the Gnogues.

The Gods. A Drama. From the Coptic of IAO SABAO - A short single scene in prose, the place is described as “In the blackness of infinite space.” The three gods, Arogogorobrao, Assalonai, and their young son Athelberseth, seem to be bored, waiting for something to happen. Arogogorobrao and Assalonai discuss the nature and meaning of time and change in short, philosophically obscure language which initially has the appearance of carrying great weight but, on reflection, is found vacuous. This philosophical discourse is balanced by a sense of familiarity with the characters, presenting the impression that we are observing not gods who have lived for thousands of millennia but, rather, characters who, if dressed differently, would not be out of place on a mainstream sitcom. Overall, it seems an odd combination of Sartre or Beckett and Larry Gelbart. The play was published in the *International*, XII:3, (March, 1918).

Bonds of Marriage: A Romantic Farce in One Act – The scene is Jack Sampson’s apartment in “any city of the United States.” Jack and Mary each believe the other is cheating on them, and have hired the same private investigator, Slyman Squiff, to follow them. Jack has been spending a great deal of money on “L. B.” every month, and a Laura Brown works in his office. Mary had been stealing from Jack’s wallet, pawning her jewelry, and spending her allowance on “Wilson.” It is revealed at the end that “L. B.” is “Liberty Bonds, “ and that Mary’s code “Wilson” means “Woodrow

Wilson,” the then-current President of the United States, and that she, too, has been spending all her money on bonds to assist the war effort. The scene ends with Squiff noticing the audience watching the performance, and the three actors then going out into the audience in character selling real war bonds. This is reminiscent of the scene in the medieval morality play *Mankind* where it has been conjectured that cast members went out among the audience and collected money for their performance. *Bonds of Marriage* is written in a flamboyant style satirizing the melodramatic form, and the language is reminiscent of the libretti of W. S. Gilbert. It was published in *The International*, XII:3, (March, 1918), and contains an in-joke through Squiff constantly repeating that he is “the man who captured Edward Kelly!” Sir Edward Kelly (1555-1595) was the psychic who worked with Dr. John Dee in developing the Enochian system of magic in England in the later half of the sixteenth century. Crowley claimed he was Kelly in a past life.

The Three Wishes – This is a play in three acts and a prologue, written primarily in American slang. The plot follows three men, friends since childhood, who are periodically reunited through a promise they made to each other decades earlier. This play was never published, and it has not been referred to by biographers. It seems to have been written in New York during the First World War for *The International*. A complete typescript survives in the OTO archives.

Film Scripts

The Pearl Girl, or, The Whale, the Siren, and the Shoestring – This is a script for a comic screenplay intended to be three reels, or roughly forty minutes in duration. It was published in *Vanity Fair* in New York, June, 1916. Included in the script are notations indicating Crowley’s suggestions for the casting of established stars of the

period in the leading roles. The script is accompanied by five drawings of the principal characters which, when considering Crowley's unique artistic style, do not appear to have been made by him. The script is advertised as the "winner of the thousand-dollar reward for the worst short film story." The plot concerns a wealthy Mexican girl, Peseta Manana wearing a fabulous pearl "the size of an emu's egg," who is kidnapped in New York and winds up in Alaska, where an "exquisite blonde" fisherwoman finds the pearl. She takes the pearl to London, is arrested as a spy, and escapes by German submarine back to New York, where she encounters the Mexican girl again. It is an exercise in outrageous situations and contrived plot twists, satirizing the deus ex machine so often found in silent films of the time.

The Opium Dream - This work may have been either a stage play or a screenplay, which Crowley outlined but may never have completed. It has seven scenes, without dialogue, each culminating in the expression of a single powerful emotion. There seem to be no references from which its date might be established. The summary, reproduced on five typescript pages, was published in the *Thelema Lodge Calendar* in October, 1998.

The Astrologer – This was a screenplay for a silent film which Crowley initially wrote in Cefalu in August, 1920. He worked on revisions of it during the following month. In his diary for that time Crowley noted various characters and situations of the script, and his divided attitude toward the medium.

21 August, 1.35 am. Finished "Astrologer." I worked rather fast, with a very difficult theme. I seemed to be able to catch up all the loose ends instantly, to grasp the whole "universe of action" without effort, and to cap climax with climax, spontaneously, thus exploding the dump of waste munitions more pyrotechnically than I had directed the barrage. The play was meant to end with Victor's death; that left Justice with a hole in her net; I gaffed the slippery fugitives. The astrologer's conscience awakened by Fate's turning her lies into

truth, her real power bursting its trickerydom, its triumph and her death - when the Gods come to a profaned temple their lightening wrecks it – this sudden apotheosis, ends also the murderer, convicting him, purging him to confess Truth’s might and his own crime, and consecrating him by the fires of suicide. I see my fault about this matter of scenarios: I despised the movie mode of art; I could not take it seriously. I could not believe in my own work; I deliberately tried to be bad when I thought badness might please producers. I thank Jane for the change; She has made me genuinely interested (besides teaching me some technique) and my last two scenarios have been my own, not sneers at other people’s. I can’t get Beauty in them, for they have no form; save only that balance, neatness, and smoothness of form are not unbeautiful, as in a chess problem. But my new interest is a little more than the intellectual pleasure of handling forces, by agreed rules, as in chess: I begin to play with live pieces. My old scenarios were rigid as algebra; cause and effect were cast, not wrought. Each piece had its move, and I knew it; given the “position,” the mate came in so many moves. Now pawns complain: “The King is dead? Bah! What happens to me?” And I like my folks to be my friends, to refuse to clerk for me, to urge their claims. (Symonds, 1972:259-60)

The “Jane” referred to above is Jane Wolfe (1875-1958), a silent film actress occasionally billed as “Jane Wolff,” who arrived at Crowley’s Abbey of Thelema in Cefalu on July 24, 1920 to study magic with him. Wolfe had appeared in over sixty films prior to her journey to Sicily, but after her return to the United States she appeared in just one final film, *Under Strange Flags* (1937). Just as Waddell, who was involved in the theatre before she knew Crowley, inspired him undertake a series of theatrical works, so to did Wolfe influence Crowley to write a series of silent film scripts. Although mentioned sporadically throughout his diaries, few of these scripts have survived.

The Ragged Rag-Time Girls

Despite her brief employment with *A Waltz Dream* in London prior to her involvement in the *Rites of Eleusis* and her engagement in New York performing in *Two Little Brides*, Leila Waddell found obtaining positions playing the violin challenging after *The Rites of Eleusis*. Crowley took this as a sign of the power of his influence. “I could invoke the gods into her; I could not teach her to invoke them herself” (Crowley,

1969:690). He took it upon himself to secure her employment by becoming a theatrical producer and created a group he called “The Ragged Rag-Time Girls.” This consisted of six assistant female violinists hired to accompany Waddell. By Crowley’s count “three were dipsomaniacs, four nymphomaniacs, two hysterically prudish, and all ineradicably convinced that outside England everyone was a robber, ravisher and assassin” (Crowley, 1969:711-712). The program was made up of a series of classical and popular musical pieces played while the violinists danced. Crowley described their costumes as “coloured rags” (Crowley, 1970: 690), but Kaczynski identifies them as “diaphanous gowns” (Kaczynski, 208). In the draft of an advertising flyer written at the time of the production, Crowley described them as:

seven beautiful and graceful maidens who dance and play the violins simultaneously. The strange, exotic beauty of the leader, Miss Leila Bathurst, as she weaves her dances inn the labyrinth of her attendant nymphs, thrills every heart with the sense alike of the rococo and the bizarre. . . The weirdly fascinating appearance of the leader, Miss Leila Bathurst, first stupefied the house and then roused it to a frenzy. As exotic and bizarre as her beauty is, it is yet of that royal kind which goes straight to every heart. Her paces suggest the tiger and the snake, and her violin contains in itself all the music alike of nature and of art. The house could not wait for the fall of the curtain to rise to its feet in surging enthusiasm, and the last bars were drowned in the roars of applause that greeted the march past through the stalls. Women shrieked, and strange men wept. Babes at the press fainted with emotion, the very unborn emulated the execution of John the Baptist recorded in the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark.⁷⁵

The Ragged Rag-Time Girls opened at the Old Tivoli in London on March 3, 1913.⁷⁶ It was a modest success, providing needed cash. In April the troupe posed for publicity photographs and Crowley wrote a letter to London theatrical agents Keith

⁷⁵ Crowley, Aleister. Draft of a puff for *The Ragged Rag-Time Girls*. Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute.

⁷⁶ Kaczynski says May 3 (Kaczynski, 208), but Crowley states in his autobiography that he took a holiday in France and the Channel Islands in May (Crowley, 1969:711).

Prowse. "I beg to enclose the card of my turn, The Ragged Rag-Time Girls, and shall be glad to know if you are interested in this with reference to engagements for banquets, private entertainments, or Society and Sunday engagements."⁷⁷ They also played the London Opera House that month. Crowley wrote to his cousin Agnes that "The Ragged Rag-Time Girls are not a musical composition, they are seven girls who play the fiddle" (Ryan, 143). Crowley decided to take the troupe to Russia that summer, and arranged a booking at the Aquarium, a variety theatre in Moscow. A letter in the Warburg Institute in London, addressed to Mrs. Stephen Graham and dated July 7, indicates that Crowley was planning on staying in Moscow "for a month, unless I decide in the course of the next half hour not to go at all, which seems more than likely."⁷⁸ Little is known of their success, but something kept them longer than expected. Crowley and the troupe returned to London at the beginning of September. This was two weeks later than Crowley had originally intended, since he still had to see to the final publishing details of the autumnal *Equinox*. While he attended to publishing details, Waddell and the troupe went on to their next engagement, two months at the Theatre Royale in Glasgow. By the time they returned to London Crowley had become involved in several serious organizational issues involving the OTO, and the Ragged Rag-Time Girls was dissolved.

Doctor Faustus

In the autumn of 1942 Peter Brook (b. 1925) directed a production of Marlow's *Doctor Faustus* at the Torch Theatre in Oxford. He states in his memoir *Threads of Time* that he had earlier come across a copy of Crowley's *Magick in Theory and Practice* in a

⁷⁷ Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Charing Cross bookshop, and had become fascinated with its descriptions of the potential powers which might be developed by practitioners of the occult arts. Brook contacted Crowley and asked him to serve as the technical advisor for the production. Crowley agreed, and Brook spent several weeks working with Crowley. Brook records an account of Crowley watching the rehearsal from the back of the stalls, and reacting when Faustus began his invocation: “No! No, no! You need a bowl of bull’s blood. That’ll bring real spirits, I promise you! Even at a matinee!” (Brook, 1998:10).

The Mass of the Phoenix⁷⁹

This is a ritual extrapolated from *The Book of Lies* (1913). It is a simple magical Eucharist which may be performed on a daily basis, as may be Crowley’s *Liber Resh*. Since the ritual itself is relatively short, Crowley often began it with the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram or other preliminary ritual.⁸⁰

The Mass of the Phoenix was incorporated by Crowley into a longer performance ritual which he began staging on a regular basis when he traveled to New York during World War I. Along with the occasional lecture on magic, yoga, or the occult, it became a semi-regular Sunday performance aimed at an audience with some discretionary income, which Crowley hoped they would send in his direction. References are made in his diaries to performing this ritual for the public well into the 1930s.

In his *Rooms of Mystery*, Elliott O’Donnell describes a performance he attended in the early 1930s. The description sounds remarkably similar to the *Rites of Eleusis*. Rows of chairs were arranged in a semicircle which faced an altar in the center of the

⁷⁹ See Appendix H for a footnoted script of this ritual.

⁸⁰ See Chapter 4.

room. Behind this were three large cabinets. Crowley recited poetry, women emerged from the cabinets periodically and played music on a harp or violin, and various gods were invoked via dramatically performed incantations. At this point the *Mass of the Phoenix* proper was performed. O'Donnell describes the room as being "almost ominously dark" (O'Donnell: 256) and the sound of Crowley apparently slashing his chest as reminiscent of "isinglass, parchment, and potato chips" (O'Donnell: 256). More gods were invoked and then dismissed. "The effect was sufficiently alarming to call forth a chorus of 'Ohs'" (O'Donnell: 257).

Conclusion

Aleister Crowley's life is a cautionary tale. It is a story of potential greatness wasted by self-indulgence. He was born with wealth, intelligence, and an athletic and attractive physique. He was provided with a university education and worldly experience granted to few at that time. He died bankrupt and forgotten by all but a few of his closest supporters. Had he not chosen to follow his "different drummer" he might be remembered today as a much more influential personality of his time.

And yet, perhaps not. Crowley is, for better or worse, the most important figure in twentieth century occultism. Anyone who ventures into an occult bookshop today owes him a portion of the responsibility for the existence of that shop. The boom in occult interest in the 1960s may be partly the result of the discovery of Crowley and the magicians of the Golden Dawn by popular music groups of the time, but it is also the result of the publicity attached to the growing witchcraft movement in England and America at that time. The growth in knowledge about witchcraft and the occult was primarily the result of the work of the founding fathers of neo-paganism, Alex Sanders,

Janet and Stewart Farrar, and Raymond Buckland. And all of them were influenced by the seminal works of Gerald Gardner (1884–1964). The most notable of these are *High Magic's Aid* (1949), a novel he published under the name Scire, *Witchcraft Today* (1954) and *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (1959). It has been shown by Aidan Kelly in his *Crafting the Art of Magic* (1991) how much of Gardner's work, which he claimed to have received from witches who had had the rituals and knowledge passed down to them by their families, was actually borrowed from Crowley's rituals, poetry, and even *The Book of the Law*. Some of it might possibly have been written by Crowley himself at Gardner's request. It is well documented that Gardner was a member of Crowley's OTO in the 1940s and Crowley's diary records several meetings with him. It would not have been out of character for Crowley to agree to ghostwrite a few rituals or invocations in exchange for a couple of pounds cash or, during the luxury-deprived years of World War II, a tin of tobacco or a flask of brandy.

Aleister Crowley was, socially and politically, a man of his times. His Tory attitude of supremacy toward the British colonies, members of any caste or race deemed lower than himself, and women was a result of the combination of economics and spirituality in which he was raised. His youth was spent among servants whose job it was to provide for his comfort and needs. He was, by benefit of his birth, a member of the privileged few who were taught to expect salvation rather than earn it. As a result of this, he expressed in his life and in many of his writings an attitude of superiority which undermines his stature in today's more egalitarian, politically correct times.

Crowley's stature as one of the seminal figures of neo-paganism is challenged by those who reject a misogynist and drug addict as a primary influence. Many of these are

women, who are a strong force in the wiccan movement and reject his teachings outright because of his unsavory personal reputation. He is condemned as well by a number of contemporary ceremonial magicians, who reject the results of his experiments in astral travel because he incorporated pharmaceuticals into many of his ceremonies and was, in their estimation, “hopped to the gills” while performing them.

These positions denigrating Crowley the man should not, however, dim the importance of the contributions he made to neo-pagan thought and practice. While many wiccans may deride Crowley and wish to have nothing to do with him, they still proclaim the Wiccan Rede (written by Gerald Gardner) “An Ye Harm None, Do What Thou Wilt,” not thinking of Crowley’s inevitable opening address on every piece of correspondence or conversation, a phrase from *The Book of the Law*, “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law” (1:40) which predates the Gardner version by fifty years. Crowley’s scholarly works *777*, *The Book of Thoth* and *Magick in Theory and Practice* are widely regarded (even by those who look askance at the author) as essential to any complete neo-pagan library. The OTO membership at the time of his death was less than fifty. It is now numbered in the thousands, and branches are found as far as but not limited to North and South America, Canada, Australia, England, Switzerland, Germany, South Africa, Israel, Japan and Taiwan. The first editions of his works are collectors items commanding from hundreds to thousands of dollars. Although Crowley died thinking himself a failure, the resurrection of his work and influence in the final decades of the twentieth century would be seen by him as a posthumous vindication of his commitment.

CHAPTER 4

ALEISTER CROWLEY AND *THE RITES OF ELEUSIS*

Introduction

Taking 1910 as a snapshot of theatrical activity, the picture seen is a kaleidoscope of activity, forms, tastes and venues. As was mentioned in Chapter Two, this was the year of John Galsworthy's *Justice* at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester. On January 29, 1910 H. B. Irving, son of Henry Irving, opened in the J. Comyns Carr stage adaptation of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* at the Queen's Theatre. Other productions running during 1910, and simultaneously with *The Rites of Eleusis*, include *The Dollar Princess*, a musical by Basil Hood and Leo Fall, *The Bad Girl of the Family*, a melodrama by Frederick Melville, and *The Chocolate Soldier*, a comic opera by Stanislaus Stange with music by Oscar Straus. Drury Lane presented *The Whip*, a pantomime which presented a train wreck onstage and included a telling Edwardian line: "Never mind – they were only third class passengers – something is always happening to people of that kind" (Trewin 166). In September, 1910, the Fred Karno company arrived in New York with their touring company production of *Mumming Birds*, known in America as *A Night in an English Music Hall*. Among the cast were two young performers, Stan Laurel and Charles Chaplin. Bert Williams and Fanny Brice made their first appearances in Ziegfeld's *Follies* on Broadway. Also on Broadway that year were Sarah Bernhardt in one of her

series of farewell tours, Ethel Barrymore in *Mid-Channel*, H. B. Warner and Laurette Taylor in *Alias Jimmy Valentine*, and Alla Nazamova in the first New York production of *Little Eyolf*. Into this mélange of music and melodrama, fluff and substance, came Crowley's *Rites of Eleusis*.

This chapter will begin by addressing the use of pharmaceuticals in religious activities as it relates to the background of the Rites in ancient Greece and during Crowley's production. It will then discuss how Crowley came to write his versions of the Rites, present brief biographies of the participants, and analyze the first Rite, the *Rite of Saturn*, to illustrate what various production decisions were and how they were arrived at through the incorporation of occult symbolism. This will be followed by brief overviews of the other rites.

The Use of Pharmaceuticals in Ritual

Crowley began experimenting with drugs while in his early twenties. When Allan Bennett came to live with Crowley in Chancery Lane in 1899, Bennett was engaging in a cyclical routine of self-medication to combat the chronic asthma with which he was afflicted.

His cycle of life was to take opium for about a month, when the effect wore off, so that he had to inject morphine. After a month of this he had to switch to cocaine, which he took until he began to 'see things,' and was then reduced to chloroform. I have seen him in bed for a week, only recovering consciousness sufficiently to reach for the bottle and the sponge. Asthma being a sthenic disease, he was then too weak to have it any more, so he would gradually convalesce until, after a few weeks of freedom, the spasms would begin once more and he would be forced to renew the cycle of drugs. (Crowley, 1970:180)

Bennett was a chemist by trade, as was George Cecil Jones, the man who had introduced Crowley to the Golden Dawn. Crowley tapped into the chemical knowledge of these men as he began his pursuit of spiritual growth. His diaries from 1899 and 1900 include

references to experiments involving magical work combined with the application of various chemicals such as laudanum. Crowley was working under the theory that any methodology which might expand his consciousness was a viable means of acquiring spiritual insights. His *The Psychology of Hashish*, published under the name Oliver Haddo in the *Equinox*, 1:2 (September, 1909), was one of the first investigations of the psychological effects of that drug.

Religious experience occasionally takes the form of consciousness-alteration. Sometimes that is the result of emotional involvement, and sometimes it is the result of pharmaceuticals. It has been speculated that various forms of drugs were incorporated into the original Eleusian rituals in a deliberate attempt to acquire a religious epiphany.⁸¹ These drugs that are used for religious purposes are termed “entheogens,” meaning “the god within,” or “containing deity.” Merlin Stone, in her book *When God was a Woman*, makes the observation that many ancient religions, such as those found in Sumer, Crete, Greece, and pre-dynastic Egypt, incorporate snakes in their iconography. She then presents a theory that these religions used the venom produced by a snakebite to incur psycho-religious experiences. Hallucinogens were frequently involved in the religions of the Americas as well. Ethnobotanists have identified almost two hundred hallucinogenic plants which have been used by Native Americans in conjunction with religious/mystical experience. The use of these plants by paleo-American groups has been dated to before 8000 BCE (Seaman, 22).

The use of drugs to induce religious experience is not necessarily limited to so-called pagan religions. In what came to be called the Good Friday Experiment of 1962,

⁸¹ See Wasson: 1986 and 1998.

ten theological students from Andover Newton Theological School took psilocybin, a hallucinogen extracted from mushrooms, in the basement of Boston University's Marsh Chapel while ten others took placebos. A Good Friday service was then conducted and the participants were interviewed in detail about their experiences. This experiment was conducted under the leadership of Harvard Psychology Professor Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert (who later became known as author Ram Das), and Walter Pahnke, a physician and minister working on his PhD in religion at Harvard. The majority of those who took the drug reported having a religious experience of some type, and remained in the ministry, while only half of those who took the placebos stayed in that profession.

Crowley's inclusion of the "Cup of Libation" in his *Rite of Artemis* is supported within the text of the original *Hymn to Demeter* wherein Metaneira offers Demeter a cup of wine. Demeter refuses it, and requests instead a drink made of water, mint, and barley. Wasson (1986) theorizes that ergot, a common fungus on grain and also an hallucinogen, naturally appeared on the barley which was used in the recreation of the story within the rite, and contributed a psychedelic aspect to the mystery.

Critics of Crowley's use of drugs as an aid in spiritual development claim that his visions or epiphanies are invalid because they were incited by an external, chemical stimulus rather than an internal spiritual one. This is a chicken-and-egg argument that rejects William James' theory of truth through pragmatism: that truth can be known by its consequences.⁸² The critics also fail to acknowledge that Crowley's visions were not intended to be valid for everyone. A spiritual journey is a personal one, and the

⁸² See his *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).

experiences of one person should not be held as the measure for the experiences of another.

The Original *Rites of Eleusis*

The mythological story of the Eleusinian Mysteries is an apt metaphor for Crowley's efforts to bring a new religious construct to mankind. At the heart of the ancient Mystery is a search for something which has been lost or taken away. The archetypal "Search" is common to many mythologies, from the search of Isis for Osiris to the quest for the Holy Grail, and is reflected in contemporary culture even today. The basic premise upon which the first three degrees of Masonry are based is the search for the Master Builder's word which has been lost through the murder of Hiram Abif. One need only view the popularity of *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Myst*, or the *Star Wars* saga (written by George Lucas, a close friend of myth scholar Joseph Campbell in Campbell's last years) to appreciate the power of mythology in capturing the contemporary imagination. Although the exact content of the original rites of Eleusis are unknown (they were, after all, religious *mysteries*, and were effectively kept that way), it has been speculated that the original rites included a re-enactment of the story of Demeter's search for Persephone (Campbell, 1990:193). In Crowley's production, the search is made more allegorical, yet it also becomes more personal, addressing as it does the search for a God which is found within each individual rather than one which exists as an external entity. Crowley's performances are ultimately the demonstration of one's search for the god which exists within each individual.

In examining the original *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, we find what is probably the best source of evidence for the content if not the construction of the original *Rites of*

Eleusis. The Homeric Hymns are a collection of poems honoring the Greek gods. There are hymns to Dionysos, Apollo, Hermes, Aphrodite, Athene and Hera, among others. The hymns are all written in dactylic hexameter, just as Homer used for his epic works, but it is generally accepted today that the hymns are the work of several poets rather than Homer alone. The majority are thought to originate from the seventh century BCE. Thelma Sargent, in the Forward to her verse translations of the Homeric Hymns (1975), states that “The form of the poems is the *prooimion*, which means ‘prelude’ or ‘preface.’ The question is, a prelude to what?” (Sargent, vii). She goes on to suggest they served as invocations for the opening of public ceremonies. It is certainly easy to read the last few lines and see them as an introduction of a rite at Eleusis:

Going then to the kings who administer right –
Triptolemos, horse-driving Diocles, might Eumolpos,
And Celeos, prince of his people – Demeter made known
Her holy order of service, teaching to all her most sacred rites –
To Triptolemos and to Polyxenos, Diocles also –
Sacred matters to be in no way transgressed, inquired into,
Or spoken about, for great awe of the gods makes mute the voice.
Happy is he of men upon earth who has seen these wonders,
But the uninitiated, having no part in the mysteries,
Never share the same fate, but perish down in the shadows. (Sargent, 14)

The *Hymn to Demeter* presents an outline of a primitive form of ritual drama, perhaps more stylized in language, yet reflecting an underlying performative structure. It opens with an Invocatory Hymn addressing relevant deities who will appear in the course of the narrative. This is followed by the story itself, a story of a search, and concludes with an Epilogue in which the deities are bid farewell. The sequence is similar to a typical neopagan ceremony. These usually begin with an invocation of the specific spirits or “elements” of the four directions who are invited to attend the ritual, followed

by the specific work to be done, and concluding with a dismissal or release of the invoked entities.

Although Demeter is identified as an Earth goddess, she should not be confused with Gaia, who represents a cosmic force of life and creativity. Demeter may also be seen as forming part of a triad motif along with her daughter Persephone, and Hades.⁸³ The Male-Female-Child construct reverses the standard Oedipal theme by placing the instigation of relations on the adult male rather than the child. It is also interesting to remember that Crowley's metaphysical construct posits that the twentieth century is the beginning of the Aeon of Horus, the Child, and that the Hymn to Demeter relates the search for and ultimate recovery of a child.

One aspect of the ancient rites which is echoed in Crowley's work is that both were open to everyone. Crowley wrote in *Magick in Theory and Practice* "This book is for All" (Crowley, 1929:xi). The original rites of Eleusis were seen as a civic as well as a religious activity, and the opportunity to participate was open to everyone, as long as they understood the Greek language and had enough money to pay for a sacrificial pig and meet the fees of the priests. The monetary output of an attendee has been estimated to be little more than an average month's wages; a costly venture, but certainly not out of the reach of most citizens.⁸⁴

Origins of the 1910 Production

It might be said that Crowley announced his intentions of producing the *Rites of Eleusis* in the final volume of his Collected Works in 1907. The last entry in the

⁸³ This triple aspect is repeated in Sumeria with Inanna, Ereshigal, and Dumuzi, in Egypt with Isis, Osiris, and Horus, and in Christianity with the Holy Trinity.

⁸⁴ See Wasson, 1998:46.

collection is titled *Eleusis*, and is “a passionate statement of the necessity for revitalizing religion” (Stephenson, 76). In it Crowley described the world as stuck in a morass of religious conservatism and stagnation, resulting in political and personal decay. He proposed a return to the more personal and ecstatic approach taken by the ancient mystics, and volunteered to undertake the challenge of reintroducing pagan rites to modern society. It was three years later that Crowley acted on his proposal.

When *Liber DCCCL, The Rites of Eleusis*, was first published in *Equinox* 1:6 (March 1911), Crowley's dedication inscribed the text "to my friend Commander G. M. Marston" of the Royal Navy, "to whose suggestion these rites are due" (*Equinox*, 1:6, vi). This reference is to the weekend of May 9, 1910 when Marston, a high-ranking officer in the Admiralty, hosted Crowley, Leila Waddell, and Victor Neuburg at his home, Rempstone, Dorset. A student of occult and primitive religions, with special skill as a ritual drummer, Marston had signed his pledge as a Probationer in the AA on February 22, 1910, and he assisted that May evening when the group performed a ritual version of the evocation of Bartzabel, the spirit of Mars. This ritual was later published *Equinox* 1:9 (March, 1913).

Crowley had written an evocation of Bartzabel some months before, but he now reworked it to accommodate new aesthetic ideas he had had regarding ritual work. As a result, the revised ritual, now titled *An Evocation of Bartzabel, the Spirit of Mars*, is almost entirely in verse. Another alteration he made from traditional evocative rituals was that, rather than evoke the spirit to physical appearance within the confines of a magically defended space exterior to the magic circle, Crowley evoked the spirit directly into the body of Victor Neuburg.

The participants of this ritual were Crowley (Chief Magus), Marston (Assistant Magus), Waddell (Magus Adjuvant), and Neuburg, who was referred to throughout the script of the ritual only as “the Material Basis.” The ritual consists of five parts: 1. Banishings and Consecrations; 2. Special Preparation of the Material Basis; 3. Particular Invocations of the Forces of Mars; 4. Dealings with Bartzabel; 5. Closings. The scene is described as a circle enclosing a pentagram, and within the center of the pentagram is a Tau, or a cross resembling a capital T. Outside the circle are five smaller pentagrams with a ruby lamp in each. The ruby lamps were employed to represent the color of Mars.

There was a double cubed altar with the Square of Mars and the Seal of Mars:

| | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 11 | 24 | 7 | 20 | 3 |
| 4 | 12 | 25 | 8 | 16 |
| 17 | 5 | 13 | 21 | 9 |
| 10 | 18 | 1 | 14 | 22 |
| 23 | 6 | 19 | 2 | 15 |

Figure 23: The Square of Mars

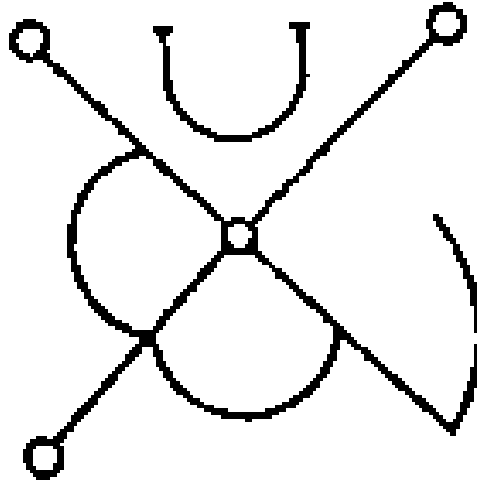


Figure 24: The Seal of Mars

The Square of Mars is created by incorporating the numbers ascribed to Mars: 5, 25, 65, and 325⁸⁵. Each planet has four specific numbers which correspond to its attributes. The first number is the number of the planet (the number of Mars is 5). The second is the square of that number ($5 \times 5 = 25$), which is the number of the planet multiplied by itself. The third number is the sum of a column, row, or diagonal (65), and the fourth number is the sum total of all numbers in the square (325). The theory then applied is that anything which is connected with these numbers will also have some connection with the various planetary attributes. This was the system which motivated Crowley's published request for those attending to color-coordinate their clothing with the ritual to be performed. The double cubed altar is constructed specifically to match the size of the magician.

⁸⁵ See Introduction, p. 33.

The attributes for the planets in the order in which they appear in the *Rites of Eleusis* are listed in abbreviated form below:

| PLANET | NUMBER | COLOR | DAY of the WEEK | ATTRIBUTES |
|---------|--------|---------------|-----------------|---|
| Saturn | 3 | Grey or Black | Saturday | Psychic defense, spiritualism, ageing |
| Jupiter | 4 | Violet | Thursday | Money, prosperity, virility |
| Mars | 5 | Red | Tuesday | Courage, war, fighting, |
| Sol | 6 | Gold | Sunday | Power, riches, glory, success, honor |
| Venus | 7 | Green | Friday | Love, romance, beauty, art |
| Mercury | 8 | Orange | Wednesday | Healing, intelligence, divination, business |
| Luna | 9 | Silver | Monday | Maternal love, nurturing, travel |

Figure 25: Planetary Attributes

While its design is that of a double cube, one stacked on top of the other, the dimensions are determined by the height of the magician. Traditionally the top surface of the altar should be at the level of the magician's navel. That height is then divided, giving the length of each side of the cube. Thus, every measurement of the altar is a direct reference to the body of the magician. This is an example of the idea that every magical apparatus should be considered an extension of the magician himself.

There is a decidedly Egyptian feel to the ritual, and it reflects the influence *The Book of the Law* was having on Crowley's work. Prayers are periodically offered to Ra

Hoor Khuit, the active aspect of Horus, and references occur throughout to the advent of the new Aeon.

During the ritual, Neuburg was placed in the psychically charged triangle and, when the spirit was constrained to speak through him, he managed to deliver, in response to Marston's questions, Bartzabel's predictions of approaching war in the Balkans and in Germany. Marston was so impressed with the success of the ritual that he suggested they might finance the growth of the AA by selling tickets for spectators to attend similar events. Crowley himself maintained a strong prejudice against the idea of charging dues in connection with admission to or continued membership in any spiritual organization, but was always susceptible to flattery, and kept the idea of a public ritual in the back of his mind.

The next event in the sequence which led to the creation of the *Rites* occurred the following month. Crowley, Waddell, Neuburg and some others were gathered one evening at Crowley's Victoria Street apartment, indulging in one of Crowley's favorite pastimes, an anhalonium party. Anhalonium is a derivative of mescaline, a South American psychedelic drug he had first encountered while in Mexico ten years earlier. That evening Crowley suggested they attempt an artistic "dialogue" incorporating various media. The evening progressed with Crowley reading a poem, Waddell responding with a violin selection, and Neuburg dancing an interpretation of the literary or musical piece. What followed was an improvised performance which left the participants and audience alike in a state of energized enthusiasm. Crowley wrote later that he felt as though he had just taken part in a highly charged and effective ritual. Remembering the experience with Marston in May, and not necessarily associating the elation or success with any

interaction of the anhalonium, he began envisioning a public event which was both ritualistic, yet aesthetically passionate.

The Rite of Artemis was presented on August 23, 1910. Unlike today, when pagan festivals are held year round throughout the country and pagan groups often advertise public rituals, in 1910 it was impossible to find a pagan ritual performed in public. This was a unique experience which raised the stakes for risqué entertainment. It was written as a test to judge the reactions of an uninitiated, invited audience to a pagan ritual. These included other members of the AA, contributors to the *Equinox*, their friends, and selected reporters and critics. It was not an entirely unbiased audience, but there were some independent individuals in the house. Ultimately the script of the *Rite of Artemis* would serve as the basis for the concluding *Rite of Luna* in the *Rites of Eleusis* series.

The Rite of Artemis was presented in the offices of the *Equinox*, which doubled as Crowley's apartment, at 124 Victoria Street, SW, in London. It is a narrow, five storey building with a white marble facade where Crowley lived from 1909 to 1911. This apartment/office was located on the fifth (top) floor of the building. A sixth floor was later added, but Crowley's apartment was the level directly below the exterior molding (see Figure 26). This is ascertainable by cross-referencing the style and placement of the windows in interior photographs of the apartment with photographs of the exterior.

His circle of friends at the time of his stay there included poet Victor Neuburg, Australian violinist Leila Waddell, Captain (later Major General) J.F.C. Fuller, George Raffalovich, and novelist Ethel Archer. All were involved with Crowley in the creation of the premiere volume of *The Equinox* in September 1909, and subsequently with the



Figure 26: 124 Victoria Street, 2001

creation and presentation of *The Rites of Eleusis* the following year. “The office [of the *Equinox*] was furnished with red curtains and cushions, a stuffed crocodile and several Buddhas” (Fuller, 134).

The Rite of Artemis attracted a capacity audience. This was not difficult, since there was space for little more than twenty people in the *Equinox* office, even with all the furniture removed. Upon climbing the five flights of stairs and entering the emptied apartment/office, participants were met by Neuburg and offered a “Cup of Libation.” This was a pleasant-smelling drink containing fruit juice, alcohol, and anhalonium, which is an alkaloid refined from the peyote plant. Anhalonium was legal at that time, and it was one of Crowley’s favorite indulgences for several years.⁸⁶ He was introduced to its use when he traveled to Mexico in 1900, and claimed to be the person who introduced it to Europe. Ethel Archer, a contributor to the *Equinox* and one of the invited guests, wrote a fictionalized account of attending the *Rite of Artemis* in her novel *The Hieroglyph* (1932). In it, she wrote “The odour [sic] of the stuff was certainly not inviting, it suggested bad apples and laudanum” (Archer, 101). In this novel she fictionalized real people and events, just as Crowley often did. Crowley’s character is named Vladimir Svaroff, the alias he used when he rented his apartment in Chancery Lane with Allan Bennett.⁸⁷ Victor Neuburg is Benjamin Newton,⁸⁸ Svareff’s periodical *The Heiroglyph* is the *Equinox*, and the flapper who commits suicide is Joan Hayes. Ethel Archer described

⁸⁶ See Marlow, 1992:60 for an account of Crowley serving the drink to Theodore Dreiser in New York during World War I.

⁸⁷ Crowley claimed he did this to maintain his anonymity. His friend George Cecil Jones later remarked that
“a wiser man would have called himself ‘Smith.’”

⁸⁸ Neuburg’s middle name was Benjamin.

her reaction to the libation served that evening as being “pepped up and lively,” although “it took about a week to wear off” (Fuller 144).

No copy of the *Rite of Artemis* is known to survive. A reconstruction may be attempted by considering the detailed review of the production published by Raymond Radclyffe in *The Sketch* on the following day, August 24, 1910. When the audience reached the top of the stairs they were met by Victor Neuburg in a white robe carrying a sword. They were then ushered into the room, which had been emptied of its usual furniture, and seated on one of the cushions which were placed along the walls. When the Rite began, it opened with the Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram (LBRP), a Golden Dawn ritual. The LBRP is spoken in Hebrew and begins with what is termed the “Qabalistic Cross.” The magician begins by facing East and visualizing him/herself growing larger and larger until their body is many times larger than the earth itself. The feet, however, remain firmly placed on the earth. A ball of brilliant white light is visualized descending to just above the head, and with the right hand a ray of light is drawn from the ball into the forehead and the magician vibrates the word “Ateh,” a rough Hebrew translation of which is “Unto thee.” The right hand is drawn down the center of the body, and a line of white energy is visualized following its path. At the pelvis the hand stops and “Malkuth” is vibrated. This is the base sepheroth on the Tree of Life representing the Kingdom of Earth, or Physical Base of existence. The hand is then moved to the right shoulder and a new line of energy is begun with the vibration “Ve-Geborah,” Power. The new line of energy then extends across the chest to the left shoulder, where “Ve-Gedulah,” Glory, is vibrated. This second hand movement, creating a line across the chest and perpendicular to the original line, thus creates a glowing cross

superimposed on the torso of the magician. The magician then folds his wrists over his chest, bows his head, and vibrates “Le Olam Amen,” Forever, Amen. This is recognizable as an adaptation of the final lines of the Lord’s Prayer.

After the Qabalistic Cross, the magician faces east again and draws a banishing pentagram in the air in front of him (see Figure 27).

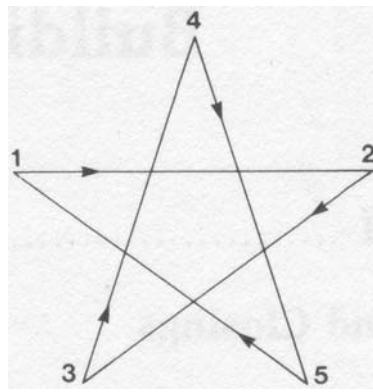


Figure 27: Banishing Pentagram of the East

There are ten different ways of drawing a pentagram. The variations on eight of them depend on which of the four cardinal directions is being addressed and whether it is being invoked or banished. There are two more pentagrams, the invoking and banishing pentagrams of Spirit, making a total of ten .

He points to the center of the pentagram and vibrates “Yod-He-Vau-He.” In Jewish mysticism this is known as the tetragrammaton, the holy, unspeakable name of God. It is formed by the letters יהוה. What is being pronounced is the name of each letter which creates this name. The first Y, Yod, traditionally represents archetypal

masculinity, e. g. the Taoist yang or Jung's Animus. The first H, He, represents archetypal femininity, the yin, or Anima. The third letter, V or Vau, is masculine and the fourth, H or He, is feminine. This combination creates a unified balance of male and female, which represents the idea that God is the unification of all things.

The magician then faces South, draws a banishing pentagram for that direction (Figure 28), and vibrates "Adonai," which means "Lord."

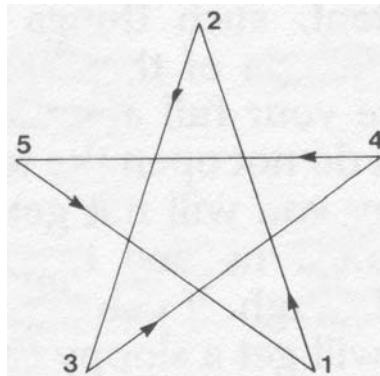


Figure 28: Banishing Pentagram of the South

The magician then faces West, draws the banishing pentagram for that direction (Figure 29), and vibrates the name "Eh He Yeh." This name means "I am," and is the name God revealed to Moses at the burning bush. The magician then faces East again and announces "Before me Raphael. Behind me Ariel. On my right hand Michael. On my left hand Uriel. For before me flames the pentagram, and behind me shines the six-rayed star." Each name is vibrated as it is

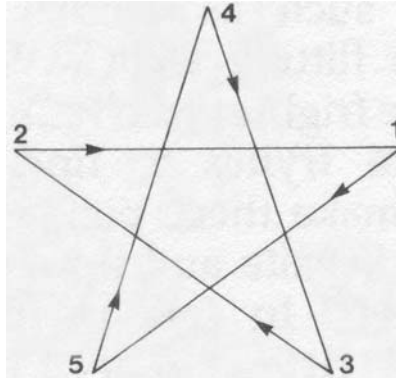


Figure 29 – Banishing Pentagram of the West

North is then invoked with another pentagram, and AGLA is vibrated.

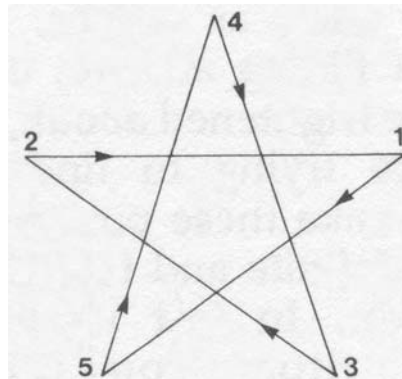


Figure 30 – Banishing Pentagram of the North

pronounced. These names are of the archangels associated with these directions.

Following the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, the space was asperged with water to purify it, then consecrated with incense. A circumambulation was made three times around the room, creating the psychic energy to be used in the rite. The first

Libation was then offered to the audience and participants. The review in *The Sketch* describes the libation as being offered in a “large, golden bowl.”

“The Twelve-Fold Certitude of God” was then recited. This is a chapter from *The Treasure House of Images*, also known as *Liber DCCCCLXIII*. This is a “Publication in Class B” which had been written by Crowley and Captain J. F. C. Fuller, and which had been published as a Supplement in *The Equinox* (1:2, March, 1910). *The Treasure House of Images* is a series of adorations, or prayers of entreaty, based upon the zodiac. There are sixteen adorations in all, one for each of the twelve signs of the zodiac, plus one each for the waxing moon, waning moon, the sun, and the Star of David.

After the recitation, the Greater Ritual of the Hexagram was performed.⁸⁹

Another libation was then served, followed by Crowley reciting his *Song of Orpheus* from his *Collected Works*. A third libation was served, and Leila Waddell entered. Crowley read from the first chorus of Swinburne’s *Atalanta in Calydon*.⁹⁰ The fourth libation was served and the invocation of Artemis was given. Neuburg performed an interpretive dance, Crowley read a final poem, and Leila played an *Abenlied*. An intense and extended silence was broken by Crowley stating “By the power in me vested I declare this temple closed,” and the Rite was ended.

Radclyffe wrote a positive review, calling the Rite “weird and impressive,” Neuburg’s dance “graceful and beautiful, and Waddell’s playing filled “with passion and feeling, like a master.” The successful reception of the *Rite of Artemis* gave Crowley the confidence to proceed with a series of seven rites, based on the Sun, Moon, and five

⁸⁹ See Appendix H.

⁹⁰ Apparently Crowley was not as impressed with Swinburne’s *At Eleusis*, which would appear to be the more appropriate selection

original planets of astrology. He vigorously promoted the *Rites of Eleusis* during the summer and , against Fuller's advice to quit while he was ahead, rented a performance space in Caxton Hall for seven consecutive Wednesdays in October and November. Crowley saw the production as a means of not only replenishing the coffers of the AA, but of publicizing the movement itself and attracting students. Several advertising materials such as publicity photographs, broadsheets and flyers were written and published. An example of one of the flyers circulated around London is the following:

Working on tradition, just as Wagner did when he took the old Norse Saga for his world drama, we find Saturn as a black, melancholy God, the devourer of his children. Ideas of Night, Death, Black Hellebore, Lead, Cypress, Tombs, Deadly Nightshade. All these things have a necessary connection with Saturn in the mind of anyone who has read the classics. The first condition of this rite is, then, to make the temple a kind of symbolic representation of the sphere of Saturn. So the representative of Saturn wears the Black Robe. The time is declared to be midnight (though, as a matter of fact, it is only twenty minutes past eight - this is an ordinary theatrical convention, and Masons will think of certain analogies in their own "Orgies"). If the Brethren are fed, it is "on the corpses of their children" as Saturn fed on his. If they drink, it is "Poppyheads infused in blood" - symbols of sleep and death. Saturn further represents the earth, the plane of matter, humanity bounded by old age and death, humanity blindly groping after illumination and failing to get it [. . .]. It is then, the primitive darkness of humanity that is represented in this ritual. Therefore we have the despairing cry, "There is no God"; and as a logical result the suicide of the high priest, for there cannot be a priest without a God. It is the blackness of uttermost despair; and so the ritual ends. (Crowley, from a flyer written to promote the *Rites of Eleusis*, Warburg Institute)

Crowley leaves no doubt as to the tone of the first rite: heaviness, darkness and despair. The form of this dramatic cycle is not strictly qabalistic, but is rather a combination of ceremonial magical practices and basic religious precepts of classical paganism. This amalgam is then filtered through Crowley's insight into and organization of his study of Masonic rituals. "The ancients were accustomed to invoke the gods by a

dramatic presentation or commemoration of their legends," as he puts it in *Confessions* (p. 633). Mather's *Rites of Isis* were basically a reconstruction of what he believed to be the religious practices followed in Egypt twenty-five hundred years earlier, and he presented them as historical reproductions rather than religious experiences. Unlike Mathers, Crowley intended to create an authentic spiritual epiphany in his audience. And initially he was willing to do whatever it took to create that experience. His next step was to create a ritual to test the waters.

In the opening editorial of Volume 3:1 of *The Equinox* (March, 1919), Crowley stated his underlying purpose for presenting the *Rites of Eleusis*:

The world needs religion.
Religion must represent Truth, and celebrate it.
This truth is of two orders: one, concerning Nature external to Man;
two, concerning Nature internal to Man.
Existing religions, especially Christianity, are based on primitive
ignorance
of the facts, particularly of external Nature.
Celebrations must conform to the custom and nature of the people.
Christianity has destroyed the joyful celebrations, characterized by music,
dancing, feasting, and making love; and has kept only the melancholy
(*Equinox*, 3:1, 9).

The *Rites* came during a transitional period between the zenith of the Symbolist movement and the birth of Dadaism. The Symbolist movement was seen as "not only an aesthetic experience for its makers and beholders but also an opportunity for metaphysical quest and spiritual discovery" (Eynat-Confino, 21). It was, among other things, an attempt to recapture and recreate the methodology, if not the experience, of the Greeks. Dada, on the other hand, had no rules beyond rejecting all rules. If symbolism was a quest for spirituality, dada was the report back that the search had been unsuccessful. Dada was founded in Zürich in 1915 by Tristan Tsara, Hans Arp, Hugo

Ball, and Marcel Janco, as a reaction to the beginning of World War I. The movement spread to Paris and Berlin before it disappeared after 1924, with many of the members joining the surrealists. Its influence may be traced through the development of the surrealists such as Dali, and also the existentialists of the 1940s.

Crowley had little regard for the dadaist movement.

Cubism, vorticism, dadaism and such sectarian sillinesses all come to the same thing; they are embalmed intellectual fads, invented in order to prove that the imbecility of their adherents is sublime [. . .] a work of art justifies itself by its direct magical effect on the observer. (Crowley, 1970:646)

Crowley intended just such a “magical effect” on his *Rites* audience. He saw the *Rites* as an opportunity to expose the public to how rewarding an active engagement with religious ceremony could be. The *Rites* were to serve as a pre-initiatory introduction to his AA, an opportunity for them to sample the activities that awaited them upon becoming full members. At the least, they might be tempted to begin reading the *Equinox* or some of Crowley’s other works.

At the same time, Crowley was no fool. He was not expecting, nor even desirous of, hundreds of people descending on the Victoria Street offices making application for acceptance into the AA. As was predicted in 1:10 of *The Book of the Law*: “Let my servants be few and secret: they shall rule the many & the known” (Crowley, 1986: 45). He was looking for a select few, the elite of mankind, just as the Plymouth Brethren were the Elect of God.

THE CAST **Victor Neuburg**

Victor Benjamin Neuburg was born on May 6, 1883 at 129 Highbury Hill, Islington, London. He left school at 16 and joined the family import business. By the

age of 20, he began to have poems published in the *Freethinker* and the *Agnostic Journal*, of which he became Sub-Editor within three years. In 1906, he began his studies at Trinity College, Cambridge, and continued to contribute poetry of an increasingly metaphysical tone to publications such as *The Agnostic Journal*. He was introduced to Crowley by J. F. C. Fuller in Cambridge on in 1906, and spent the following year studying Crowley's works. In the summer of 1908, he and Crowley walked across Spain and Morocco, and began their homosexual relationship. It was during this trip that Crowley wrote his analysis of drug experiences, later published as *The Psychology of Hashish*. Later that year, Neuburg's first collection of poetry, *The Green Garland*, was published.

Neuburg was made a Probationer of the AA on April 8, 1909, taking the magical motto *Omnia Vincam*, (I Will Conquer All). Three weeks later he sat for and passed his final examinations at Cambridge. In June he traveled to Boleskine to begin intensive training with Crowley. His willingness to follow Crowley around Europe and Africa is an indication of the depth of the feelings, both romantic and spiritual, he held for Crowley. They returned to London in July to prepare the premiere volume of the *Equinox*, in which Neuburg had a number of works published over the course of several subsequent numbers.

In the summer of 1914, following an extended magical experiment with Crowley that lasted several weeks, Neuburg broke with Crowley and resigned from the AA. The following year he was drafted into the army, where he spent World War I. He was discharged in 1919 and moved into Vine Cottage in Steyning. It was here he began his

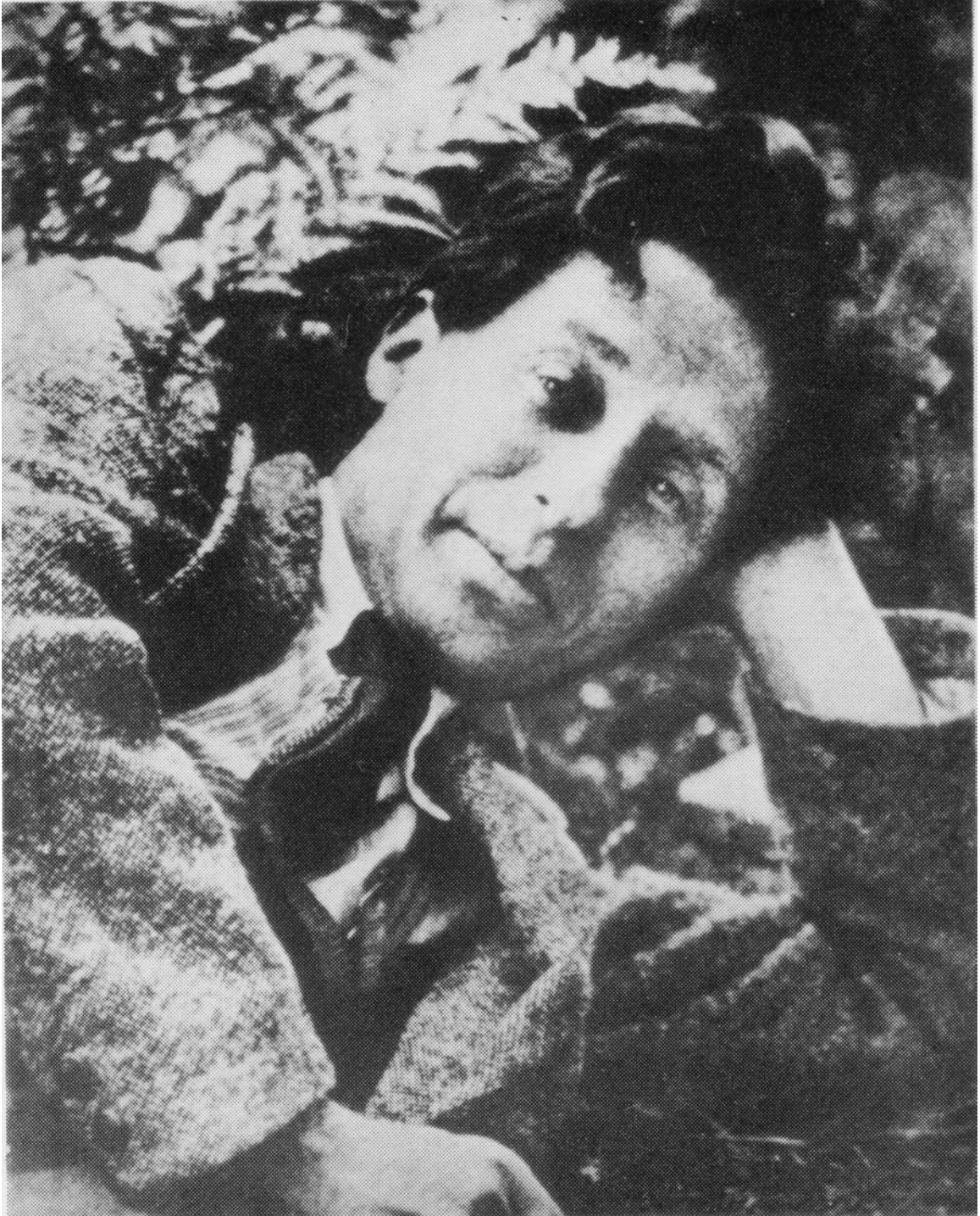


Figure 31: Victor Neuburg

Vine Press, primarily for the publication of his own poetry. In 1921 he married, and a son was born in 1924. It was not a happy marriage due to the recurring bouts of depression from which Neuburg suffered. In 1933 he was made poetry editor of the *Sunday Referee*, and that same year had a poem submitted to him by a young Dylan Thomas. Neuburg encouraged Thomas, published a number of his poems, and is credited with “discovering” him. Neuburg spent the remainder of his life at the *Sunday Referee*, and he died of tuberculosis in 1940.

An entry in Crowley’s unpublished diary for June 28, 1930 makes reference to Neuburg:

A sausage-lipped songster of Steyning
Was solemnly bent on attaining.
But he broke all the rules
About managing tools
And so he broke down in the training.
(Crowley, Diary, June, 1930, Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute)

Leila Waddell

The Equinox 1:7 (March, 1912) contains a birthday poem written by Crowley, dated Aug.10, 1911 which begins

Full moon to-night; and six and twenty years
first broke from angel spheres! (*Equinox*, 1:7, 419)⁹¹

This suggests that Leila Waddell, the subject of the poem, was born in 1885. Another poem to her by Crowley closes the last number of the first volume of *The Equinox*. It is entitled “Colophon: To Laylah Eight and Twenty” and was published in September, 1913, a month after she would have turned twenty-eight had she been born in 1885. A

⁹¹This was written when Crowley was living at 50 Rue Vavin in Paris, about the same time he wrote *The Ghouls* and *Mortadello*.

third poem published in *The Equinox*, “The Interpreter,” is accompanied by a photograph of her in the robes of the *Rites* performances (1:4, 10). This poem is one of two works from the original *Rite of Artemis* (the other being “Pan to Artemis”, also published in this volume). Crowley also wrote two short stories, “The Vixen” (*Equinox*, 1:5, 125) and “The Violinist”(*Equinox*, 1:9, 13), in which she served as the model for the main characters. Crowley described her in “The Violinist” as

tall and finely-built, huntress-lithe [. . .]. Her face was Greek in delicacy; but what meant such a mouth in it? The mouth of a satyr or a devil. It was full and strong, curved twice, the edges upwards, an angry purple, the lips flat. Her smile was the snarl of a wild beast (*Equinox*, I, ix, 13).

In his *Confessions* Crowley says he “idealized her; I robed her in the royal vestures of romance. The power and passion of her playing inspired me. Her beauty, physical and moral, bewitched me” (Crowley, 1970:690). Yet from that “mouth of a satyr” came a strong Australian accent which Crowley periodically encouraged her to lose, citing the negative artistic impact it had on ritual invocations. This reaction is typical of Crowley. He saw himself as a member of a superior race, a superior class, and a superior gender. His diaries are peppered with derogatory and racist references to “Jews” and “niggers,” and along with his racial bigotry came a noblesse oblige attitude toward women. Women had “no true moral ideals. They were bound up with their necessary preoccupation, with the function of reproduction. Their apparent aspirations were camouflage. Intellectually, of course, they did not exist” (Crowley, 1970:142).

Perhaps motivated by vanity, the sensibilities of a female public performer, or an awareness of the chauvinist with whom she was dealing, Waddell deliberately misled Crowley. Leila Ida Nerissa Waddell was born in Australia on August 10, 1880. She was



Figure 32: Leila Waddell in *The Rites of Eleusis*

the daughter of David Waddell of Bathurst, Australia. The missing five years are probably due to professional or personal vanity. At the age of seven the local barber, who was also an accomplished musician, offered to give music lessons to Leila and her sister. Leila was seen as the more musical of the two and studied with the man for several years, learning pieces of increasing complexity and demonstrating an advanced natural ability. It was not until her first tutor had died and a replacement engaged that it was discovered that she had learned all her repertoire through imitation and could neither read music nor identify specific notes on the instrument (*What's On*, 1910).

And yet, despite this technical shortcoming, Waddell managed to obtain professional engagements in Australia. Her first professional appearances were under the direction of Arthur Mason, the Sydney, Australia, City Organist from 1901 through 1907. During her time with Mason her services in the cause of several local charities led to a concert given in her honor. She followed this apprenticeship with Mason with a tour of Australia and New Zealand with *The Brescians*, a concert group led by Henry Hayward.

In 1908, Waddell went to England, and the following year obtained a position as the leader of the Gypsy band in a revival of Oscar Straus's *A Waltz Dream* at Daly's London Theatre. She played the role of Annerl, a violinist in the ladies' orchestra. She then became involved with an offshoot of this production, assuming the role of "The Ragged Gypsy" in appearances in England and Europe for the next year.

Waddell met Crowley early in 1910 as he was returning to London from an extended trip to Algeria with Neuburg. She was inducted into his magical organization, the AA, on April 1 of that year, taking the magical name "Sister Agatha." After the production of the *Rites*, Waddell "spent some weeks in New York" (Crowley, 1970: 690)

in 1912 with a production of *Two Little Brides*, starring James T. Powers and Frances Cameron. She also served as the impetus for Crowley to create *The Ragged Rag-Time Girls*, a vaudeville-style music-hall act which he produced and which highlighted Waddell's violin performances of a number of popular and classical pieces.⁹² In his autobiography Crowley viewed the production with disdain, calling it "a sickening business" (Crowley, *Confessions*, 690). Crowley returned to New York in October, 1914 and Waddell followed in February, 1916, but would not continue their relationship after he left for Europe in 1920. She remained in America for several more years where she toured the country and often contributed short stories and articles on music to supplement her income as a performer. She finally returned to Australia in 1923 after learning of the failing health of her father. She obtained a position in a convent school teaching music, and also made appearances with the Conservatorium Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Society of Sydney. She died of uterine cancer on Tuesday, September 13, 1932 at the age of fifty-two and is buried in an unmarked grave in Sydney.

Ione de Forest

Ione de Forest (aka Joan Hayes) played "Luna" in the Rites. She was born Jeanne Heyse in 1892, and studied acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in 1910. She was a friend of Dame Rebecca West during this time. Rebecca West was born Cicily Isabel Fairfield on December 21, 1892 in London, the daughter of an army officer, and was educated in Edinburgh after her father's death in 1902. When she began to study

⁹² See Chapter Three.

theatre she adopted the name “Rebecca West,” a role she had performed in a production of Ibsen’s *Rosmersholm*.⁹³ West described de Forest at the time of their relationship:

She had a beautiful face of the Russian ballet type, oval with beautifully defined eyebrows; her hair was very black and her skin white. Most girls at that time did not use powder but a curious thing called papier poudre, and we thought it rather dashing of her to use powder - and terribly dashing when she took to using a pale blue or pale green powder to intensify the whiteness of her skin. This she had been taught to do by a famous beauty of the time [. . .] a poor girl who was just too marvelous to look upon, and could not act at all, and had come before the days of the photographic model. She had the body of a child of twelve. She was a freak of nature, though a very lovely one. She was both short and slight. It was as if her growth had been checked. She had absolutely no talent of any sort, as actress or dancer. Her delivery was wooden and her movement stiff. She was also quite stupid on general matters. But her beauty was extraordinary, and she was sweet natured. Joan Hayes was a delightful, kind, sympathetic friend.

She had two sisters. One was a famous show-girl called Kathleen Hayes, the other was also on the stage. The father was, I thought, a Frenchman; and he had come over to England because in some curious way he had been ruined by the Dreyfus case. I think they were possibly Jewish. She was not in the least what one would have expected from the daughter of a man who kept a lodging house in Brixton Road. She was by the way frank and humorous about her home. She spoke beautiful English and odd French, she had good manners, and a certain air of refinement was evident in everything she did and said, but there was something odd and isolated about her, plus an air of second rate theatre. Joan’s fees were paid by somebody very odd - I can’t remember if it was the local doctor or the grocer. Anyway he came with his wife to see her act and I met them. Or was it a bookmaker? I remember a cheerful and vulgar pair. (Fuller, 148-9)

West adds:

I know her family background was probably sordid, but . . . that she was an innocent girl I am certain. I met her every day in term-time for a year, and I took her home several times and exposed her to the really very shrewd gaze of my mother, who thought she was a nice, stupid, very affected, good natured girl, with a tragedy ahead of her because of her ambition and her quite evident lack of gifts. (Fuller, 162)

⁹³ Interestingly, this was the same role Florence Farr played in the first English production at the Vaudeville Theatre in 1891.

Prior to her involvement with the *Rites of Eleusis*, de Forest's primary experience had been her appearing in the Haymarket Theatre's production of Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird* in 1909. Although having no interest in magic, de Forest answered the advertisement for performers for the *Rites* which Crowley had placed in *The Stage*.

Joan took a job appearing as a *figurante* in some ceremonial shows which were given by Crowley. She either applied for the job as a result of seeing it advertised or was sent by an agent. I don't think Joan had any ideas which would have led her to Crowley. She was a very simple-minded girl, who read in order to develop herself but wouldn't have known the difference between Marie Corelli and Thomas Hardy. (Fuller, 148-9)

During the rehearsals, she began an affair with Neuburg. Crowley did not approve of this development, feeling it interfered with Neuburg's AA work (Sutin, 231). There has also been speculation that she had a brief romantic involvement with Crowley as well, which may explain his passionate dislike for her later on. At the end of the following year de Forest married Wilfred Merton, a friend of Neuburg's. By spring of 1912, Merton had instituted divorce proceedings against de Forest, presumably because of the continuing relationship between de Forest and Neuburg. She left Merton in June, 1912 and shot herself in the heart the night of Thursday, August 1, 1912. Nina Hamnett found her body the next morning:

She seemed often depressed and one day said to me, "I am going away tomorrow for a long time, perhaps for ever, come in the morning and I will give you some clothes." I was delighted as I had very few clothes. I felt rather worried about her but did not know what I could do. The next day I went to the studio. Outside pinned on the door was an envelope and inside was the key. I was rather frightened. I opened the door and inside was a large red curtain. I hesitated for a moment, terrified; I pulled it aside and on there sofa she lay dead, with a mother-o'pearl revolver and her slippers beside her on the floor. Her face was quite white and her golden eyes were half closed. She had placed the revolver to her chest, inside her dress, and shot herself through her heart and lungs. I called the caretaker and he fetched the police. I, of course, had to be a witness. This depressed me for some time. (Hamnett, 32)

A handwritten letter found in the apartment after her death was addressed to the London Coroner:

The last statement of Jeanne Merton, wife of Wilfred Merton, of the above address, written at her present residence at Rossetti Studios, where she has been living under her professional name of Ione de Forest, being an art student. I hereby state that although of sound mind I intend committing suicide tonight because of the intolerable position my extremely rash and unfortunate marriage has placed me in. It is my wish my body should be cremated. (Fuller, 172)

The death certificate verdict read:

2nd August, 1912. In flat, Rossetti Studios, Flood Street, Chelsea. Jeanne Merton, Female. 21 years. Found dead. Syncope from a revolver wound of the heart, self inflicted, and deceased did kill herself while temporarily insane. (Fuller, 172)

Neuburg blamed Crowley as the ultimate cause of her death, feeling Crowley had ritually cursed her and brought about her suicide as a result of jealousy of her perceived power over Neuburg. It is an intriguing accusation in hindsight. Fifteen years after this incident Crowley fell out with another of his students, Norman Mudd, and cursed Mudd saying he would die by the rope and by water. In June 1934, Mudd was found drowned, his pants filled with stones and bicycle clips fastened around his ankles. A rope was around his neck. In all probability this was a case of self-fulfilling prophesy, yet this begs the question of the power of prophesy to become a curse.

George Raffalovich

George Raffalovich was born in Cannes in 1880. His mother was French (Crowley claims in his autobiography that Raffalovich's maternal grandmother was a countess descended from one of the ministers of finance under Napoleon) and his father was a Russian Jew from Odessa. His father's family were wealthy bankers who had left Russia around 1860 to avoid anti-Semitic persecution. A cousin of his was Andre

Raffalovich, a novelist, poet, playwright and author of the first published account of the trials of Oscar Wilde. Andre's mother, Marie Raffalovich, held a salon in Paris at her home at 19 Avenue Hoch which was frequented by celebrities such as Colette, Sarah Bernhardt and the philosopher Henri Bergson.⁹⁴

George Raffalovich moved to England about 1906. Like Crowley, he had inherited a considerable fortune and, according to Crowley, squandered a good portion of it:

At one time he bought a traveling circus with a menagerie and a collection of freaks. He should certainly have been the principal attraction. He had almost come to his last franc when he was pulled up by a *conseil de famille*. They saved a few thousand for the fool and kept him on short commons to teach him sense. (Crowley, 1970: 633)

After arriving in England, Raffalovich published a number of novels and collections of short stories. *Planetary Journeys and Earthly Sketches*, published in London by Arnold Fairbanks & Company in 1908, was an anthology of thirteen short stories, some of which had appeared earlier in *New Age* magazine. The first four stories of the collection are a connected series of tales concerning extraterrestrial life and interplanetary travel. *The History of a Soul* was published by Crowley in 1909 under the *Equinox* imprint in a limited edition of 1,000 copies. Editions of this book are extant which display a printed label for "Francis Griffiths, 1913" pasted over the *Equinox* imprint, suggesting the stock was sold to another distributor. This liquidation may have been done by Crowley to raise funds for his trip to Russia with his *Ragged Rag Time Girls* troupe. *The Deuce and All* and *On the Loose* were also published by Crowley, the latter in a paperback edition. These publications were an exchange (or reward) for

⁹⁴Henri Bergson was the brother of Moira Mathers, wife of Samuel Liddell Mathers; see Chapter Two.

Raffalovich using some of his allowance to help finance the publication of *The Equinox*. He also had several short stories appear in *The Equinox* (*The Man-Cover*, in 1:2; *The Brighton Mystery*, in 1:3; *My Lady of the Breeches*, and *Ehe*, both appearing in 1:4).

Raffalovich wrote sections of the *Rite of Mercury* and the *Rite of Mars*. After the production of *The Rites of Eleusis* Raffalovich, like so many other acquaintances of Crowley, fell out with him and, in turn, was remembered by Crowley with derision in his autobiography. Raffalovich went on to become a political activist for several causes, acting as a propagandist for Ukrainian independence, and contributing numerous articles to periodicals on the political situations of the time. He also supported himself by translating the works of other writers.

John Frederick Charles Fuller

John Frederick Charles Fuller was born September 1, 1878 in Chichester. His father was an Anglican clergyman, and his mother was French, but raised in Germany. His was a comfortable middle-class childhood. Although slight of stature (when he entered Sandhurst Military Academy he was five feet four inches tall and weighed one hundred twenty pounds), he graduated in 1898 and was granted a commission in the Oxfordshire Light Infantry. He was posted to India in 1903, and spent the next three years there, where he became fascinated with Indian culture, mysticism, and where he first discovered Crowley's writings.

Crowley had met Fuller in 1906 when Fuller, by now a Captain, had responded to a competition published the year before for the best essay on Crowley's *Collected Works*. Prior to meeting Crowley in person, Fuller had published several articles in *The Agnostic Journal*, and had first met Victor Neuburg at the funeral of the *Agnostic Journal's* editor,



Figure 33: J. F. C. Fuller c. 1919

William Stewart Ross, in November, 1906. Crowley's advertisement for the essay of 1905, coinciding with the publication of the first of the three volumes which would comprise his *Collected Works*, proclaimed: "The Chance of the Year! The Chance of the Century! The Chance of the Geologic Period!" and offered a cash prize of 100 pounds to the winner. Fuller won the competition (there were no other entrants) but there is no record of either his collecting the prize or complaining about the oversight.

Fuller became a member of Crowley's AA in 1906 and was one of the three co-authors (Crowley and Raffalovich being the others) of the *Rites of Eleusis*. In 1910 Crowley published *The Winged Beetle*, an anthology of poetry in which he dedicated selected poems to Fuller (*The Wizard Way*), Raffalovich (*The Pentagram*)⁹⁵, G. M. Marsten (*Ave Adoni*), Wilfred Merton⁹⁶ (*The Poet at Bay*), and Neuburg (*The Garden of Janus*). One of the poems in *The Winged Beetle*, although dedicated to Millicent Tobas, mentions Fuller:

THE CONVERT

(A hundred years hence)

There met one eve in a sylvan glade
A horrible Man and a beautiful maid.
"Where are you going, so meek and holy?"
"I'm going to temple to worship Crowley."
"Crowley is God, then? How do you know?"
"Why, it's Captain Fuller that told us so."
"And how do you know that Fuller was right?"
"I'm afraid you're a wicked man; Good night."
While this sort of thing is styled success
I shall not count failure bitterness. (Crowley, 1910:102)

⁹⁵On the recording Crowley made of *The Pentagram* in the early 1940s, he says at the beginning, "The Pentagram. Dedicated to Henry Foreman." It is unknown who Henry Forman was, or when Crowley revoked the Raffalovich dedication.

⁹⁶Merton married Joan Heyse - "Ione de Forest" - the following year. Crowley noted that the poem "was written before W. M.'s marriage - or his wife might have explained it to *him!*" (Crowley, 1910:11)

The volume is dedicated to Fuller. Crowley considered a second edition in 1914, but by then had fallen out with Fuller. Crowley wrote to Fuller asking if the dedicatory page should be revised. Whether Fuller responded is unknown, but the response would have been a moot point, since there were numerous unsold copies of the original printing still extant.

Following the *Rites of Eleusis*, Fuller ended his friendship with Crowley, feeling Crowley had deserted a good friend. Fuller served as a staff officer with the Tank Corps during World War I, and during the 1920s he tried to restructure the British Army, which earned him a number of political enemies and effectively ended his military career. He turned to writing books on military theory and history, and became one of the best-respected military theorists of the twentieth century (Booth, 177). He was among the first to support the utilization of armored tanks in battle, and proclaimed the idea that success in a protracted war was best achieved through the support and nurturing of a healthy peacetime economy. Viewed by many of his contemporaries as an arrogant genius, Fuller retired from the army as a Major-General in 1933 and joined the British Union of Fascists. His support of Nazism earned him an invitation to Adolf Hitler's fiftieth birthday celebration, which he attended. After the war he turned to writing histories, and died in 1966.

Kenneth Martin Ward

Kenneth Martin Ward was born in 1887. Standing over six feet, Ward was an avid athlete, excelling in boxing, gymnastics, swimming, and mountain climbing. He entered Cambridge in October, 1906 on a physics and chemistry scholarship. Crowley met him while on a climbing vacation at Wastdale Head in the winter of 1909. Through

Crowley, Ward was introduced to Victor Neuburg, and soon after joined the latter's Pan Society. Ward was the founder of the Cambridge Freethought Association, and one of the first members of the AA, being initiated a Probationer in 1909. Ward visited Crowley at Boleskine in 1909, and it was Ward's request to borrow a pair of skis from Crowley that resulted in Crowley going to his attic and rediscovering the missing manuscript of *The Book of the Law*.

Following the *Rites of Eleusis*, Ward was one of several participants who broke with Crowley. Growing disillusioned with magic generally and Crowley specifically, Ward accepted an offer to become a professor of Mathematics and Physics at Rangoon College. Once there he became a student of Buddhism, and ultimately embraced Christian Science.

PERFORMANCE RECONSTRUCTIONS

The opening performance of the *Rites of Eleusis* presented at Caxton Hall was the *Rite of Saturn*, which began at eight p.m. on Wednesday, October 19, 1910. Although best known today as the site of society and celebrity weddings, Caxton Hall has a long tradition of hosting unusual activities. It has served as the location for meetings such as the suffragette march on the House of Commons in 1906, the Fifth International Congress for the suppression of the white slave traffic in 1913, and the first Gramophone Congress, in 1925. Lloyd George spoke there in 1918, Winston Churchill spoke there on March 12 and 14, 1924 while campaigning for Parliament⁹⁷, and in 1910 George Bernard Shaw delivered a speech there claiming that, for the eugenic good, women should be permitted

⁹⁷ He was elected, as a Constitutionalist, and one week later was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer.

to become respectable mothers without having to live with the fathers of their children. Paramhansa Yogananda gave a lecture series on yoga there in 1936, and Princess Diana's father married his second wife there in 1976. Caxton Hall is located a short walk down a side street from New Scotland Yard. Although an auditorium was available, Crowley rented one of the moderately-sized meeting rooms. This not only created a more intimate atmosphere, but also worked as a psychological advantage in that the smaller room made the size of the audience seem larger.

The doors to the private room in Caxton Hall were opened at 8:30 p.m. by Victor Neuburg, dressed in an Arabian headdress, who checked the tickets and greeted the audience as they entered. The audience, comprised primarily of wealth patrons, friends of Crowley, and the press, were dressed in formal attire, tuxedos and evening dresses. The event, despite its prohibitive initial cost of 5 guineas, was almost sold out. Five guineas in today's economy would have the purchasing power of several hundred dollars.

The tickets issued for the performances were on a small perforated card, 4 ¼ x 5 ½ inches, with all seven rites listed in it, enabling one card to be used for all seven performances (see Figure 34).⁹⁸ The smaller stub on the left of the ticket was kept by the doorman and the rest of the card was then returned to the ticket holder to be used in the subsequent weeks. As may be noted by the ticket illustrated here, the first evening's curtain time was misprinted, and Crowley and the others had to correct each ticket by hand. The audience were then led into the performance space, a room with one hundred bamboo stools positioned in rows facing a double-cubed altar. A small platform with a 6-

⁹⁸ The "15b" written in pencil in the upper right hand corner is a catalogue reference, and was not part of the original ticket.

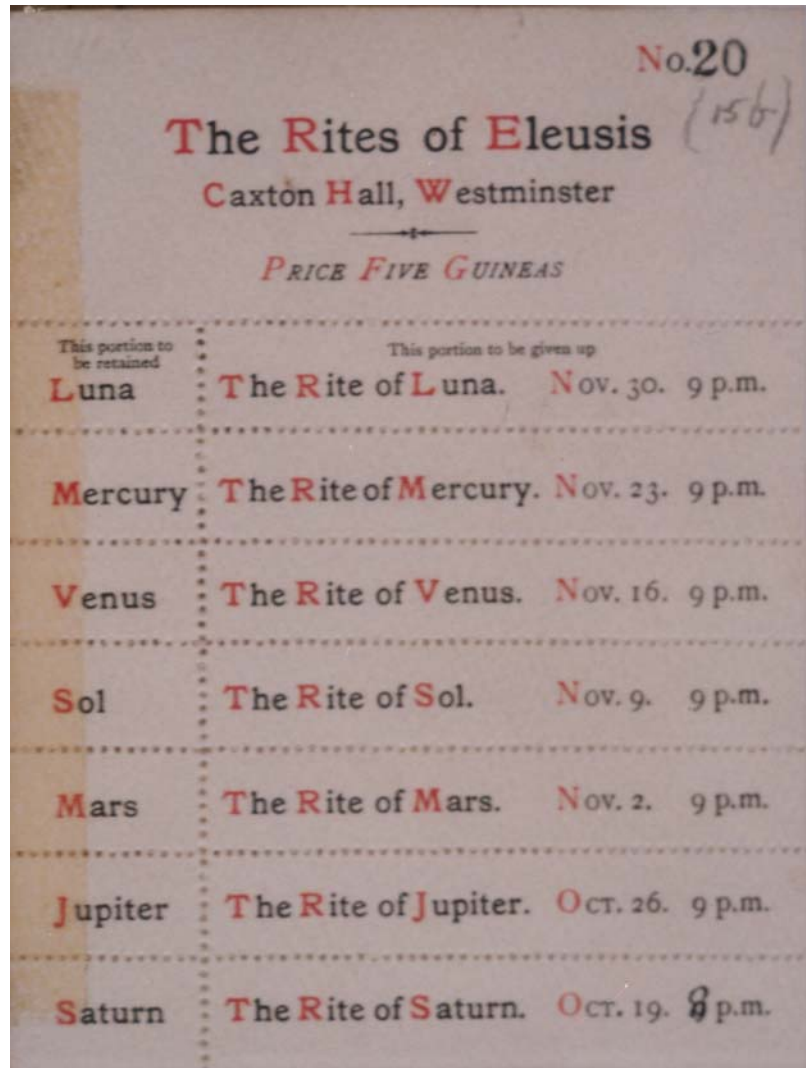


Figure 34: original ticket for *The Rites of Eleusis*

inch rise stood behind the altar, and on this platform and two large black cloths draped across a pole which extended between two tall, narrow screens.

The costumes for the performances were the ceremonial robes of the various members of the AA, who were also the cast members. The robes had been manufactured by William Northam, 9 Henrietta Street, Southampton Street, Strand. Northam was the official robe maker for the AA and advertised regularly in the *Equinox*.

The Rite of Saturn

The cast list for the first rite is titled “The Officers of the Temple” and lists the following performers (the original descriptions are in italics):

MAGISTER TEMPLI, the representative of Binah, Saturn.

The MAGISTER TEMPLI was played by Crowley. Binah is the third sephera of the Tree of Life, representing the archetypal idea of Understanding, and in the material world equates to Shabbathai, the Sphere of Saturn.

MATER COELI, Venus in Libra, the house of Saturn’s exultation

The MATER COELI was played by Leila Waddell.

BROTHER AQUARIUS, the house of Saturn; in Chesed, because Pisces is water: “Hope.”

BROTHER CAPRICORNUS, in the throne of Capricornus, the house of Saturn; in Geburah, because Mars is exalted therein. He is Mars in Capricornus.

BROTHER CAPRICORNUS EMISSARIUS

BROTHER CAPRICORNUS EMISSARIUS was played by Victor Neuburg

THE LEADER OF THE CHORUS, or CHORAGOGE

SCENE - In the East is a veiled shrine. To its Chokmah, Binah, Chesed, and Geburah are M.T., M.C., Bro. A., and Bro. C respectively. Bro C. E. is disguised as an ordinary member of the garrison.

This description of the initial placement of the cast references the qabalistic Tree of Life diagram as a ground plan for the stage. With the first sephera of the tree, Kether, representing the East, the following four sepheroth, Chokmah, Binah, Chesed and

Geburah identify the locations of the rest of the cast. Therefore, in the southeast corner of the room (Chokmah, the second sephera) is the Magister Templi, in the northeast corner (Binah, the third sephera) is the Mater Coeli, in the southwest corner (Chesed, the third sephera) is Brother Aquarius, and in the northwest corner (Geburah, the fourth sephera) is Brother Capricornus. The time “lacks a quarter of midnight,” and the place is “the fortress that is upon the frontier of the abyss.”

Part 1

BROTHER CAPRICORNUS enters and turns off Blue light. Red lamps are brought in by BROTHER CAPRICORNUS and the LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

The “Blue light” was probably a blue-gelled electric light which lit the room so the audience could maneuver its way toward the seating area. This would be simple and quick to extinguish, and the switch would have been positioned close to the door so as to enable Brother Capricornus to exit in darkness without tripping over furniture or a member of the audience. It would also be simple to switch on suddenly as it is required to do in Part 2. The “Red lamps” were small candle lamps with red globes. Supplying their own fuel source, they would be easy to carry in while lit, and would also provide an added psychic element by being truly “elemental.” One of these lamps is visible in the production photograph just in front of the “8” on the altar (see Figure 28). Capricornus and the Chorus Leader each held a red lamp.

First the Temple is lighted by two red lamps. Probationers chant the Capricornus and Aquarius sections from 963 while others wait without in darkness.

“963,” referred to in the opening stage directions, is *Liber DCCCCLXIII*, also known as *The Treasure House of Images*. The “Capricornus” and “Aquarius” sections cited in the *Saturn* stage directions are subtitled “The Chapter known as The Twelfefold Humiliation of God and the Unity thereof” and “The Chapter known as The Twelfefold Lamentation of God and the Unity thereof” respectively, and are both entreaties to God.⁹⁹ The first begins each stanza with “Oh my God,” followed by requests to “behold me...,” “order me...,” “conquer me...,” “suckle me...,” “comfort me...,” etc. The second, since it is entitled “Lamentations,” is understandably more negative. It begins each stanza with the phrase “O woe unto me, my God, woe unto me” and then bemoans the existentialistic state in which mankind finds itself:

O woe unto me, my God, woe unto me; for all my song is as the dirge of the sea that moans about a corpse, lapping mournfully against the dead shore in the darkness. Yet in the sob of the wind do I hear Thy name, that quickeneth the cold lips of death to life. (*Equinox* 1:3,45)

The choice of these two sections reflects a supplication to God, followed by confusion, concern and ultimately despair when there is no reply. The lamentations state that existence is futile since all “works,” “craft,” “labours,” “hope,” etc, are empty and without reward when they lack an acknowledgement from the Almighty.

At the end of the Lamentations, the stage directions read: “*red lights are then hidden within the veil. Brother CAPRICORNUS turns on the blue light.*” The red lights were simply taken behind the curtain and the blue-gelled overhead light switched back on.

The temple being in darkness, and the assistants seated, let BROTHER

⁹⁹Although each of the chapters of this book contains the descriptive phrase “The Twelfefold [. . .]” they all actually contain thirteen stanzas.

CAPRICORNUS arise from his throne, and knock thrice with his spear-butt upon the floor.

The triple knock with the spear may be homage to the classical French tradition, but it seems more likely to reflect the use of sound as a means of “breaking” from the “real” world and signaling the beginning of the actual magic of the Rite. Immediately following the three knocks CAPRICORNUS announces “Procul, O procul este profani!” This was a formula for banishment of evil influences in widespread use throughout the ancient Roman world. The form in which Crowley utilized it comes directly from Virgil's *Aeneid* (vi:258), where Aeneas, as magician, and the "vates" (the seer or skryer) begin their complex divination working in the Sibyl's cave. Some dogs approach the sacrificial animals near the shrine, disturbing the seer, who uses these words to banish them. The line is imperative, a command, and might be translated as "Be gone, oh be gone, you who are unworthy!"

CAPRICORNUS performs the Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, lights the hell-broth and recites.

The recitation is a chorus from Crowley's verse play, *The Fatal Force*. It begins

Even as the traitor's breath
Goeth forth, he perisheth
By the secret sibilant word that is spoken unto death.

Ten more stanza follow, serving as a foreshadowing of events yet to come. The hell-broth is not a container of liquid, but an incense burner. It also serves as the primary light source for this recitation, and for the rest of the scene, since the red lamps from the opening were hidden behind the veil in the first minute of the Rite, and the dim blue light is the only other illumination referenced. The vessel acting as the hell-broth was a large-

mouthed urn or cauldron and is also visible in the production photograph cited above (see Figure 28).

Capricornus then enlists the others in attempting to awaken the Master of the Temple with ad-libbed tom-toms, clapping, and stomping of feet. Capricornus then reaches through the veil and pulls out Mater Coeli (Leila Waddell) and asks her assistance. She performs *Kuyawiak* by Henri Wieniawski (1835-1880), and kneels. The veil is parted by Capricornus and the Leader of the Chorus, and the Magister Templi (Crowley) enters.

MAGISTER TEMPLI comes down to hell-broth and recites "The Eyes of Pharoah." This is a poem from Crowley's collection of poetry, *Gargoyles* (1906), and describes in sinister fashion the intrusion of a Pharoah's tomb by a grave robber who is killed by Pharoah's occult power. This is a second poem referencing betrayal and revenge.

The lamp burns out, and darkness covers all. LEADER OF THE CHORUS secretly removes the hell-broth vase.

That "The lamp burns out" at the end of the scene is an indication the hell-broth contained a small amount of fuel which would self-extinguish after a set period of time. This would be very effective if the timing worked, even if there was more fuel than needed, since the extra time would be spent in silence, observing the light flickering over the face of the Magister Templi who had just recited an eerie poem.

Part 2

The temple is in darkness.

Through question and answer reminiscent of the opening of a Masonic or Golden Dawn ritual, it is established that the time is midnight and the place is "upon the Frontier

of the Abyss.” The Magister Templi recites Swinburne’s *Ilicet*, and Mater Coeli plays an *Aria for G String* by Bach. Magister Templi then asks “To what end are we assembled?” and all respond “Shabbathai.” This is the Hebrew name for Saturn, which also corresponds to Binah on the Tree of Life. Magister Templi turns on the blue light, and announces the presence of a traitor. All begin an inspection of the area. Capricornus pulls Capricornus Emissarius to the altar and stabs him with his spear, and Magister Templi announces “So perish all traitors!” *CAPRICORNUS extinguishes the light.*

Part 3

This scene is a continuation of the previous scene, with the Magister Templi in front of the altar.

Darkness. AQUARIUS comes forward and kneels to MAGISTER TEMPLI.

Aquarius and Capricornus “beseech thee to let the ceremony proceed.”

All Probationers join AQUARIUS and CAPRICORNUS kneeling (see Figure 35)

Mater Coeli comes forward, kneels before MAGISTER TEMPLI, thus making the apex to the pyramid of petitioners, rises and plays her petition, then again kneels.

The “petition” played was an *Abenlied* by Schumann. The others remained kneeling while she played. Following this the MAGISTER TEMPLI allows the ceremony to continue.

MATER COELI returns to her throne. AQUARIUS rises, and

CAPRICORNUS returns to his post and lights the lamp.

AQUARIUS and all present dance wildly for joy to the sound of the tom-tom. During the confusion BRO. CAPRICORNUS EMISSARIUS

slips into the temple and hides behind the veil, where he removes his disguise and dons his dancing robe.

It would not be difficult for Brother Capricornus Emissarius to slip into the temple since he was killed directly in front of it. It was quite possible for him to quietly roll under the veil during the wild dancing. The Magister Templi then proposes they “enter the Ark of Increased Knowledge [. . .] Death! ”

MAGISTER TEMPLI rises and circumambulates the temple widdershins.

CAPRICORNUS plucks forth every third person and makes them follow him, continuing this process until only one is left. To this one MAGISTER TEMPLI addresses the allocution, as he hales him forth.

“Widdershins” is counter-clockwise, a direction traditionally associated with negative energy, since it travels opposite the track of the sun. Those persons “plucked” were the other probationers, not audience members. The Magister Templi then says to the last Probationer, “Thou also must die!” He then

throws veil open, showing the empty shrine. BRO. CAPRICORNUS EMISSARIUS must have well dissimilated himself so that he is not discovered. MAGISTER TEMPLI draws the veil again. CAPRICORNUS puts out light.

MAGISTER TEMPLI: Alas! There is no God!

The others move about in confusion. Part Four follows immediately without any type of break.

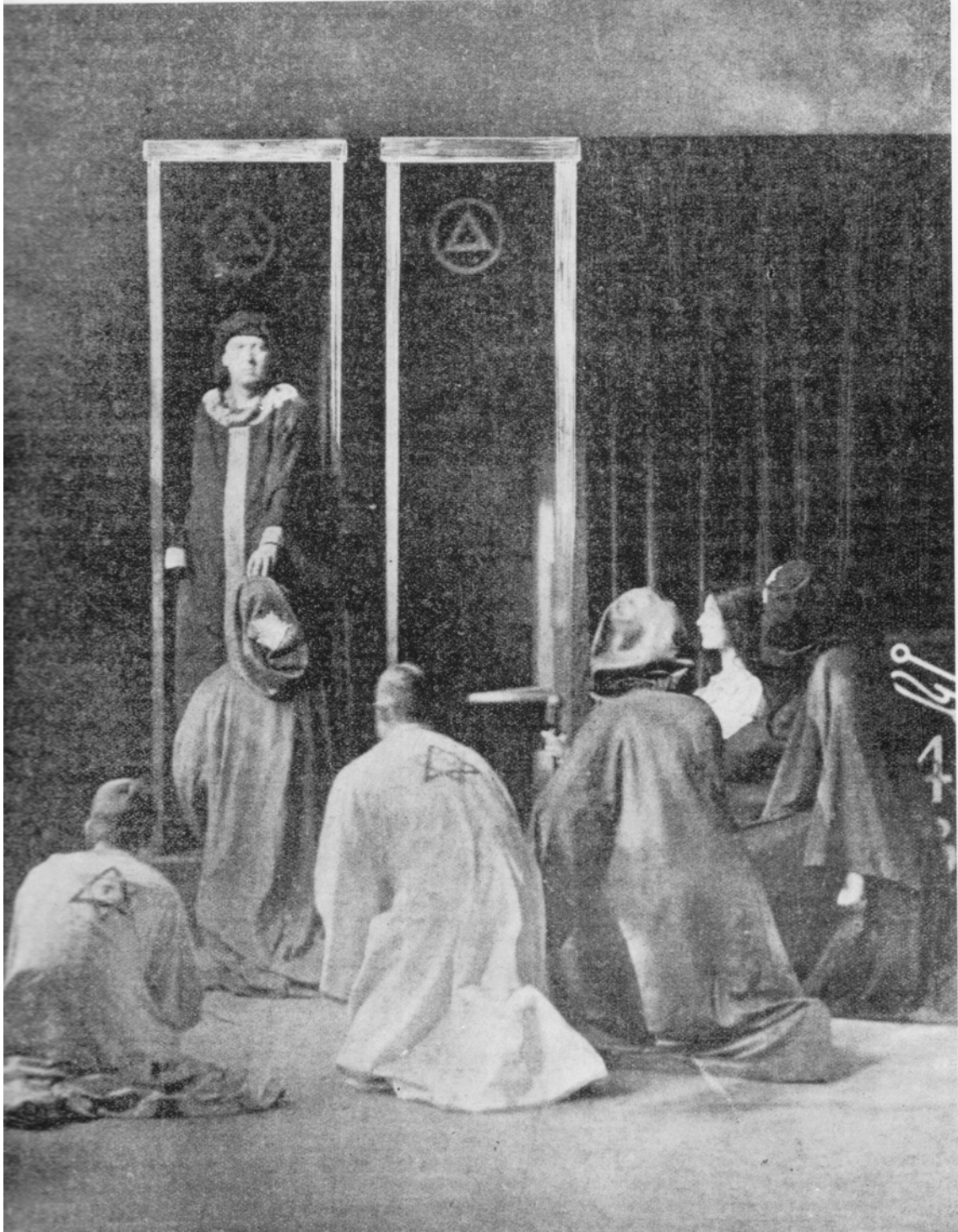


Figure 35: *The Rite of Saturn, Part 3*

Part 4

Capricornus searches inside the shrine and reports finding “nothing but a little pile of dust.” The Magister Templi recites *Colloque sentimental*, a poem by Crowley about lost days of happiness. The Magister Templi then says “Mother of Heaven, let us lament together!” He then recites Swinburne’s *The Garden of Prosperine*.¹⁰⁰ The Mater Coeli accompanies him on the violin with Wieniawski’s *Légende*.

CAPRICORNUS: Master, it is not to be borne!

MAGISTER TEMPLI: Mother of Heaven, let us work together!

MATER COELI: Behold thine handmaiden!

MAGISTER TEMPLI and MATER COELI go together hand in hand, within the veil. CAPRICORNUS turns light up. MATER COELI plays a paen of despair.

The “paen of despair” was Hauser’s *Wiegenlied*. Waddell stayed behind the veil during the playing of this piece so as not to distract the audience from the heavy, almost hypnotic reverie into which the music and previous recitation had lulled them. At the conclusion of the piece the veil was drawn apart revealing Crowley standing on the alter (see Figure 36). From there he recited Section Fourteen of *The City of Dreadful Night* by Thomson.

Blow out red lights. Bro. CAPRICORNUS EMISSARIUS runs out with tom-tom and dances wildly. At the conclusion, AQUARIUS and CAPRICORNUS run up, tearing the veil asunder. Bro. CAPRICORNUS EMISSARIUS flings himself at foot of altar. CHORAGOGE lights salt

¹⁰⁰ This is inaccurately printed in all copies of the text of the *Rite of Saturn* as *The Garden of Proserpine*.

again, or other glare. MAGISTER TEMPLI is discovered lying dead, his head supported by MATER COELI weeping, (Figure 37)

CAPRICORNUS extinguishes the light. AQUARIUS draws the veil.

MATER COELI plays the final hopeless dirge.

The final dirge was a composition of Waddell's, a *Marche funébre*.

AQUARIUS: Brother Capricornus, what is the hour?

CAPRICORNUS: Noon.

AQUARIUS: Let us depart; It is accomplished.

Full light. Capricornus stands with drawn sword before the veil. The others escort the people out.

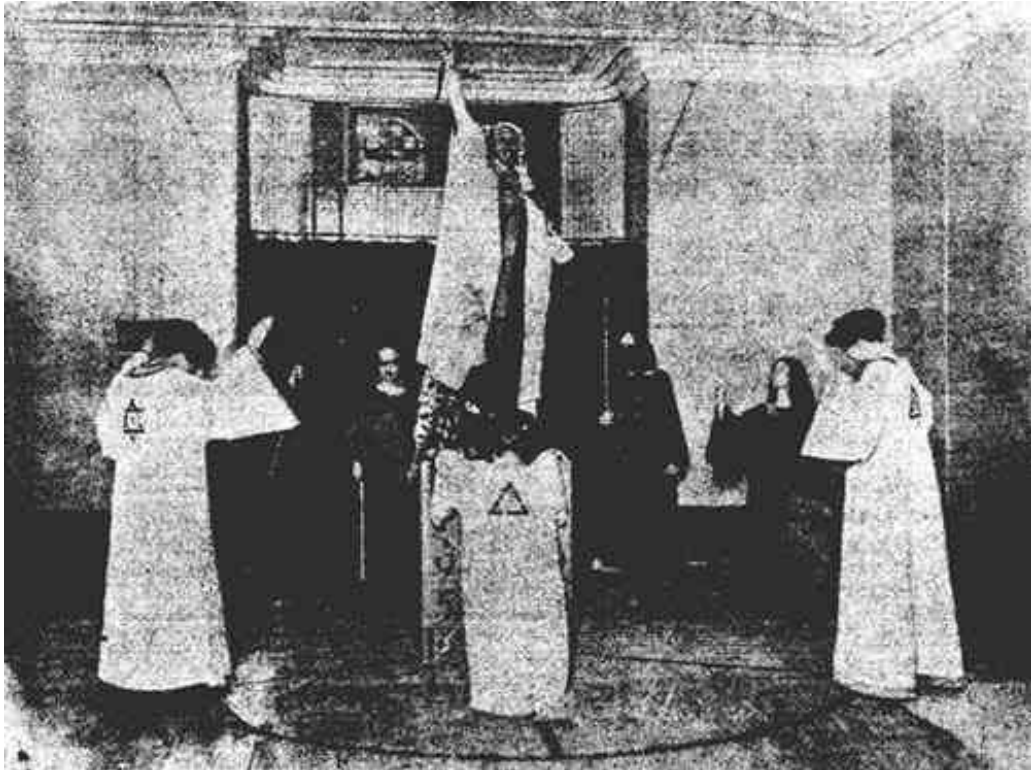


Figure 36: *Rite of Saturn*, Part 4. Photograph taken at Caxton Hall

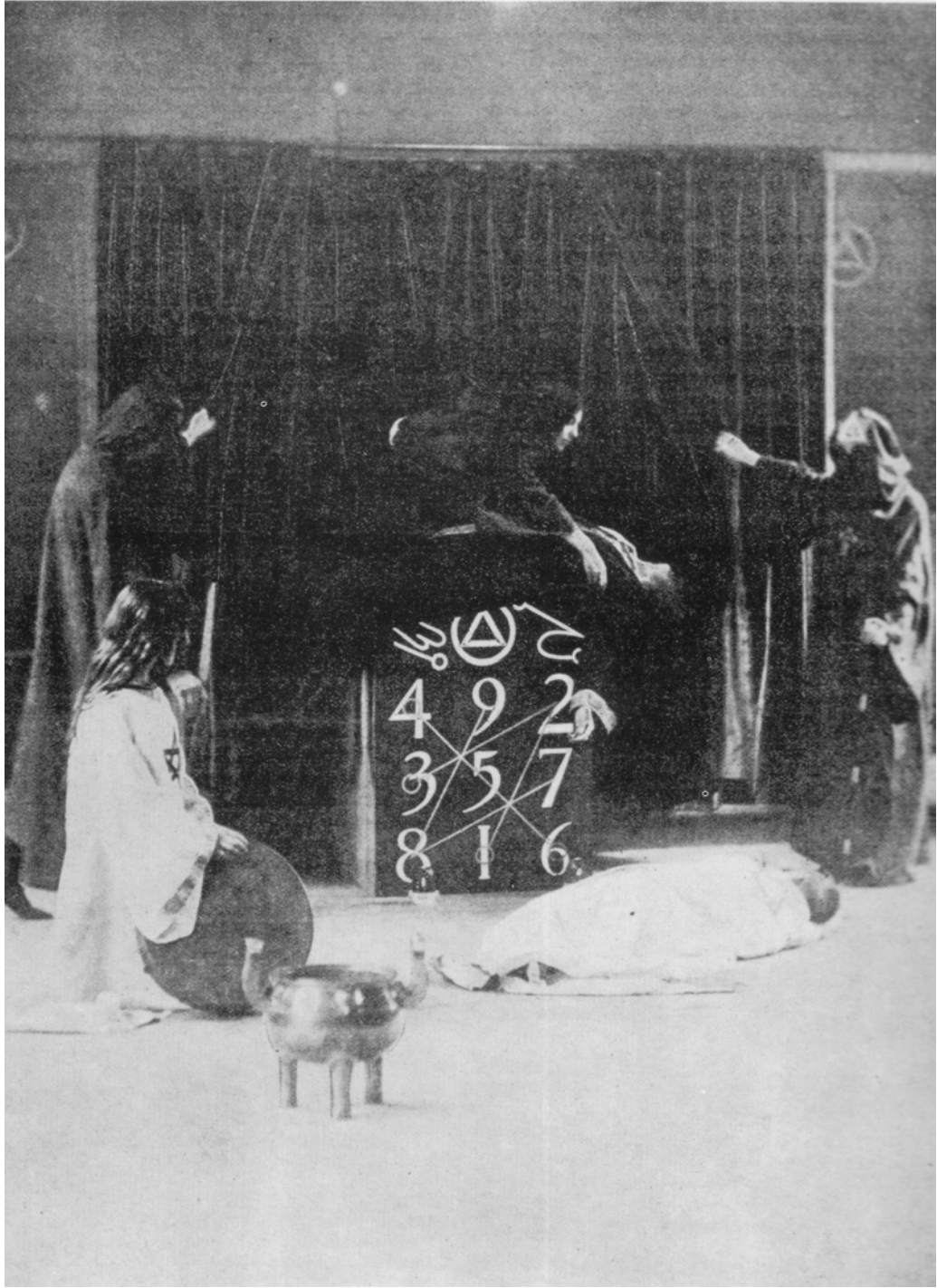


Figure 37: *Rite of Saturn, Part 4*

A review published the next day by *The Morning Leader* gives an indication of the first evening's reception:

Rites of Eleusis: Classicism and Mysticism at Caxton Hall.

The first Rites of Eleusis was held at Caxton Hall last night by the mystical society of which Mr. Crowley (of the "Equinox") is the chief. It was the rite of Saturn. The rites of Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, and Luna follow on successive Wednesdays, and unless a more cheerful tone is imparted than Saturn gave, the people who have paid five guineas for the whole lot will have committed suicide before they reach Luna. The "Leader" worshiper, sneezing through a fog of incense, entered the temple of Saturn, which was lit by one feeble blue light. Most of the ritual was held in total darkness, though once there was a methylated spirit fire, which betrayed an audience of ladies and gentlemen in evening dress sitting most uncomfortable on very low bamboo stools. After a litany of lamentation, the lights went out. After that it was all lamentation - though once there was a jolly interval when a traitor in the temple was discovered, and slain, howling bitterly. The ritual is totally an appeal to Saturn to explain the riddle of the universe. He explains it, "Death." "There is no God." "There is nothing behind the Veil but a pinch of dust."

In the end, the veil is rent asunder, and the Master of the Temple is found dead, having recited, "O melancholy brothers, dark, dark, dark!" and committed suicide.

This last line of the performance is from an extended quotation (the entirety of section fourteen) of James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night*, used by Crowley to signal the "cliff-hanging" end of the first performance. Thomson continued to influence Crowley for several years. W. F. Ryan (1992) suggests that echoes of this same piece by Thomson may be found in Crowley's poem *The City of God* (1913). Crowley's selection of *The City of Dreadful Night* as the signature for the emotion of this *Rite* works quite well. It is a poem steeped in despair, existential before the arrival of the existentialists, crying out at man's abandonment in a universe devoid of hope or meaning. The creation of the poem comes as no surprise when the life of its author is examined.

James Thomson was born in Port Glasgow, Scotland in 1834. His father was a disabled seaman, and his mother died soon after the family had moved to London. He was raised in the Chelsea Royal Military Asylum, and at seventeen was engaged as a teacher in Ballincollig, Ireland. He suffered from depression, alcoholism and insomnia throughout his life, was dismissed from the army in 1862, and spent the remainder of his life in dire circumstances trying to support himself on the small earnings brought in by his writing. The *National Reformer* published *The City of Dreadful Night*, his most famous work, in installments in 1874. It was reissued as a separate volume in 1880. *Essays and Phantasies* was published the following year, but Thompson's alcoholism led to an intestinal hemorrhage which killed him on June 3, 1882.

The ending of the first *Rite*, as disapprovingly noted by the reviewer for *The Morning Leader*, leaves the audience with a sense of depression and confusion, and was precisely the condition which Crowley intended for them. Acting as the introduction to the Rites as a whole, it identifies the condition of the human race as having lost all sense of purpose and hope for the future. The revelation at the end of Part Three that "Alas! There is no God!" refers to the loss of the belief in (or disillusionment with) the Judaeo-Christian God of contemporary culture. This is clearly as much a reflection of Crowley's own distaste for Christianity as it is an assessment of his view of the condition of contemporary religious practice.

The practical challenge for the producer of such an introduction is to tantalize the audience in such a way that they are induced to return the next week to find out what happens next. In a sense, Crowley was foreshadowing the development of the "serials" produced by Hollywood a few years later in which epic storylines were segmented over a

period of weeks, months or, again to utilize the *Star Wars* analogy, years, when he presented the segmented storyline of *The Rites of Eleusis*. Crowley had also attempted to circumvent the possible negative reaction to the first rite by requiring that tickets not be sold separately, but in blocks of seven covering the entire run of the production. In this manner, if the reception by the public was not positive after the opening of the first night, he would at least be assured a minimal amount of income from the production.

The openly hostile review of the *Morning Leader* was echoed by another London periodical, *The Looking Glass*:

An Amazing Sect

We propose under the above heading to place on record an astounding experience which we have had lately in connection with a sect styled the Equinox, which has been formed under the auspices of one Aleister Crowley. The headquarters of the sect is at 121 (*sic*) Victoria Street, but the meeting or seance which we are about to describe, and to which after great trouble and expense we gained admittance under an assumed name, was held in private at Caxton Hall. We had previously heard a great many rumors about the practices of this sect, but we were determined not to rely on any hearsay evidence, and after a great deal of manoeuvring we managed to secure a card of admission, signed by the great Crowley himself. We arrived at Caxton Hall at a few minutes before eight in the evening - as the doors were to be closed at eight precisely - and after depositing our hat and coat with an attendant were conducted by our guide to the door, at which stood a rather dirty looking person attired in a sort of imitation Eastern robe, with a drawn sword in his hand, who, after inspecting our cards, admitted us to a dimly lighted room heavy with incense. Across the room low stools were placed in rows, and when we arrived a good many of these were already occupied by various men and women, for the most part in evening dress. We noticed that the majority of these appeared to be couples - male and female. At the extreme end of the room was a heavy curtain, and in front of this sat a huddled-up figure in draperies, beating a kind of monotonous tom-tom. When all the elect had been admitted the doors were shut, and the light, which had always been exceedingly dim, was completely exhausted except for a slight flicker on the "altar." Then after a while more ghostly figures appeared on the stage, and a person in a red cloak, supported on each side by a blue-chinned gentleman of some sort of Turkish bath costume, commenced to read some gibberish, to which the attendants made responses at intervals.

Our guide informed us that this was known as the “banishing rite of the pentagram” (*The Looking Glass*: October 29, 1910, pp. 141-142).

This account, while derogatory and ignorant in its interpretation of events, does seem to offer a fairly accurate description of the specific events which occurred during the first night’s performance. Complete veracity of the article is questionable due to the numerous minor errors which occur in the first paragraph alone. “The Equinox” was not a sect, but the name of Crowley’s periodical publication. The offices were located at 124 Victoria Street, not 121. The “great trouble” the author claims to have had in securing a ticket was, if it existed at all, of his own doing, since one of the primary reasons for the production was publicity, and Crowley would probably have issued a “press pass” to the reporter if it had been requested. The production was hardly a “private” affair, since it had been publicized and tickets had been sold for its production. The “gibberish” which began the production was the Latin, “Procul, O Procul este profani,” discussed earlier. This was followed by the Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram (LBRP).¹⁰¹

It was disappointing to Crowley that despite the publicity which he had attempted to raise for the productions, the only published reviews came from two weekly tabloids. The publicity was thin enough that Crowley felt necessary to write an extensive “letter to the editor” which was published in *The Bystander* on November 16, 1910 (see Appendix C).

Conclusion

The Rites of Eleusis were, along with the publication of the *Equinox*, the first major public project undertaken by the newly-formed AA. In hindsight, the *Rites*

¹⁰¹ Either through a typographical error or a misunderstanding of what was being said, this was incorrectly referred to as the “Vanishing Ritual of the Pentagram” in the November 5 issue of *John Bull*.

achieved none of the results Crowley had hoped for and, in fact, had done just the reverse in several ways. Crowley had seen the performances as a means of attracting positive publicity for his fledgling AA, but the newspaper attacks had frightened the public away. Initially, tickets could only be purchased in blocks of seven, requiring the attendee to invest a significant amount of money on an unseen commodity. While this seemed logical to Crowley, who viewed the production holistically, it was apparent by the second week that, if costs were to be recouped, additional tickets would have to be sold on a per-performance basis. Even with this adjustment, the numbers of patrons who purchased single-evening tickets scarcely made up for those who stopped attending. The rented room at Caxton Hall was never filled.

Crowley lost more than potential AA members through the attacks in the press. In the third installment of its series on the *Rites*, "An Amazing Sect," the *Looking Glass* broadened its attack:

Two of Crowley's friends and introducers are still associated with him: one, the rascally sham Buddhist monk, Allan Bennett, whose imposture was shown up in "Truth" some years ago; the other a person of the name of George Cecil Jones, who was for some time employed at Basingstoke in metallurgy, but of late has had some sort of small merchant's business in the City. Crowley and Bennett lived together, and there were rumours of unmentionable immoralities which were carried out under their roof. (*The Looking Glass*, November 26, 1910, 268)

Allan Bennett, later the founder of the British Society of Buddhists, was in his Buddhist temple in Ceylon, either ignorant of the contention or unconcerned about it. George Cecil Jones was in a different position. He was married, with four children, and was, to all appearances, a model of the middle class small businessman. He and Fuller urged Crowley to take legal action, but Crowley was satisfied with defending himself by

publishing his responses to the reviews in the same newspapers and magazines.¹⁰² This may have been a case of Crowley taking the high road and being unwilling to lower himself to the level of his enemies, or it may have been a case of him being so short of funds he lacked the wherewithal to take legal recourse. Jones, not much better off financially than Crowley but seeing himself as having more to lose, sued *The Looking Glass*. The trial instantly became an investigation into the immorality of Crowley, and Jones lost the case through guilt by association. As a result, Jones and Fuller ended their friendship with Crowley. It was a pattern Crowley's personal relationships would follow his entire life.

The Looking Glass case was also the beginning of the public relations trouble that would plague Crowley for the rest of his life. While he had been known before the trial to his own circle of acquaintances, the newspapers gave extended coverage to the supposedly immoral activities connected with the performance of the *Rites of Eleusis* in particular, and with Crowley in general. The Mathers trial at the beginning of the year and the *Looking Glass* trial at the end of the year served as harbingers of Crowley's life to come. In the 1930s he would frequently pursue lawsuits, viewing them as an additional source of income. He sued newspapers and old friends indiscriminately, until he was made bankrupt and lost the means of supporting this type of venture. *The Rites of Eleusis* heralded the arrival, at least in the yellow press, of the demon Crowley, the person who would become "Wickedest Man in the World."

¹⁰² See Appendices C and D.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

All Art is Magick (Crowley, 1929:82).

Introduction

The production of *The Rites of Eleusis* in 1910 was not an event which appeared without precedent. The *Rites of Isis*, staged by Mathers in the 1890s, was an important if unacknowledged influence on Crowley's decision to create his own publicly performed rituals *cum* artistic event. The theatrical activities of Florence Farr and Annie Horniman, both members of the Golden Dawn during Crowley's tenure there, were further incitements of his desire to achieve a publicly acknowledged validation of his spiritual methodology. Possibly the most goading of all to Crowley was the continuing theatrical and poetic success of W. B. Yeats. Crowley died believing he was one of England's greatest poets. In his *Confessions* he mentions he was born in Warwickshire and states in a footnote that "it has been remarked a strange coincidence that one small county should have given England her two greatest poets – for one must not forget Shakespeare" (Crowley, 1970:35). That Yeats won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1923 must have been galling to Crowley. Crowley was not one to forgive or forget a supposed slight or wrong and Yeats, having undermined Crowley's mentor Mathers and effectively ended

Crowley's membership in the Golden Dawn, was derided by Crowley verbally and in print for the rest of Crowley's life.

Nor were Crowley's *Rites* without what at first glance seems to be influence or, at least, sporadic methodological commonality throughout the rest of the century. His attempt to incorporate a spiritual message within the context of a mix of performative media may be compared to any number of original theatrical performances created on college campuses and more professional venues throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Often the responses to these later productions were the same as those given to Crowley, reactions ranging from bemusement to outrage.

This chapter will begin with a brief history of Crowley's magical organization, the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO), following his death. The OTO in America was the group responsible for beginning the annual productions of the *Rites of Eleusis* in 1977. An account of the specific productions is found in Appendix J. This overview will be followed by a discussion of Vasilios Calitsis' production of *The Mysteries of Eleusis*, to illustrate how Crowley's intentions and ideas of staging and presentation were echoed eighty-eight years after his *Rites* were first performed. A conclusion follows, which identifies Crowley's position in twentieth century occultism, literature, and theatre, and assesses the extent of Crowley's contribution to theatrical methodology.

Background of the OTO in America

The history of the *Ordo Templi Orientis* after Crowley's death is almost as convoluted as that of the creation of the Golden Dawn. When Crowley died in 1947, control of the organization went to Karl Germer (1885-1962), who was the Grand

Treasurer General of OTO.¹⁰³ At that time, Agapé lodge in California was the only active OTO lodge in the United States. Agapé had originally been founded by Crowley and a disciple, Charles Stansfield Jones, in Vancouver in 1915, during Crowley's stay in America during World War I. In the 1930s, Jones' successor, Wilfred T. Smith, moved the lodge to Pasadena, California to enable a closer working relationship with Jane Wolfe, who had returned to southern California after her stay with Crowley in Cefalú in the 1920s. Although members survived into the 1970s, Agapé lodge ceased to hold regular meetings two years after Crowley's death.

Grady Louis McMurtry (1918-1985) had met Crowley when stationed in England during World War II, and was initiated into the OTO by Crowley in 1943. Crowley gave McMurtry the magical name Hymenaeus Alpha¹⁰⁴. The following year Crowley, aware that he was nearing the end of his life, began discussing with McMurtry the line of succession of the OTO. Crowley planned on Germer succeeding him as the Outer Head of the Order (OHO), but was concerned about who would succeed Germer decades later. Crowley gave McMurtry a charter authorizing the establishment of an OTO Lodge in the event of the collapse of the organization after Crowley's death. They both referred to this charter as "The Caliphate," from the Arabic "Khalifa," meaning "deputy." It was a term

¹⁰³ In addition to the leadership of the organization, Germer also inherited Crowley's ashes and personal effects.

¹⁰⁴ As will become apparent, it is a common practice for those involved in occult activity to assume a "magical name" or alias. One reason is the belief that the assumption of a name reminiscent of a deity imbues the person utilizing that name with attributes of that deity (see page 31). A more pragmatic reason is that many neo-pagans today feel they will be persecuted by family, friends, and/or employers for their beliefs if their involvement in the movement becomes public knowledge. They thus adopt pseudonyms to disguise their identities.

historically used to designate the successor to the Prophet. Crowley and McMurtry no doubt enjoyed the pun created by this word. McMurtry was born in California.

Germer was a quiet, shy man, and the OTO saw no growth under his stewardship following Crowley's death. Germer's wife was critical of his involvement with the organization, and withheld the news of his death from many in the group. When he died in 1962 the Order went into stasis. The year before, McMurtry lost his job in California due to health problems and moved to Washington, D.C. He taught political science at George Washington University while working as a Management Analyst for the U.S. Government, and directed several productions of the Washington Shakespeare Society. It was not until the late 1960s that McMurtry was informed of the death of Germer and, effectively, of the OTO as an active organization. It was at this time, 1969, that he invoked the powers of the charters left him by Crowley and, assisted by several surviving members of Agapé Lodge, and with the blessing of two surviving students of Crowley,¹⁰⁵ took over the role of OHO and began performing initiations.

In 1946 Kenneth Grant (b. 1924), who had also studied briefly with Crowley immediately following the war, was initiated into the AA, and in 1948 was initiated into the OTO by Germer. In 1955 Grant formed New Isis Lodge in London. He was expelled from the OTO by Germer that same year but, not recognizing Germer's authority, he assumed the OHO role himself in England. This was the creation of what is known today as the "Typhonian" OTO, an organization which still questions the legal authority of McMurtry's group, which has come to be known as the "Caliphate" OTO.

¹⁰⁵ Israel Regardie (1907-1985) and Gerald Yorke (1901-1983).

A substantial effort was made to assume control of the OTO by Marcelo Motta (1931-1987), who claimed to be the OHO of a group called the "Society Ordo Templi Orientis" (SOTO). Motta studied under Karl Germer for a number of years, but never become a member of the OTO.

McMurtry desired that his successor be chosen by vote of the membership of the OTO after his death. The election was held September 21, 1985, and Frater Hymenaeus Beta (William Breeze) was elected to succeed Frater Hymenaeus Alpha as Caliph and acting OHO of the OTO. Hymenaeus Beta continues in office to this day.

Thelema Lodge is the oldest continuously-operating OTO lodge in the United States. It was founded by McMurtry on October 12, 1977, as the Sun exited an eclipse, on the one hundred second anniversary of Crowley's birth. The founding happened at McMurtry's home in Berkeley, California, where McMurtry had been holding OTO initiations since the beginning of that decade. Under McMurtry the OTO was incorporated under the laws of the State of California on March 26, 1979, won several national and international lawsuits addressing copyrights pertaining to Crowley and the OTO, and continued to grow far beyond anything Crowley had experienced during his lifetime.

Vasilios Calitsis and *The Mysteries of Eleusis*

The echoes of Crowley's *Rites of Eleusis* continued into the latter half of the century. His attempt to create a personalized ecstatic experience for his audience was not always pursued by groups directly associated with occult activity. Experimental groups such as the Living Theatre, the Wooster Group, and individuals such as Richard Schechner have created theatrical situations which incorporate audience mindset and

activity into the performances. The closest attempt to emulate Crowley's original intent, aside from the re-enactments of the *Rites* presented by the OTO organizations discussed earlier, was presented at the New Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music Majestic Theatre on October 16 and 17, 1998.

The World Mysteries: The Mysteries of Eleusis was conceived and directed by Vasilios Calitsis. Basing his concept of the *Mysteries* on the tradition that they were accessible to all citizens, Calitsis incorporated a variety of genres and cultural influences into his production. The styles presented ranged from Kabuki and Noh to flamenco and Chinese Opera. It was noted in the program that Calitsis himself played the voice of the "Hierophant," which is not only a card from the Tarot representing Initiation, but is also an officer in a Golden Dawn Lodge. Irene Worth played the role of the "Mystagog." Included in the script, and underscoring the universality of the experience, were sections from the *Hymn to Demeter*, the *Bhagaved Gita*, the *Book of John*, and selections from Aeschylus, Euripides, Plato, and T. S. Eliot.

A synopsis of the plot, presented in a review published in the *Village Voice*, is as follows:

A traveler from a distant and futuristic world is transported to the ancient times revealing certain cultures of our world, As the traveler journeys through time, he weaves the cultures. The performance is divided into five parts, The Purification, The Myth, The Initiation, The Illumination and Divinity (David Kilpatrick, *Village Voice*, October 15, 1998).

This scarcely serves to describe the complexity of the performance. The overall narrative is one of a search for Initiation, by an "ancient Initiate" dressed in gold and a "future Initiate" dressed in silver. The Initiates encounter Hades, who announces himself with "Ich bin Hades," and speaks on the relationship of Death to Life as the Priestesses writhe

about on the floor at his feet. The Initiates then witness a reenactment of the capture of Persephone. Several interpretive dances and musical interludes are interspersed between the episodes that pertain to the Persephone myth proper. The program ends with the appearance of Demeter, who is worshipped by the performers who then turn to the audience, silently including them in their adoration.

Calitsis used several methods to emphasize his concept of the performance as experiential for the audience. He placed “mini-ritual” acts in the lobby which were viewed by the audience as they came in. He incorporated the use of incense throughout the building, suggesting the idea that the entire area, anywhere there was air, was a ritual space. The use of several languages within the text served to heighten the sense of oneness or unification within the context of a multicultural experience. Calitsis used his *Mysteries* to illustrate the interconnectedness of religious myth and the mystical nature of performance. By combining references of mythologies and archetypes of different cultures within a framework of the classic Greek myth he created an experience that attempted to answer one of the questions studied by Levi-Strauss: how may myths be simultaneously historically specific yet universally applicable? The universality is readily apparent through the use of a multiplicity of cultural references. The specificity only becomes clear when the audience makes the personal connection, identifying themselves with the Future Initiate and, thus, becomes the Initiate themselves.

The methodology and intent are identical with Crowley’s. Crowley did not restrict himself to the Greek image in his *Rites of Eleusis*, but incorporated elements from Babylonian and Egyptian mythology as well as generic Golden Dawn-inspired god images. Calitsis and Crowley both included incense, dim lighting, abstract set designs,

music and ritualistic movement in their productions. They both created scripts which seem, at first reading, to be a patchwork of cultural and mythic references. In one sense this last is an accurate criticism since the scripts of both Crowley and Calitsis assume familiarity with a number of philosophical and literary references. Yet that familiarity is not a requirement. not incomplete without the engagement of the other senses intended by the creators.

Conclusion

This dissertation was written to accomplish four goals. The first was to create, as closely as possible, a sense of what the original audience experienced at the 1910 performances. I was interested in aspects ranging from the number and appearance of the audience to how the set pieces and costumes looked and felt. The accomplishment of this recreation not only creates an aesthetic image of the production for the student of Crowley and of the *Rites* performances, but reveals new information. Until I began research for this dissertation I had never seen an actual ticket for the *Eleusis* performances. I discovered one in a shoebox in the Yorke Collection of the Warburg Institute in London. The photograph reproduced in Chapter 4 is the first time the physical appearance of these tickets has been revealed.

While Ethel Archer's *The Heiroglyph* presents a fictive account of the Victoria Street production of the *Rite of Artemis*, it does not address the *Rites of Eleusis*, either individually or as a collection. Her work is useful in gaining insight into the mindset of an audience member attending a publicly presented occult ritual, but she was already a member of Crowley's AA and, as such, not as susceptible to potential shock, fear or moral outrage when presented with robed figures waving swords and incanting in Latin,

Greek and Hebrew. The value of *The Heiroglyph* comes in its description of the style of the rituals, the character portraits of the people involved, and the after-effects of the combination of “bowls of libation,” artistic performance, and spiritual themes. It provides a glimpse into an event that, like Crowley himself, was interpreted differently and held varying messages according to the perceptions of the observer.

Other descriptions, such as those found in various newspaper reviews, and in the reminiscences of authors such as James Laver and Arthur Calder-Marshall, present uninitiated reportage of the event. Play scripts are meant to be experienced produced on a stage rather than read, and this holds true for the *Rites* as well. It is impossible to read the scripts and experience what that London audience felt during the production. Part of the attraction of Theatre is the notion that it is ephemeral, and the *Rites* were an ultimate example of this. Each performance of each *Rite* was, simultaneously, an opening night and a closing night.

My second goal was to create a model for an analysis of the *Rites*. This model is a natural outgrowth of the first goal, since it demonstrates that there are specific occult motivations for every artistic decision reflected in the actual productions. Thus, the position in which performers are discovered at the opening of a rite is not merely an aesthetic choice, but is also reflective of specific criteria established by qabalistic, astrological, or other occult requirements. The costumes and properties used within the *Rites* are also dictated by deeper symbolism. My close reading of the *Rite of Saturn* shows the depth of meaning and semiotic communication which may be unearthed through a detailed analysis of the various *Rites*. The danger inherent in approaching the *Rites* in this manner is that an appreciation of the comprehensive experience the *Rites*

offered is lost when they are examined piece by piece. The *Rites* were an experience intended to be taken as a whole, an intent demonstrated by Crowley forgoing the sale of individual tickets.

My third goal was to take the scattered information I gathered during my research of the productions and bring it together “under one roof.” Crowley biographies are generally frustrating when it comes to the *Rites of Eleusis*. While they mention that the productions did occur, they rarely go beyond that morsel of information. Other sources, either about Crowley or memoirs by those who knew him, make brief references to the productions or the people connected with them. It was by cross referencing these footnotes, bibliographies, and remarks, seemingly written as afterthoughts by those tangentially connected to the people and/or events, that a more detailed and fascinating story emerged.

My fourth goal was to establish that Crowley’s *Rites* were not merely a unique event with neither precedent nor subsequent influence. While the *Rites* are a classic example of Symbolist theatre, no in-depth study of them has been made before now. They are not mentioned in any of the major studies of Symbolist, or avant-garde theatre. An artist is a product of his time and Crowley was well aware of the various artistic movements immediately preceding and concurrent with his production. Their style and methodology are a direct result of Symbolist work that had gone before, and has since been repeated numerous times, especially since the swell of experimental theatre in the 1960s.

The reason for this lack of attention became apparent during the course of the research. Influences may be identified which informed the philosophical and stylistic

structure of the *Rites of Eleusis*. Productions such as Calixtis', or Peter Brook's *Mahabharata*, may be interpreted as following in the philosophical/theatrical footsteps of Crowley and the *Rites*. The challenge became to find the through line that links these productions together, thus demonstrating an influential, if not evolutionary, linkage. The problem arose when it became apparent that these productions were not connected in that manner. Part of the reason for this is rooted in Crowley's reputation as "The Wickedest Man in the World." As was discussed in the conclusion to Chapter Three, Crowley is seen through his own writings as bigoted, misogynistic, chauvinistic, and enthusiastically self-serving. Additionally, he has had the image of child-sacrificing Satan-worshipper attached to him since the yellow press began their investigations of him during the productions of *The Rites of Eleusis*. His reputation degenerated further in the 1920s with the death of Raoul Loveday at the Abbey of Thelema in Cefalú, Sicily. He was married twice and both wives went into mental institutions after leaving him. He was a known drug addict for the last twenty-five years of his life. He is not likely to be referred to as a source of inspiration from someone trying to explain concepts of art, spirituality and communication. It is much easier to refer to Artaud (who had his own problems, but was not the target for public vilification that Crowley was) or Grotowski, who are respected and "legitimate" theatrical theoreticians. Which raises another criticism of Crowley in this arena: he was not of the theatre and never claimed to be anything more than a dabbling amateur when it came to actual productions.

Yet Crowley periodically evidenced behavior or ideas that can now be recognized as coming from a man ahead of his time. He was well-known among his close friends as a superb cook, and in the 1930s tried to launch the Black Magick Restaurant, a stillborn

business venture which would have been one of the first “theme” restaurants, foreshadowing companies such as Planet Hollywood. In his *Rites of Eleusis* Crowley was presenting a style of theatre the symbolists of his time could readily appreciate. It was a mixed-media event with a spiritual theme that defied a superficial appreciation, or even explanation. It was an experience intended to affect multiple areas of the brain, consciously and subconsciously.

During the *Rites* Crowley attempted to enhance a trance-like state of consciousness within the audience through the incorporation of poems which were specifically chosen for their hypnotic effect. It is no coincidence that the poems of Swinburne which Crowley selected are those that most clearly illustrate Swinburne’s concept of poetry-induced trance as a means of achieving an openness to Symbolist communication. The poems used in the *Rites* were also chosen to assist in the creation of a literally “sensual” experience for the audience. The hypnotic rhythm of the words often lulled the audience into what may be described as an alpha state of mental activity, opening them to a more enriched experience of Waddell’s playing or Neuburg’s ecstatic dancing.

That a significant amount of Aleister Crowley’s literary work is involved with performance pieces should not be surprising. Crowley’s life was a series of theatrical events performed for a variety of audiences, beginning in his childhood with his father as his target audience. As has been shown, Crowley was a devout Plymouth Brother until the death of his father, an event which propelled him toward his second performance (for his mother), that of adolescent rebel. Arriving at Cambridge at the age of twenty and coming into his inheritance a year later, Crowley began to play the role of an arrogant

swell, indulging in the self-publication of his literary output and a lifestyle which would later come to be called “conspicuous consumption.”

This presentation of self as a performance was not unusual, although it was not consciously acknowledged as such at the time. One need only view photographs of Victorian drawing rooms to identify carefully designed set pieces upon which to play out the scenes of one’s life. The idea of “self as performance” ties in with Crowley’s grander vision, that of a world in step with the teachings of *The Book of the Law*.

Coming of age as he did at the height of the Symbolist movement, the influences on his literary and life styles are easily identifiable. The swinging rhythms of Swinburne, the classically influenced themes and images of the Golden Dawn, and the tendency toward daily self-portrayal, all are characteristics which were popular at the time of Crowley’s approach to adulthood. The theatricalization of the self was a common practice in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Deak examines this in some detail, demonstrating the development of the concept of the “self” as a work of art, and identifying some of the works of Wilde, Huysmans, and Péladan as didactic instruction for this transformation. (Deak, 1993:248) It is interesting to note that in the mid-1920s one of Crowley’s mistresses, in a fit of pique, wrote in her diary that “I do in the main consider him [Crowley] merely a Word, but it’s damn hard when one has to have ‘human’ dealings with what appears to be the rottenest kind of creature, to think of it as an Idea” (Symonds, 1997:401). Even in some of his most intimate relationships Crowley was viewed more as the embodiment of a concept than as a human being. This was a perception which he encouraged, validating his image of himself as a god, a Mahatma, a Secret Chief, a World Teacher.

Another of Crowley's goals in presenting these performances of the *Rites of Eleusis* was to inspire others to take up the Great Work of self-development, leading to the advancement or evolution of humanity. Seldom have the actions of a single individual alone directly benefited the lives of large populations. Advancement and change is a collective effort. My body is physically different from human bodies of two hundred years ago as a result of hundreds of scientists, researchers and chemists who worked to develop and manufacture the vaccines with which I was inoculated as a child. My teeth are better protected than my grandfather's as a result of fluoridation. Ceremonial magic aspires for not merely a lateral change to a set of different perceptions, but for a developmental change creating an advanced perception and understanding of the universe and reality. This is a desire which is the basis of science, the desire to acquire knowledge in order to understand and then advance even further in our understanding and then apply that understanding toward the further development and betterment of mankind.

Crowley died believing his efforts to convince the world of the importance of his psychospiritual insights had failed. "Magick" was a science which held little interest for those living in the thermonuclear light at the end of World War II. Technological wonders such as the atomic bomb and the discovery that there are no limits to the depths of depravity to which man is capable of sinking had usurped the interest in spirituality and the occult for many. The rumors that Hitler had gained his control over Germany via supernatural means made the topic of occultism even more distasteful. The years immediately following Crowley's death seemed to confirm his fears. Although the first of many biographies appeared in 1951, it was primarily the cult of personality, rather than

his poetry or magical writings, that kept his name in print for the next several decades, usually appearing in “gentlemen’s magazines” that focused on Crowley’s association with “love cults.”

As the 1960s brought a more serious interest in and study of alternative religions and spiritualities, Crowley’s name was still shunned, for reasons discussed in the conclusion of Chapter Three. One of the primary contributions Crowley made to occult study during the twentieth century was the melding of eastern and western thought. Through his extensive travels and studies in the Far East he was able to absorb the principles of Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Shinto, and others and, by filtering their precepts through his encyclopedic knowledge of western systems, create a magical/philosophical system of thought which incorporated universal concepts. Jung had begun to think along these same lines:

A few years ago, the then president of the British Anthropological Society asked me how I could explain how an intellectually outstanding people like the Chinese had failed to create a science. I replied that this must be an optical illusion, since the Chinese possessed a “science,” of which the standard work was the *I Ging*, but that the principle of this science, like so much else in China, was quite thoroughly distinct from *our* scientific principle. The science of *I Ging* is not founded on the causal principle, but on a hitherto unnamed – since it has not reached us – principle, which I had experimentally designated as “synchronistic principle” (Fodor, 202).

Perhaps it was “synchronistic” that Jung and Crowley were working along the same lines at about the same period in history. There are a number of similarities between the two. Both had interests in the occult. Both were prolific writers and widely read in mythology and hermeticism, and referenced this knowledge in their works. Both were the basis for groups which saw them as cult-like figures. Crowley founded his “College of Thelema” in Cefalu in 1920. In 1939, Jung began researching the possibility

of establishing a Jungian University. Jung and Crowley both held elitist views of society. In Jung's view there was no such thing as society, only individuals. Thus, any collection of individuals became an unwieldy and irrational grouping. Like Crowley, Jung was willing to stretch the definition of empirical evidence. Both sought to meld the mythological and psychological teachings of East and West into a global system of comprehension. This blending of Eastern religion and western mysticism with modern psychology is termed today Transpersonal Psychology, in which the focus shifts away from an emphasis on a morality imposed from the outside by an external deity. It is a construct which values the spiritual well-being of the individual. Both strove to return the individual to a personalized spirituality which would bypass the political pitfalls of organized religion.

Shamanic ecstasy is the *real* 'Old Time Religion,' of which modern churches are but pallid evocations. Shamanic, visionary ecstasy, the *mysterium tremendum*, the *unio mystica*, the eternally delightful experience of the universe as energy, is a *sine qua non* of religion, *it is what religion is for!* There is no need for faith, it is the ecstatic experience itself that gives one faith in the intrinsic unity and integrity of the universe, in ourselves as integral parts of the whole; that reveals to us the sublime majesty of our universe, and the fluctuant, scintillant, alchemical miracle that is quotidian consciousness. Any religion that *requires* faith and gives none, that *defends against* religious experiences, that promulgates the bizarre superstition that humankind is in some way separate, divorced from the rest of creation, that heals not the gaping wound between Body and Soul, but would tear them asunder . . . is no religion at all (Ott, 1995:14).

The appearance of performativity in a religious or worshipful context is repetitive throughout history, and time after time it is spirituality that gives birth to the drama, rather than spirituality evolving from a performative context. From the prehistoric rituals designed to insure a successful hunt, through the mysteries of the original rites of Eleusis, to the development of the *quem quaeritis* in the ninth century CE and the rise of pageants

and passion plays, continuing through the work of theoreticians such as Brook and Schechner, the ongoing connection of theology and theatre has enriched the experience of both. And just as Crowley attempted to create a new magical system out of the fusion of Eastern and Western mysticism, so to did he attempt to demonstrate a workable linkage between religious and performative experience.

APPENDIX A

A TIME LINE OF ALEISTER CROWLEY

An underlined event indicates a significant magical ceremony

- 1875 - Edward Alexander (Aleister) Crowley born at Leamington Spa, Warwickshire on 12 October
- 1887 - His father, Edward Crowley, dies.
- 1895 - Matriculation at Trinity College, Cambridge.
- 1896 - First mystical experience on a visit to Stockholm.
- 1898 - His first published poem, *Aceldama*; meets Gerald Kelly and George Cecil Jones; is initiated into the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.
- 1899 - Meets Mathers, the Chief of the Order.
Buys Boleskine House on the Shores of Loch Ness in Scotland.
Performs Abra-Melin Operation.
- 1900 - Conflicts and schisms in the Order; Mathers initiates Crowley into Philosophus degree in Paris.
- 1900 - Crowley leaves for Mexico.
- 1901 - In Mexico, he writes *Tannhauser*; becomes a 33* Mason; continues scrying experiments, tries Enochian magic, devises a Ritual of Self-Initiation, and claims the grade of Adeptus Major.
- 1902 - Leaves for Ceylon and practices Yoga under Allan Bennett; Wanderings in India; Meets Somerset Maugham in Paris; collaborates with Auguste Rodin, and produces *Rodin in Rime*.
- 1903 - Returns to Boleskine; marries Rose Kelly, the sister of Gerald Kelly.
- 1903-4 - Honeymoon travels to Paris, Naples, Cairo and India; return to Cairo;

- April 8 - 10: The Book of the Law dictated to Crowley in Cairo.
- 1905-7 - The Collected Works of Aleister Crowley published.
- 1906 - Travels through Southern China; completes Abra-Melin Operation; writes 777; acknowledged a Master by George Cecil Jones; meets and becomes friends with Captain J. F. C. Fuller and Victor Neuburg.
- 1907 - Reception of The Holy Books commences; AA (Argon Astron – Silver Star) founded.
- 1908 - Walks across Spain and Morocco with Neuburg, performing magical ceremonies.
- 1909-13 - Publishes the first ten numbers of the *Equinox*.
- 1909 - The AA opened to new members; divorces Rose Kelly; performs series of Enochian rituals in the Sahara with Neuburg (these are later published as *The Vision and the Voice*).
- 1910 - Sued by Mathers over publication of Golden Dawn material in the *Equinox*; meets Leila Waddell; *The Rites of Eleusis* performed at Caxton Hall.
- 1911 - Jones, Fuller and others break with Crowley; another visit to the Sahara with Neuburg; meets Mary d'Este Sturges; Abuldiz working.
- 1912 - Theodor Reuss initiates Crowley into the Ordo Templi Orientis, and appoints Him head of the British Branch.
- 1913 - Visit to Moscow with the “Ragged Rag-Time Girls.”
- 1914 - Departure for the United States.
- 1915 - Work on *Astrology* with Evangeline Adams; work with Charles Stansfield Jones in Vancouver; claims the Grade of Magus, Prophet of the New Aeon.
- 1916 - Magical Retirement in New Hampshire.
- 1917 - Becomes editor of *The International* in New York City; takes up painting.
- 1918 - *Liber Aleph* completed; Amalantrah Working with Roddie Minor.
- 1919 - *The Blue Equinox*, III:1, published; returns to England.
- 1920 - Abbey of Thelema founded in Cefalu, Sicily.
- 1921 - Claims the Supreme Grade of Ipsissimus.

- 1922 - Publication of *Diary of a Drug Fiend*.
- 1923 - Crowley expelled from Sicily by Mussolini; leaves for Tunis and completes *Confessions*.
- 1924 - 'The Supreme Ordeal' of the Ipsissimus Grade in Paris.
- 1925 - Invited by Heinrich Tränker to Thuringen in Germany to become International Head of the OTO.
- 1926-28 - Travels in France, Germany and North Africa.
- 1928 - Israel Regardie joins Crowley in Paris and becomes his secretary.
- 1929 - Crowley expelled from France; *Magick in Theory and Practice* published; Crowley marries Maria de Miramar in Germany.
- 1930 - First two volumes of the *Confessions* published.
- 1930-36 - Is visited and supported financially by Karl Germer who later succeeds Crowley as OHO of the OTO.
- 1930-4 - Travels in Germany and Portugal.
- 1934 - Crowley loses libel suit against Nina Hamnett over her book *Laughing Torso*
- 1935 - Crowley declares bankrupt.
- 1936-8 - Visits to Germany; meets Aldous Huxley.
- 1937 - Publication of *The Equinox of the Gods*.
- 1938 – Publication of *Eight Lectures on Yoga*.
- 1940-5 – Visited by Grady MacMurtry, who later succeeds Germer as OHO of the OTO.
- 1944 - Publication of *The Book of Thoth* with Tarot Cards designed by Lady Frieda Harris.
- 1945 - Crowley retires to 'Netherwood', Hastings and works on *Magick without Tears*.
- 1947 - Completes *Olla*, his third anthology of poetry; Crowley dies on December 1; he is cremated on December 5.

APPENDIX B

The Looking Glass: October 29, 1910, pp. 141-142

An Amazing Sect

We propose under the above heading to place on record an astounding experience which we have had lately in connection with a sect styled the Equinox, which has been formed under the auspices of one Aleister Crowley. The headquarters of the sect is at 121 (*sic*) Victoria Street, but the meeting or seance which we are about to describe, and to which after great trouble and expense we gained admittance under an assumed name, was held in private at Caxton Hall. We had previously heard a great many rumors about the practices of this sect, but we were determined not to rely on any hearsay evidence, and after a great deal of manoeuvring we managed to secure a card of admission, signed by the great Crowley himself. We arrived at Caxton Hall at a few minutes before eight in the evening - as the doors were to be closed at eight precisely - and after depositing our hat and coat with an attendant were conducted by our guide to the door, at which stood a rather dirty looking person attired in a sort of imitation Eastern robe, with a drawn sword in his hand, who, after inspecting our cards, admitted us to a dimly lighted room heavy with incense. Across the room low stools were placed in rows, and when we arrived a

good many of these were already occupied by various men and women, for the most part in evening dress. We noticed that the majority of these appeared to be couples - male and female. At the extreme end of the room was a heavy curtain, and in front of this sat a huddled-up figure in draperies, beating a kind of monotonous tom-tom. When all the elect had been admitted the doors were shut, and the light, which had always been exceedingly dim, was completely exhausted except for a slight flicker on the "altar." Then after a while more ghostly figures appeared on the stage, and a person in a red cloak, supported on each side by a blue-chinned gentleman of some sort of Turkish bath costume, commenced to read some gibberish, to which the attendants made responses at intervals.

Our guide informed us that this was known as the "banishing rite of the pentagram."

More Turkish bath attendants then appeared, and executed a kind of Morris dance round the stage. Then the gentleman in the red cloak, supported by brothers Aquarius and Capricornus - the aforesaid blue-chinned gentlemen - made fervent appeals to Mother of Heaven to hear them, and after a while a not unprepossessing lady appeared, informed them that she was the Mother of Heaven, and asked if she could do anything for them. (She may be seen in the photograph on page 140 sitting on the chest of "the Master" - Mr. Crowley - and apparently endeavouring to perform some acrobatic feat.) They beg her to summon the Master, as they wish to learn from him if there is any God, or if they are free to behave as they please. The Mother of Heaven thereupon takes up the violin and plays not unskillfully for about ten minutes, during which time the room is again plunged in complete darkness. The playing is succeeded by a loud hammering, in which

all the robed figures on the stage join, and after a din sufficient to wake the Seven Sleepers the lights are turned up a little and a figure appears from the recess and asks what they want. They beseech him to let them know if there really is a God, as, if not, they will amuse themselves without any fear of the consequences. "The Master" promises to give the matter his best attention, and, after producing a flame from the floor by the simple expedient of lifting a trap-door, he retires with the Mother of Heaven for "meditation," during which time darkness again supervenes. After a considerable interval he returns, flings aside a curtain on the stage, and declares that there is no God. He then exhorts his followers to do as they like and make the most of life. "There is no God, no hereafter, no punishment, and no reward. Dust we are, and to dust we will return." This is his doctrine, paraphrased. Following this there is another period of darkness, during which the "Master" recites - very effectively, be it admitted - Swinburne's "Garden of Proserpine." After this there is more meditation, followed by an imitation Dervish dance by one of the company who finally falls to the ground, whether in exhaustion or frenzy we are unable to say.

There are also at intervals a species of Bacchae revel by the entire company on the stage, in which an apparently very young girl, who is known as the "Daughter of the Gods," takes part.

On the particular occasion we refer to the lights were turned up at about 10:15, after a prolonged period of complete darkness, and the company dispersed. We leave it to our readers, after looking at the photographs - which were taken for private circulation only, and sold to us without Crowley's knowledge or consent, and of which we have acquired the exclusive copyright - and after reading our plain, unvarnished account of the

happenings of which we were an actual eye-witness, to say whether this was not a blasphemous sect whose proceedings conceivable lend themselves to immorality of the most revolting character. Remember the doctrine which we have endeavoured to faintly outline - remember the periods of complete darkness - remember the dances and the heavily scented atmosphere, the avowed object of which is to produce what Crowley calls "ecstasy" - and then say if it is fitting and right that young girls and married women should be allowed to attend such performances under the guise of the cult of a new religion.

New religion indeed! It is as old as the hills. The doctrines of unbridled lust and licence, based on the assumption that there is no God and no hereafter, have been preached from time immemorial, sometimes by hedonists and fanatics pure and simple, sometimes by charlatans whose one thought is to fill their money-bags by encouraging others to gratify their depraved tastes.

In the near future we shall have more to say about this man Crowley - his history and antecedents - and those of several members of his sect - and we also hope to be in a position to give a description of the "happenings" at the flat in Victoria Street on the occasion of what we may call "private matinee performances."

APPENDIX C

The Bystander: November 16, 1910

Concerning “Blasphemy” in General and the Rites of Eleusis in Particular

by Aleister Crowley

[The editor wishes it to be clearly understood that The Bystander does not associate itself in any way with the views of Mr. Crowley. We have offered him the hospitality of our columns to repel the serious charge that the “Rites of Eleusis” now in progress at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, are “orgies” of a blasphemous character, and it is entirely for the public to decide whether or not he succeeds in doing this. Our columns are open for correspondence.]

Pioneers, O Pioneers!

Whenever it occurs to anyone to cut a new canal of any kind, he will be well advised to look out for trouble. If it be the isthmus of Suez, the simple-minded engineer is apt to imagine that it is only a question of shifting so much sand; but before he can as much as strike the first pick-axe into the earth he finds that he is up against all kinds of interests, social, political, financial, and what-not. The same applies to the digging of canals in the human brain. When Simpson introduced chloroform, he thought it a matter

for the physician; and found himself attacked from the pulpit. All his arguments proved useless; and we should probably be without chloroform to-day if some genius had not befriended him by discovering that God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep before He removed the rib from which Eve was made.

The Abuse of the Gutter

Nowadays a movement has to be very well on the way to success before it is attacked by any responsible people. The first trouble comes from the gutter. Now the language of the gutter consists chiefly of meaningless abuse, and the principle catch-words, coming as they do from the mouths of men who never open them without a profane oath or a foul allusion, are those of blasphemy and immorality. The charge of insanity is frequently added when the new idea is just sufficiently easy to understand a little. There is another reason, too, for these three particular cries; these are the charges which, if proved, can get the person into trouble, and at the same time which are true in a sense for everybody; for they all refer to a more or less arbitrary standard of normality. The old cry of "heresy" has naturally lost much of its force in a country nine-tenths of whose population are admittedly heretics; but immorality and insanity are to-day almost equally meaningless terms. The Censor permits musical comedy and forbids *Oedipus Rex*; and Mr. Bernard Shaw brands the Censor as immoral for doing so. Most people of the educated classes will probably agree with him.

Insanity and Blasphemy

As for insanity, it is simply a question of finding a Greek or Latin name for any given act. If I open the window, it is on account of claustrophobia; when I shut it again,

it is an attack of agoraphobia. All the professors tell me that every form of emotion has its root in sex, and describe my fondness for pictures as if it were a peculiarly un-natural type of vice. It is even impossible for an architect to build a church spire without being told that he is reviving the worship of Priapus. Now, the only result of all this is that these terms of abuse have become entirely meaningless, save as defined by law. There is still some meaning in the term "Forger," as used in general speech; but only because it has not yet occurred to any wiseacre to prove that all his political and religious opponents are forgers. This seems to me a pity. There is, undoubtedly, a forged passage in Tacitus and another in Petronius. Everyone who studies the classics is, therefore, a kind of accomplice in forgery. The charge of blasphemy is in all cases a particularly senseless one. It has been hurled in turn at Socrates, Euripides, Christ, El-Mansur, the Baab, and the Rev. R. J. Campbell.

The Morality Red Herring

Legal blasphemy is, of course, an entirely different thing. In the recent notorious case where an agent of the Rationalist Press Association, Harry Boulter by name, was prosecuted, the question proved not to be a theological one at all. It was really this, "were the neighbours being annoyed?" "Was the man's language coarse?" And the Judge and Joseph McCabe agreed that it was. But in modern times no one has ever been prosecuted in any civilised country for stating philosophic propositions, whatever may be their theological implications. We have no longer the Casuists of the Inquisition, who would take the trouble to argue from Bruno's proposition of the immanence of God that, if that were so, the doctrine of the Incarnation was untenable (and therefore he shall be burned). It is only the very narrowest religious sects that trouble to call Herbert Spencer

an Athiest, Bradlaugh or Foote; and it is a singular characteristic of the Odium Theologicum that, instead of arguing soberly concerning the proposition, which those worthies put forward, they always try to drag the red herring of morality across the track. Of all the stupid lies that men have ever invented, nothing is much sillier than the lie that one who does not believe in God must be equally a disbeliever in morality. As a matter of fact, in a country which pretends so hard to appear theistic as England, it requires the most astounding moral courage, a positive galaxy of virtues, for man to stand up and say that he does not believe in God; as Dr. Wace historically remarked, "it ought to be unpleasant for a man to say that he does not believe in Jesus;" and my dislike to Atheism is principally founded on the fact that so many of its exponents are always boring me about ethics. Some priceless idiot, who, I hope, will finish in the British Museum, remarked in a free-thinking paper the other day, that they need not trouble to pull down the churches, "because they will always be so useful for sane and serious discussion of important ethical problems." Personally, I would rather go back to the times when the preacher preached by the hour-glass.

The Pot and the Kettle

I have always been very amused, too, in this connection of blasphemy by the perusal of Christian Missionary journals, on which I was largely brought up. They are full from cover to cover of the most scandalous falsehoods about heathen gods, and the most senseless insults to them, insults penned by the grossly ignorant of our religious population. It is only in quite recent years that the English public have discovered that Buddha was not a God, and it was not the missionaries that found this out, but scholars of secular attainment. In America, particularly, the most credible falsehoods are constantly

circulated by the Missionary Societies even about the customs of the Hindoos. To read them, one would suppose that every crocodile in India was fed with babies as the first religious duty of every Indian mother; but, of course, it is most terribly wicked for the Hindoo to make fun of the deities of the American. For my part, who have lived half my life in “Christian” countries and half my life in “heathen” countries, I cannot see much to choose between the different religions. Their arguments consist, in the end, of passionate assertion, which is no argument at all.

Religion and Draw Poker

There is an excellent story - much better known in India than in England - of a missionary, who was explaining to the poor heathen how useless were his gods. “See!” said he, “I insult your idol, he is but of dead stone; he does not avenge himself, or punish me.” “I insult your God,” replied the Hindoo, “he is invisible; he does not avenge himself, or punish me.” “Ah!” said the missionary, “my God will punish you when you die”; and the poor Hindoo could only find the following pitiable answer: “So, when you die, will my idol punish you.” It was from America, too, that I obtained the first principle of religion; which is that four to a flush are not as good as one small pair.

Orgies

Still, I suppose it is useless to contest the popular view that anyone whom any fool chooses to call an Atheist is liable to conduct “orgies.” Now, can anyone tell me what orgies are? No? Then I must reach down the Lexicon. Orgia, only used in the plural and connected with Ergon (work), means sacred rites, sacred worship practiced by the initiated at the sacred worship of Demeter at Eleusis, and also the rites of Bacchus. It also means any rites, or worship, or sacrifice, or any mysteries without reference to

religion; and Orgiasso means, therefore, to celebrate Orgies, or ceremonies, or to celebrate any sacred rites. It is really a poor comment upon the celebration of sacred rites that the word should have come to mean something entirely different, as it does to-day. For the man in the street Orgie means a wild revel usually accompanied by drunkenness. I think it is almost time that someone took the word Orgie as a Battle Cry, and having shown that the Eucharist is only one kind of orgie to restore the true enthusiasm (which is not of an alcoholic or sexual nature) among the laity; for it is no secret that the falling away of all nations from religion, which only a few blind-worms are fatuous enough to deny, is due to the fact that the fire no longer burns in the sacred lamp. Outside a few monasteries there is hardly any church of any sect whose members really expect anything to happen to them from attending public worship. If a new Saint Paul were to journey to Damascus, the doctor would be called in and his heavenly vision diagnosed as epilepsy. If a new Mahomed came from his cave and announced himself a messenger from God, he would be thought a harmless lunatic. And that is the first stage of a religious propaganda.

The Stations of the Cross

Now the real messenger of God can always be distinguished in a very simple way. He possesses a mysterious force which enables him to persist, heedless of the sneers and laughter of the populace. It then strikes the wiser people that he is dangerous; and they begin on the blasphemy and immorality tack. In the life of our Lord, this will be noticed. In the first place, there was just the contemptuous "he hath a devil," which was the equivalent for our "he's just a crank," but when it was found that this crank had adherents, men of force and eloquence like Peter, to say nothing of financial genius like Judas Iscariot, the cry was quickly changed into wild accusations of blasphemy and

allegations of immorality. "He is a friend of publicans and sinners." A sane Government only laughs at these ebullitions; and it is then the task of the Pharisees to prove to the Government that it is to its interest to suppress this dangerous upstart. They may succeed; and thought the Government is never for a moment blind to the fact that it is doing an injustice, the new Savior is crucified. It is this final publicity of crucifixion (for advertisement is just as necessary in one age as another) that secures the full triumph to him whom his enemies fondly suppose to be their victim. Such is human blindness, that the messenger himself, his enemies, and the civil power, all of them do exactly the one thing which will defeat their ends. The messenger would never succeed at all if it were not that he is the Messenger, and it really matters very little what steps he may take to get the message delivered. For all concerned are but pawns in the great game played by infinite wisdom and infinite power.

Orderly, Decorous Ceremonies

It is, therefore, a negligible matter, this abuse, from whatever source it comes. I should waste my time if I were to prove that the rites of Eleusis, as now being performed at Caxton Hall, are orderly, decorous ceremonies. It is true that at all times darkness prevails; so it does in some of Wagner's operas and in certain ceremonies of a mystical character which will occur to the minds of a large section of my male readers. There are, moreover, periods of profound silence, and I can quite understand that in such an age of talk as this, that seems a very suspicious circumstance!

Aleister Crowley

APPENDIX D

THE BYSTANDER: NOVEMBER 23, 1910.

The Rites of Eleusis: Their Origin and Meaning

by Aleister Crowley

The Rights of Eleusis

Among the various accounts that have appeared of the character of the *Rites of Eleusis*, so-called, I find that very few people seem to understand intellectually what they were all about. It will be as well, therefore, if I make here a plain statement as to the exact nature of the rites. The ceremonies developed from very rude beginnings. The first one was in this wise. I happened to have a few friends in my room in the evening, among them the celebrated Australian violinist, Miss Leila Waddell. It struck me that we might pass the time by a sort of artistic dialogue; I read a piece of poetry from one of the great classics, and she replied with a piece of music suggested by my reading. I retorted with another poem; and the evening developed into a regular controversy. The others were intensely interested in this strange conflict, and in the silence of the room spiritual enthusiasm took hold of us; so acutely that we were all intensely uplifted, to the point in some cases of actual ecstasy, an intoxication of the same kind as that experienced by an

assistant at the celebration of the Mass or the performance of Parsifal, but stronger because of its naturalness and primitiveness.

It was subsequently decided to try and tune everybody up to some definite, prearranged emotion, and we strung together a rough ceremony in honor of Artemis. This was so successful that it even impressed persons who had always been complete sceptics and scoffers. Having been of help in private, we endeavoured to reproduce the effects in public with greater elaboration.

How to Write Rites Right

With regard to the genesis of the *Rites of Eleusis* I must explain that they did not spring fully armed from my brain, Minerva-like. The actual form which my ideas took was simply a question of convenience and compromise. It was necessary to have a series of some sort, and seven seemed to be about the right number, if we were going to get them done before people went away for Christmas. I might have chosen another sort of deities; but I thought that those associated with the days of the week would make it easier for everybody, and it certainly made it very much easier for me, because the correspondences of colour, form, idea, number, and so on of the planets had been so very well worked out. Of the way in which the rituals were constructed, I must say a few words. Let us put ourselves in the position of the dramatist. Take, for example, the first ritual, that of Saturn. Working on tradition, just as Wagner did when he took the old Norse Saga for his world drama, we find Saturn as a black, melancholy God, the devourer of his children. Ideas of Night, Death, Black hellebore, Lead, Cypress, Tombs, Deadly Nightshade. All these things have a necessary connection with Saturn in the mind of anyone who has read the classics. The first condition of this rite is, then, to make the

temple a kind of symbolic representation of the sphere of Saturn. So the representative of Saturn wears the Black Robe. The time is declared to be midnight (though, as a matter of fact, it is only twenty minutes past eight -- this is an ordinary theatrical convention; and masons will think of certain analogies in their own "Orgies.") If the brethren are fed, it is "on the corpses of their children" as Saturn fed on his. If they drink, it is "Poppyheads infused in blood" -- symbols of sleep and death. Saturn further represents the earth, the plane of matter, humanity bounded by old age and death, humanity blindly groping after illumination and failing to get it.

The Truth Behind the Veil

It is, then, the primitive darkness of humanity that is represented in this ritual. Therefore, we have the despairing cry, "There is no God"; and as a logical result the suicide of the high priest, for there cannot be a priest without a God. It is the blackness of uttermost despair; and so the ritual ends. It is only in the second rite, the rite of Jupiter, who is etymologically and actually identical with the Hebrew Jehovah, that light breaks. But even in that rite, when the Supreme Power is declared, He is too exalted for anyone to approach Him; it is only by the work of the Divine Spirit that He is made manifest; and this manifestation only takes place in the God-man whom some call Iacchus and others Jesus -- again an etymological and mystical identity! This doctrine appears to me to differ from the orthodox doctrine of Christianity in one point only; it is not sectarian. I do not require Mr. John M. Robertson to tell me that the story of the crucifixion is merely a mystery play adapted from the rites of Mithras; the rite being symbolical of a spiritual truth, all nations that possess knowledge of spiritual things will have incorporated it in their rites under some name or other.

The Deadness of Dogma

If my interpretation has been erroneous, let me be shown my error, and I will repent; but no sensible person can maintain for a moment that my interpretation is un-serious or irreverent. And my chief defense – my counter-attack -- is that the orthodox methods of inculcating the doctrine in question have been so purely dogmatic and dull, that they have lost all vital force. Without art, truth becomes falsehood. Imagine anyone taking the teachings of the "Blue Bird," and pounding them into a creed, and writing dull sermons about them! The unfortunate children who had to learn them would begin to hate Maeterlinck bitterly. But let the sublime truths of Christianity be once again "clothed round by sweet art, with the spacious warm heaven of her imminent wings," and there will be that true revival of religious life that everyone is blindly seeking.

APPENDIX E

THE LOOKING GLASS: NOVEMBER 12, 1910 pp 203-205

An Amazing Sect. – no. 2.

The origin of Their Rites and the Life-History of Mr. Aleister Crowley

A fortnight ago we published an article under the heading of “An Amazing Sect” in which we gave an account of a meeting or séance which we had attended of the Equinox Sect, of which Mr. Aleister Crowley is the presiding genius, and which we illustrated by exclusive photographs. After describing in detail the performances of which we were an eye-witness, we promised, in conclusion, that in the near future we should have something more to say about Crowley’s history and antecedents. We now proceed to redeem that promise.

The Ancient Rites of Eleusis

We propose in the first place to give a brief sketch of the ancient rites of Eleusis, from which presumably Mr. Crowley has derived the performances of which we gave an account in our previous article.

The Rites of Eleusis take their name from Eleusis, a city of ancient Greece, and though little is known of their form by reason of the fact that the mysteries perished with the destruction of Eleusis in A. D. 396, yet tradition has handed down some data from which it is possible to reconstruct their general outline. Demeter, so the legend runs, incensed at the rape of her daughter Persephone, betook herself to Eleusis and there dwelt

for the space of a year, plunged in solitary mourning for her child, in a temple built for her by the pious natives. Her advent, however, was in the nature of a calamity for these pious folk, as during her year of residence the Earth brought forth no increase, and the human race would have perished had not Zeus, on whom she had some sort of claim – possibly on the score of arrears of alimony, he being the father of the said Persephone – relented and ordained that Persephone should return from Hades. On the return of Persephone mother and daughter are reunited, the corn grows again, and once more all's well with the world. With a parting benison to the good folk of Eleusis, Demeter prepares to exchange her austere temple for the more congenial atmosphere of Olympus. But before quitting Eleusis Demeter laid down the lines of the services which were to be held in her honour after she had gone. These were what came to be known as the Eleusinia – the rites of Eleusis.

The Original Ceremonies

So much for their origin. With regard to the ceremonies themselves the details are most nebulous, and there is marked divergence of opinion among the authorities. Lobeck in his “*Aglaophamus*,” published in 1839, gives most minutiae. We are told that during the nine days before the festival the pious fasted, taking sustenance only between sunset and sunrise. At the commencement of the ceremonies, which started at Athens, a proclamation was issued ordering the immediate departure of all strangers, murderers, and undesireables. From this apparently comes Mr. Crowley’s “banishing rites of the pentagram,” to which we referred in our previous article. On the following day the initiates were bathed for outward purification, and were then decked in a fawn skin as their only garb. This was followed by public sacrifices to Demeter and Persephone, and

by a private sacrifice of a sacred pig to Demeter by the initiates; and various ceremonies were also gone through *in camera* by the Order. From the time of the purification of the initiates by immersion the ceremonies were of a dual character, the public ceremonial and festival open to all – barring such aliens, murderers, and undesirables as had come under the ban of the opening injunction – and the private ceremonies open only to the initiates of the Temple. These last were under the leadership of a high priest known as the Hierophant, a man vowed to a life of strict and saintly chastity, whose duties were to show and explain the sacred symbols. Besides the virtue of chastity the Hierophant had to possess a good, clear voice for intoning. His right hand man was known as the Daduchus – the torchbearer – whose office it was to bear the sacred torch and relieve the Hierophant in the chanting. He, too, had to combine the virtues of chastity with a good voice and presence. For the female portion of the retinue the qualifications were not quite so searching, for the Hierophantis – priestesses dedicated to Demeter – were required to live a life of chastity “during their term of office.”

Initiates and their Myths

Initiates to the Order were required to pay a large fee, and the aim of initiation into the mysteries was that they should be gradually weaned from things of earth – in which category presumably was included the aforesaid premium – and have their higher impulses stirred. From this point the portrayal of the Mysteries of Eleusis is given by the Hierophant and his retinue, and from these rites all but the initiated were rigorously excluded. The mystics commemorated first the myth of Demeter and Persephone, starting with the rape of Persephone; and M. Stephani says that there can be no doubt that the scene of Baubo was given in all its indecent coarseness. Next was shown the union of

Jupiter with Demeter; the resistance of the goddess; the god's ruses and final attainment of his desire, from which consummation sprang Persephone. In the next myth is shown how Zeus in guise of a serpent rapes Persephone, who gives birth to the god Bacchus. Then followed the complete myth of Bacchus – Zagreus. Finally the initiates drank a libation and consumed their nocturnal meal. The nine days' abstinence are said by some writers to correspond to the nine nights' continence of Roman ladies in honour of Ceres. As a French writer pithily puts it: "Nulle part il n'est question de l'emploi des journées qui s'interscalaient entre les nuits mystiques. Il est en effet probable que l'on n'y faisait rien de particulier et que les mystes les donnaient au repos, pais qu'ils veillaient toute la nuit."

A Tolerant Critic's Opinion

It is generally held that the rites contained scenes of the greatest licence, and that there were many symbols of a coarse nature; for example, those represented by the Hierophant and the Priestess portraying the union of Zeus and Demeter, and later of Zeus and Persephone, which entered into the higher worship. Clement d'Alexandrie, most temperate of writers and tolerant of critics, says: "In any case it is true that the priest is chambered with the priestess alone, to give to the spectators the verisimilitude of conjugal union between the god and the goddess," and concludes, "La hardiesse d'un tel rite suffrait à légitimer les protestations et les révoltes des Pères de l'Eglise chrétienne." Such were the Eleusinia as handed down by the ancient authorities, and from which the Rites of Eleusis, portrayed by Mr. Aleister Crowley, have presumably derived.

East and West Intermingle

The number of rites in Mr. Crowley's series is seven, and he has been apparently influenced in his choice of that number by the fact that it corresponds with the number of the planets, and he has ordered the sequence by the rate of their progress across the heavens.

Into the ancient Greek ceremonies Mr. Crowley has interpolated many Eastern observances, with which his long wanderings and research in the East have rendered him familiar.

The result is the ceremony which we endeavoured to describe a fortnight ago. Our readers will recollect that in summing up we made the following remarks: "We leave it to our readers, after looking at the photographs – which were taken for private circulation only, and sold to us without Crowley's knowledge or consent, and of which we have acquired the exclusive copyright – and after reading our plain, unvarnished account of the happenings of which we were an actual eye-witness, to say whether this is not a blasphemous sect whose proceedings conceivably lend themselves to immorality of the most revolting character." Remember the doctrine which we have endeavoured faintly to outline – remember the long periods of complete darkness – remember the dances and the heavy scented atmosphere, the avowed object of which is to produce what Crowley terms an "ecstasy" – and then say if it is fitting and right that young girls and married women should be allowed to attend such performances under the guise of the cult of a "new religion."

The Personnel of Crowley

We now propose to give a few details of Mr. Aleister Crowley's career up to the present time, and we shall then once more leave it to our readers to determine whether or not our remarks as to his precious "sect" are or are not well-grounded. Alexander Edward Crowley – he assumed the Christian name of Aleister later in life – was born about 35 years ago. His father was an eminent member of the "Plymouth Brethren," and young Crowley was brought up in the odour of sanctity. He was educated privately, and afterwards went to Trinity College, Cambridge. There he made the acquaintance of Mr. Gerald Festus Kelly, and after leaving Cambridge these two spent some years in Paris studying art. From Paris Crowley went to the East, where he disappeared for some time, but subsequently returned to Paris about the year 1902, and became a disciple of Rodin. About this time he wrote an effusion entitled "Rodin in Rhyme," which he dedicated to his master. During this sojourn in Paris he made the acquaintance of the sister of his friend Mr. Festus Kelly, who was a widow, her husband, Capt. Frederic Skerrett, having died three years previously. He became very friendly with this lady, and in the following year, July, 1903, they met again at Strathpeffer in Scotland. Crowley proposed marriage to her, was accepted, and the marriage took place on the following day.

A Man of Many Names

In the marriage certificate he gave his name as MacGregor, but his father's name was given as Edward Crowley. After the marriage the happy pair went to live at Boleskine, Foyers, Inverness-shire, a large house with about 50 acres of land which Crowley had bought some years previously. This house he had fitted up in an ultra-aesthetic manner. He had one room covered entirely with mirrors, which he called a

temple. Shortly after his marriage Crowley raised himself to the peerage, under the title of Lord Boleskine, he having previously, in Paris, gone under the style of Count Skerrett. In 1904 a child was born of the marriage, which died 21 months later. Shortly after the birth of the child, Crowley and his wife started for the East, where they traveled for about a year, and in 1906 they were at Hong-Kong. There his wife was in a delicate condition, but in spite of this he left her alone there, himself going to America, and the unhappy woman had to travel all the way home to her father's house in England, where her confinement took place. Crowley afterwards joined her at Chislehurst, and they then went to live at a house in Warwick Road, Earl's Court, which was taken in her name. In the summer of 1909 she found herself unable to stand Crowley's brutal treatment any longer, and on July 21st, 1909, she left him. On August 5th she learnt from the charwoman that her husband had had a woman staying with him in the house the previous night. Some time before that Crowley had asked his wife to take care of a child of one of his intimate friends, and she, of course, presumed that it was his friend's child. However, she accidentally opened a letter addressed to Crowley which gave the address of the mother of the child, a Miss Zweek, and Mrs. Crowley, on going to see this person, learnt that Crowley was the father of the child. This Miss Zweek was a milliner in the Burlington Arcade.

How the Sect Originated

A decree of divorce, with custody of the child of the marriage, was granted to Mrs. Crowley in the Edinburgh Courts on November 24th, 1909. Shortly before this, Crowley had started a half-yearly magazine called "The Equinox," which purported to deal with mystical and occult matters, and out of which was evolved the sect which we

have under discussion, and which is technically known as the A.. A.. Other stories there are about Aleister Crowley, dark and forbidding stories, but we prefer to confine ourselves to indisputable facts – and we ask our readers, after reading this bare and unvarnished statement of facts, to say whether Mr. Aleister Crowley, with the record which we have outlined above, is likely to be the High Priest of wholesome or helpful doctrines, and whether this is the sort of man to whom young girls and married women should be allowed to go for “comfort” and “meditation.”

APPENDIX F

JOHN BULL: NOVEMBER 5th, 1910

IS A NEW SMYTH-PIGOTT AMONG US?

Mr. Aleister Crowley's Blasphemous and Prurient Propaganda

A "new religion" is usually viewed with suspicion in this country, but Mr. Crowley is just the person for such an enterprise. He is a man of good birth and education, with distinguished, almost pontifical, manners. He has traveled over all the unusual parts of the world and investigated fantastic things with zeal, if not with discretion. He has probed the secret recesses of most Oriental religions and has made a special study of all the endless literature of magic and mysticism. Though he has never yet succeeded in catching the long ear of the public, he has been a voluminous writer, and has published works which fill many shelves. "Konx Om Pax" and "777" have already been noticed in this journal. To the uninitiated, they appear like the outpourings of an extremely clever lunatic, now solemnly revealing the secrets of the ancients, now running off into the most delightful nonsense, now assuming the role of the preacher, now frankly pulling legs. His chief efforts have been concentrated upon the composition of really remarkable poetry. His rhythm and metre and melody are often quite perfect, and as a

lord of language he runs Swinburne very close. Often he goes very near to the borderland of insanity.

His work, however, is spoiled by the intrusion of wild, erotic, and disgusting images and startling blasphemies, which restrict his writing to private circulation, though it possesses an artistic enchantment quite apart from its appeal to pruriency and debauchery.

His present “mission” was heralded in March of last year by a portly publication called *The Equinox*. The idea, evidently, is to attract the public to the teachings of medieval alchemists or magicians. The propaganda consists in assembling a number of ladies and gentlemen in a dark room where poems are recited in sonorous tones and a violin is played with considerable expression amid choking clouds of incense, varied by barbaric dances, sensational interludes of melodrama, blasphemy and erotic suggestion.

Our Representative’s Report

By special favour, or good fortune, or both, I was able to get free admission into the chamber of mysteries, which others less fortunate than I could not enter without paying in advance a fee of £5. In the corridor there stood none other than Aleister Crowley himself – a man of fine physique and with all the appearance of an actor – in a long white garment which reminded one of a cassock one moment and a Roman tunic the next, although undoubtedly it was neither the one nor the other. He vanished as mysteriously as he had appeared. Then there came among us, for a few brief seconds, a woman, young, with strong features set in a deathly pale face. Someone said, “That is Leila Woddell. She plays the violin and takes the chief part in the mystic séance.”

A few of my own sex, in evening frocks, some looking as though they were strangers in the place, were enquiring for the dressing-room, and were informed there was only one such room, used by both sexes. A figure in a brown, monk-like frock, with face completely hidden by a cowl, passed among us, handing around typewritten sheets explanatory of the performance, and then it was time to visit the mystic chamber.

“Master of the Temple” and “Mother of Heaven”

The room was in semi-darkness, a bluish light hanging from the ceiling at the far end, a heavy smell of incense pervading the air, while the solemn stillness and hushed voices helped to enhance the weirdness of the place. I was taken to the front row, and a large cushion was given me to sit on. There were evidently no rules as to the pose one should adopt, for during the evening I saw some very Bohemian attitudes. To say the least, the cushions were not conducive to comfort, but those people behind me fared worse still. They sat on low wicker and bamboo footstools; several of these gave way during the performance, letting the unsuspecting occupants down, and not too gently! Presently the door was closed and locked, the low blue light fell pale and mystical upon a male figure sitting behind a cauldron, with a drum between his knees; he beat the drum with his hands, paused, and then resumed the beating, and from a small door behind him entered a number of male and female figures, ten or twelve, clothed some in white, some in brown. He ceased to beat the drum, and one of the male figures then performed the “vanishing ritual of the Pentagram,” which is designed to keep away evil influences. He then lighted a fire in the cauldron, and, crouching behind, recited. Next, he joined with the brethren in an endeavour to arouse someone whom they called the “Master of the Temple.” I could not refrain from a feeling of envy at his ability to slumber through such

a din! They failed to wake him, and the same brother appealed to the “Mother of Heaven.” She appeared in the person of Leila Waddell, played an invocation, and the “Master of the Temple” was at last aroused. I was not surprised!

Our Representative Embraced

He came forward, crouching behind the cauldron, and recited a most blood-curdling composition, filled with horrible allusions to “the stony stare of dead men’s eyes,” &c., &c. After all, one couldn’t blame him for getting angry at being disturbed, I suppose. However, suddenly he lifted what looked like a tin of Nestlé’s milk, and pouring the contents on the flame, extinguished the fire, declared that “there is no God,” that everybody was free to do just as he or she liked, and left the audience in utter darkness! Not the slightest ray of light entered the room, and the atmosphere seemed heavier and more oppressive than even. There was a sound as of people moving quietly about which added to the uncanniness. How long this lasted I do not know, but all of a sudden an arm was placed round my neck, and a moustache pressed to my cheek – someone had kissed me!

The Dead Men Fed

The next moment the blue light appeared. The mystical figures were moving before me, and I watched, fascinated. The presence of a traitor among them was suspected, and a man clad in white, sword in hand, sought this traitor among the crouching figures. What a weird picture it was! With an unearthly scream he fell upon one of the male figures, and, dragging him forth, “slew” him before our eyes. After this there was more violin music, and a wild barbaric dance in the misty, smoky blue light. One little scene that chilled my blood occurred when the lights were extinguished. In the

utter darkness, and after a long pause, in which one could hear one's own heart beat, a male voice, a terrible voice, called out: "My brethren, are the dead men fed?" "Yea, verily, the dead men are fed," came the reply. "My brethren, upon what have the dead men fed?" "Upon the corpses of their children," was the horrible answer. I had had enough, and was heartily glad when it was all over.

APPENDIX G

THE SKETCH: AUGUST 24, 1910

Aleister Crowley's "Rite of Artemis"

reviewed by Raymond Radclyffe

A certain number of literary people know the name of Aleister Crowley as a poet. A few regard him as a magician. But a small and select circle revere him as the hierophant of a new religion. This creed Captain Fuller, in a book on the subject extending to 327 pages, calls "Crowleyanity." I do not pretend to know what Captain Fuller means. He is deeply read in philosophy, and he takes Crowley very seriously. I do not quite see whither Crowley himself is driving; but I imagine that the main idea in the brain of this remarkable poet is to plant Eastern Transcendentalism, which attains its ultimate end in Samadhi, in English soil under the guise of Ceremonial Magic.

Possibly the average human being requires and desires ceremony. Even the simplest Methodist uses some sort of ceremony, and Crowley, who is quite in earnest in his endeavour to attain such unusual conditions of mind as are called ecstasy, believes that the gateway to Ecstasy can be reached through Ceremonial Magic. He has saturated himself with the magic of the East -- a very real thing, in tune with the Eastern mind. He

is well read in the modern metaphysicians, all of whom have attempted to explain the unexplainable.

He abandons these. They appeal only to the brain, and once their jargon is mastered they lead nowhere; least of all to Ecstasy. He goes back upon ceremony, because he thinks that it helps the mind to get outside itself. He declares that if you repeat an invocation solemnly and aloud, "expectant of some great and mysterious result," you will experience a deep sense of spiritual communion.

He is now holding a series of *seances*.

I attended at the offices of the *Equinox*. I climbed the interminable stairs. I was received by a gentleman robed in white and carrying a drawn sword.

The room was dark; only a dull-red light shone upon an altar. Various young men, picturesquely clad in robes of white, red, or black, stood at different points round the room. Some held swords. The incense made a haze, through which I saw a small white statue, illumined by a tiny lamp hung high on the cornice.

A brother recited "the Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram" impressively and with due earnestness. Another brother was commanded to "purify the Temple with water." This was done. Then we witnessed the "Consecration of the Temple with Fire," whereupon Crowley, habited in black, and accompanied by the brethren, led "the Mystic Circumnambulation." They walked round the altar twice or thrice in a sort of religious procession. Gradually, one by one, those of the company who were mere onlookers were beckoned into the circle. The Master of Ceremonies then ordered a brother to "bear the Cup of Libation." The brother went round the room, offering each a large golden bowl full of some pleasant-smelling drink. We drank in turn. This over, a stalwart brother

strode into the centre and proclaimed "The Twelfefold Certitude of God." Artemis was then invoked by the greater ritual of the Hexagram. More Libation. Aleister Crowley read us the "Song of Orpheus" from the *Argonauts*.

Following upon this song we drank our third Libation, and then the brothers led into the room a draped figure, masked in that curious blue tint we mentally associate with Hecate. The lady, for it was a lady, was enthroned on a seat high above Crowley himself. By this time the ceremony had grown weird and impressive, and its influence was increased when the poet recited in solemn and reverent voice Swinburne's glorious first chorus from "Atalanta," that begins "When the hounds of spring." Again a Libation; again an invocation to Artemis. After further ceremonies, Frater Omnia Vincam was commanded to dance "the dance of Syrinx and Pan in honour of our lady Artemis." A young poet, whose verse is often read, astonished me by a graceful and beautiful dance, which he continued until he fell exhausted in the middle of the room, where, by the way, he lay until the end. Crowley then made supplication to the goddess in a beautiful and unpublished poem. A dead silence ensued. After a long pause, the figure enthroned took a violin and played -- played with passion and feeling, like a master. We were thrilled to our very bones. Once again the figure took the violin, and played an *Abendlied* so beautifully, so gracefully, and with such intense feeling that in very deed most of us experienced that Ecstasy which Crowley so earnestly seeks. Then came a prolonged and intense silence, after which the Master of Ceremonies dismissed us in these words -- "By the Power in me vested, I declare the Temple closed."

So ended a really beautiful ceremony -- beautifully conceived and beautifully carried out. If there is any higher form of artistic expression than great verse and great

music I have yet to learn it. I do not pretend to understand the ritual that runs like a thread of magic through these meetings of the AA. I do not even know what the AA is. But I do know that the whole ceremony was impressive, artistic, and produced in those present such a feeling as Crowley must have had when he wrote:

So shalt thou conquer Space, and lastly climb

The walls of Time;

And by the golden path the great trod

Reach up to God!

APPENDIX H

44¹⁰⁶

ΚΕΦΑΛΗ ΜΑ

The Mass of the Phoenix

The Magician, his breast bare, stands before an altar on which are his Burin, Bell, Thurible, and two of the Cakes of Light.¹⁰⁷ In the Sign of the Enterer¹⁰⁸ he reaches West across the Altar, and cries:

Hail Ra, that goest in Thy bark
Into the Caverns of the Dark!¹⁰⁹

He gives the Sign of Silence, and takes the Bell, and Fire, in his hands.¹¹⁰

East of the Altar see me stand
With Light and Musick in mine hand!

He strikes eleven times upon the Bell 333 – 55555 – 333 and places the Fire in the Thurible.

¹⁰⁶ 44 is the chapter number of *The Mass of the Phoenix* as published in *The Book of Lies*. 44 is also a number sacred to Horus, and gematrically equates to the Hebrew word for “blood” (דָּם). It also represents 4 x 11 (the number of magick)

¹⁰⁷ The Burin is a ritual knife. The Thurible is an urn in which incense is burned.

¹⁰⁸ The sign of the enterer is made by stepping forward with the left foot, leaning forward, and shooting the hands (which have been at the temples) forward, pointing straight ahead with the index fingers.

¹⁰⁹ This is a rephrasing of the first section of Crowley’s *Liber Resh vel Helios*, the four adorations to the Sun.

The first section begins “Hail unto Thee who art Ra in Thy rising, even unto The who art Ra in Thy strength. Who travelst over the heavens in Thy bark at the uprising of the Sun...”

¹¹⁰ The sign of Silence is a Golden Dawn practice. It is made by placing the forefinger of the right hand to the closed lips.

I strike the Bell: I light the Flame:
I utter the mysterious Name.
ABRAHADABRA

He strikes eleven times upon the Bell.
Now I begin to pray: Thou Child,
Holy Thy name and undefiled!
Thy reign is come: Thy will is done.
Here is the Bread; here is the Blood.¹¹¹
Bring me through midnight to the Sun!
Save me from Evil and from Good!
That Thy one crown of all the Ten¹¹²
Ever now and here be mine. AMEN

He puts the first Cake on the Fire of the Thurible.

I burn the Incense-cake, proclaim
These adorations of Thy name.

He makes them as in Liber Legis, and strikes again Eleven times upon the Bell. With the Burin he then makes upon his breast the proper sign.¹¹³

Behold this bleeding breast of mine
Gashed with the sacramental sign!

He puts the second cake to the wound.
I stanch the blood; the wafer soaks
It up, and the high priest invokes!

He eats the second Cake.

This Bread I eat. This Oath I swear
As I enflame myself with prayer:
“There is no grace: there is no guilt:
This is the Law: DO WHAT THOU WILT!”

He strikes Eleven times upon the Bell, and cries ABRAHADABRA¹¹⁴.

¹¹¹ The “Child” referred to is Horus, representative of the new Aeon of which Crowley was the supposed prophet.

¹¹² A reference to the ten sepheroth of the Tree of Life

¹¹³ *Liber Legis, The Book of the Law*, instructs the cakes to be made of meal, honey and red wine (3:23).

¹¹⁴ The logic behind striking the bell eleven times is discussed in the Introduction, page 25.

I entered in with woe; with mirth
I now go forth, and with thanksgiving,
To do my pleasure on the earth
Among the legions of the living.

He goeth forth.

APPENDIX I

THE LESSER AND GREATER RITUALS OF THE HEXEGRAM

The Lesser Ritual of the Hexagram

1. Stand upright, feet together, left arm at side, right arm across body, holding the wand or other weapon upright in the median line.

2. Face East and say:

I. N. R. I

Yod, Nun, Resh, Yod.

Virgo, Isis, Mighty Mother.

Scorpio, Apophis, Destroyer.

Sol, Osiris, Slain and Risen.

Isis, Apophis, Osiris. IAO.

3. Extend the arms in the form of a cross and say, “The sign of Osiris Slain” (see Figure 6).

4. Raise the right arm to point upward, keeping the elbow square, and lower the left arm to point downward, keeping the elbow square, while turning the head over the left shoulder and looking down so that the eyes follow the left forearm, and say: “The sign of the Mourning of Isis” (see Figure 8).

5. Raise the arms at an angle of sixty degrees to each other above the head, which is thrown back, and say, “The sign of Typhon and Apophis” (see Figure 9).

6. Cross the arms on the breast, bow the head, and say, “The sign of Osiris Risen” (see Figure 10).

7. Extend the arms again, and then cross them again saying, “L. V. X., Lux, the Light of the Cross.”

8. With the magical weapon trace the Hexagram of Fire in the East, saying “Ararita¹¹⁵.” This Hexagram is made of two equilateral triangles, both pointing up, and the top of the second triangle positioned in the center of the first triangle (Figure 38):

¹¹⁵ “Ararita” = **אראריקה**; The initials of the words of a sentence which translates: “One is His Beginning; One is His Individuality; His Permutation is One

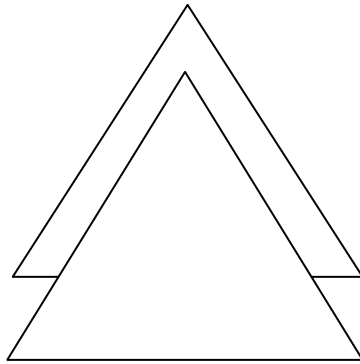


Figure 38: The Hexagram of Fire

9. Trace the Hexagram of Earth in the South, saying “Ararita.” This Hexagram has the apex of the lower triangle pointing down (see Figure 39).

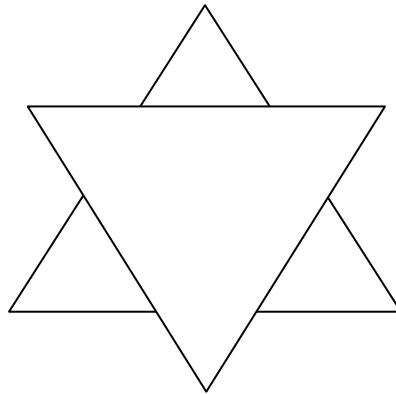


Figure 39: The Hexagram of Earth

10. Trace the Hexagram of Air in the West, saying “Ararita.” This Hexagram is like that of Earth, but the bases of the triangles coincide, forming a diamond (see Figure 40).

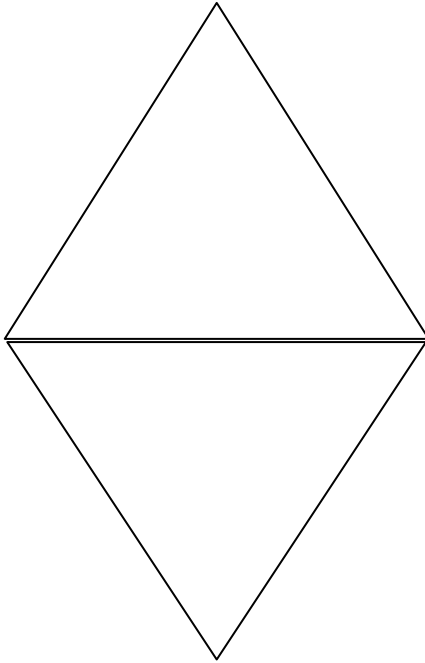


Figure 40: The Hexagram of Air

11. Trace the Hexagram of Water in the North, saying “Ararita.” This Hexagram has the lower triangle placed above the upper, so that their apices coincide (see Figure 41)

12. Repeat steps 1 – 7.

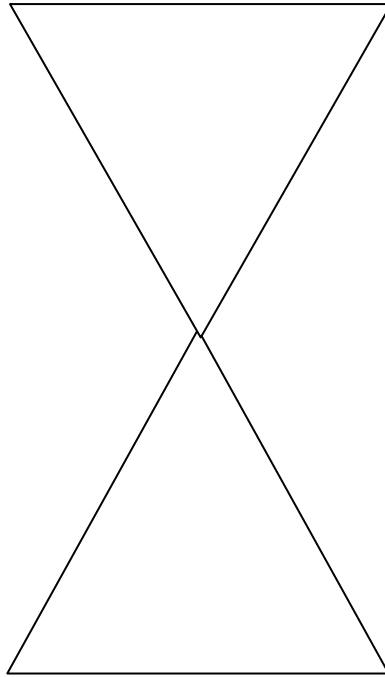


Figure 41: The Hexagram of Water

The Greater Ritual of the Hexagram

This is a ritual employed to invoke or banish planets or zodiacal signs. The Hexagram of Earth alone is used. Begin drawing the Hexagram from the point which is attributed to the planet with which you are dealing (see Crowley, 1979: 18). The planet's astrological sigil is then traced in the center of the Hexagram (see Figure 41). The following is taken from *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1929:386-389).

To banish reverse the Hexagram.

In all cases use a conjuration first with Ararita, and next with the name of the God corresponding to the planet or sign you are dealing with.

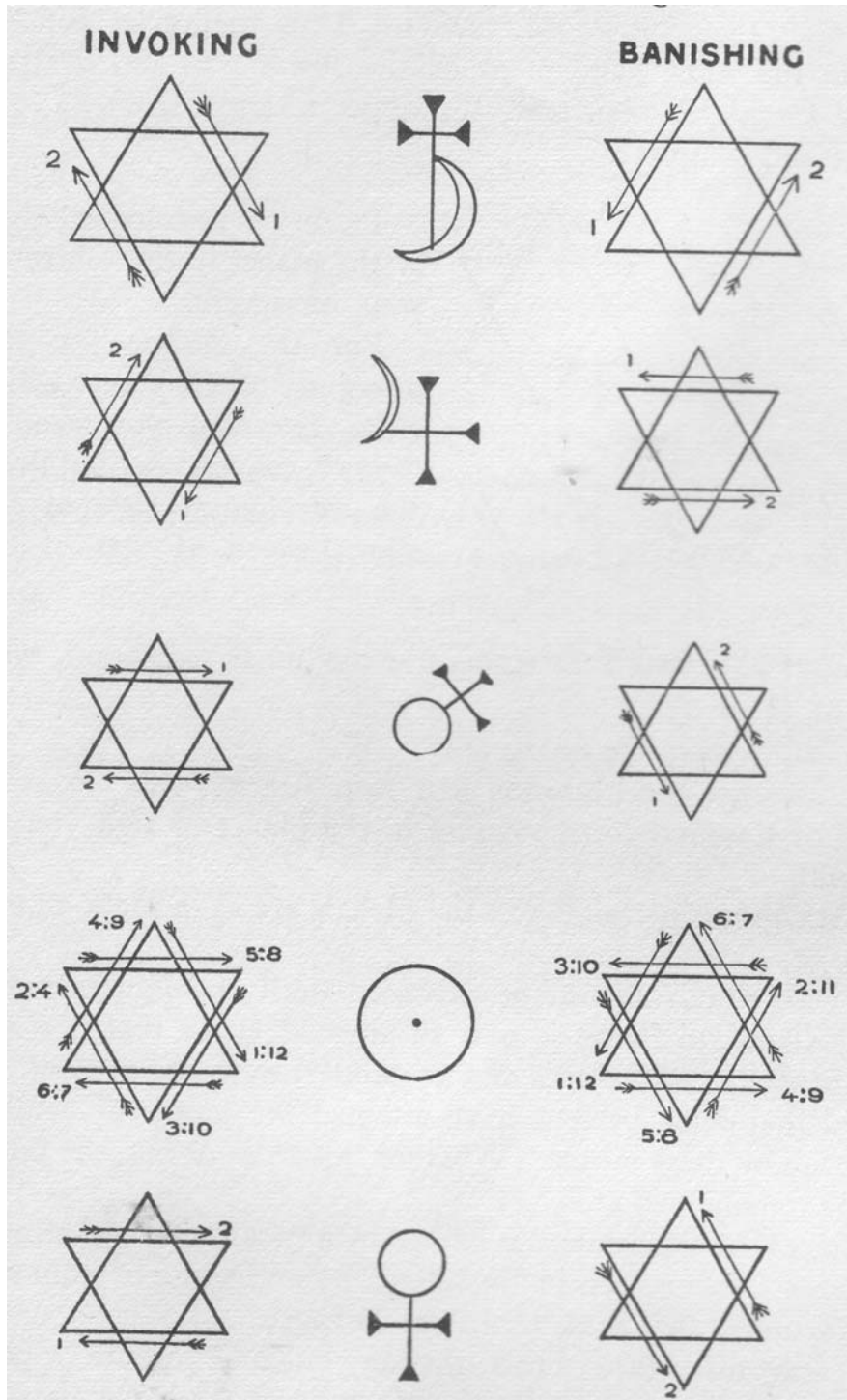


Figure 42: Hexagram diagrams and planetary sigils

1. These rituals should be practiced until the figures drawn appear in flame, in flame so near to physical flame that it would perhaps be visible to the eyes of a bystander, were one present. It is alleged that some persons have attained the power of actually kindling fire by these means. Whether this be so or not, the power is not one to be aimed at.

2. Success in “banishing” is known by a “feeling of cleanliness” in the atmosphere; success in “invoking” by a “feeling of holiness.” It is unfortunate that these terms are so vague.

But at least make sure of this: that any imaginary figure or being shall instantly obey the will of the student, when he uses the appropriate figure. In obstinate cases, the form of the appropriate God may be assumed.

3. The banishing rituals should be used at the commencement of any ceremony whatever. Next, the student should use a general invocation, such as the “Preliminary Invocation” in the *Goetia*, as well as a special invocation to suit the nature of the working.

4. Success in these verbal invocations is so subtle a matter, and its grades so delicately shaded, that it must be left to the good sense of the student to decide whether or not he should be satisfied with his result.

V.

1. Let the student be at rest in one of his prescribed positions, having bathed and robed with the proper decorum. Let the Place of Working be free from all disturbance, and let the preliminary purifications, banishings and invocations be duly accomplished, and, lastly, let the incense be kindled.

2. Let him imagine his own figure (preferably robed in the proper magical garments and armed with the proper magical weapons) as enveloping his physical body, or standing near to and in front of him.

3. Let him then transfer the seat of his consciousness to that imagined figure; so that it may seem to him that he is seeing with its eyes, and hearing with its ears.

This will usually be the great difficulty of the operation.

4. Let him then cause that imagined figure to rise in the air to a great height above the earth.

5. Let him then stop and look about him. (It is sometimes difficult to open the eyes).

6. Probably he will see figures approaching him, or become conscious of a landscape.

Let him speak to such figures, and insist upon being answered, using the proper pentagrams and signs, as previously taught.

7. Let him travel about at will, either with or without guidance from such figure or figures.

8. Let him further employ such special invocations as will cause to appear the particular places he may wish to visit.

9. Let him beware of the thousand subtle attacks and deceptions that he will experience, carefully testing the truth of all with whom he speaks.

Thus a hostile being may appear clothed with glory; the appropriate pentagram will in such a case cause him to shrivel or decay.

10. Practice will make the student infinitely wary in these matters.

11. It is usually quite easy to return to the body, but should any difficulty arise, practice (again) will make the imagination fertile. For example, one may create in thought a chariot of fire with white horses, and command the charioteer to drive earthwards.

It might be dangerous to go too far, or stay too long; for fatigue must be avoided.

The danger spoken of is that of fainting, or of obsession, or of loss of memory or other mental faculty.

12. Finally, let the student cause his imagined body in which he supposes himself to have been traveling to coincide with the physical, tightening his muscles, drawing in his breath, and putting his forefinger to his lips. Then let him “awake” by a well-defined act of will, and soberly and accurately record his experiences.

APPENDIX J

THE *RITES* TODAY: A BRIEF HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY PRODUCTIONS OF THE *RITES OF ELEUSIS*

The Revival of the *Rites of Eleusis* in California

Since investigating the beginnings of Thelema Lodge's series of revivals of Crowley's *Rites of Eleusis* reveals only the most scant accounts of the first few cycles, much of the following material was culled from the website of Thelema Lodge. That resource, together with conversations I had with several OTO members in the 1990s, serves as the primary source of information. At some point during the first year of Thelema Lodge's existence, a number of magicians and performers within the group gathered in El Sobrante, California to investigate the dramatic possibilities of the scripts. There may have been an undocumented reading or walk-through of the cycle in 1978 with little or no audience, organized by Soror Andromeda, later known as the Lady Chandria, in her home. The following summer a group of Thelemites, led by Chandria, presented an astrologically timed and fully costumed performance. This group was later chartered as a camp of the OTO in Contra Costa County. It was this series of the seven planetary Rites, given in El Sobrante at five-day intervals during the late summer of

1979, which seems to be the first cycle about which anyone has recorded particular impressions.

The *Rites* were offered again the following year, once more in El Sobrante, by the group now chartered to Chandria under the name Nuit Camp. This group was soon upgraded by the OTO to Nuit-Urania Chapter,¹¹⁶ and declared they would have as their primary area of interest the development of dramatic practice as it applied to the performance of ritual. A tradition which developed expectation of *Rites* productions was forged among Thelemites in the San Francisco area, and it was determined to repeat the cycle for seven consecutive years. Chandria wrote in a Nuit-Urania report on the 1981 cycle: "We have just finished our fourth series of the *Rites of Eleusis*." This time the performances had been given at the Grand Lodge temple on San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley, and a number of photographs were taken during the dress rehearsals, which Grady McMurtry showed as illustrations for a lecture on dramatic ritual delivered to other OTO members in New York City later that year. A few of these photographs now hang in the Lodge kitchen, showing elaborate costumes and backdrops emblematic of the planetary god-forms.

The fifth cycle in late 1982 was more ambitious, and was expanded to include participation from other OTO groups within California. Just after the final production of the *Rite of Luna* that year, Chandria wrote that "the energy which they have generated is amazing. We consider them to be an experiment in Thaumaturgy, and the end result, when we finally complete the series for the seventh time, will be a surprise to all of us"

¹¹⁶ "Chapter" was the old name for what today is called an Oasis. The OTO structure consists of Lodges, which are the primary groupings, Camps, which are smaller than lodges but are still authorized to perform basic initiations, and Oases, which are smaller than Camps and have no initiatory authority.

(<http://www.nuit.org/thelema/eleusis/>). In this fifth cycle, the Grand Master, Caliph Hymenaeus Alpha, took the leading role in the opening *Rite of Saturn*, which was performed at the Thelema Lodge Emeryville temple. Heru-Ra-Ha Lodge in Costa Mesa hosted the *Rite of Jupiter*. Chandria and other Grand Lodge members drove down to visit, and took in Disneyland with the Caliph afterwards. Additional *Rites* that year were held in El Sobrante, at the Gumption Theater in San Francisco, and at New Horizons in Pittsburg, California.

The following summer's sixth cycle was divided mostly between Grand Lodge's Emeryville Temple and the Nuit-Urania Chapter, but also included the first *Rite* given in Berkeley at what became Sirius Oasis, where many of the *Rites* were subsequently performed for the next several years.

But the projected seventh cycle failed to materialize in 1984. The *Rites* were held in Southern California that year, according to a different schedule, but Nuit-Urania disappeared from the roster of OTO official bodies when Chandria's health failed in the spring, forcing her to retire from participation in OTO activities. At the same time, for a variety of reasons, other leading players left the lodge and relocated around the country. Grady McMurtry's own failing health became critical, and he died the following summer.

After a year's hiatus, and shortly after McMurtry's passing, a new cycle of the *Rites* was mounted, performed entirely at the New Horizons complex in Pittsburg, California. Chandria portrayed Luna in this 1985 series, during a temporary remission of her illness, accomplishing her personal goal of producing all seven plays of the cycle. This production also seems to have been her final participation in the ongoing enterprise she had instigated. Due to the previous year's hiatus no one seemed to realize that the

goal of seven productions had been achieved, and interest and participation within the OTO community had grown so much since the first cycle, that planning began immediately for the productions for the following year.

During the autumn of 1986 an eighth cycle was given in various San Francisco locations, including a *Rite of Saturn* performance in the Oakland Humanist Hall, the *Rite of Sol* at the Sirius Oasis, and the *Rite of Venus* at the old Ankh-f-n-Khonsu Lodge in Berkeley. The production schedule for 1986 was as follows:

Rite of Saturn – October 18
Rite of Jupiter – October 23
Rite of Mars – October 28
Rite of Sol – November 2
Rite of Venus – November 7
Rite of Mercury – November 12
Rite of Luna – November 17

The San Francisco Bay area productions were mounted through the formation of different troupes for each of the seven Rites. The rules and arrangements varied with each troupe, since they were viewed as autonomous producing bodies. Soror Janestra led the *Rite of Mercury* and began with an organizational meeting on August 13. Rehearsals were held on August 20 and 27, and continued on a weekly basis until the performance date of November 12.

Cycles nine through thirteen continued more or less in the same pattern every year between 1987 and 1991, with one of the dates in each sequence usually organized as a camping trip. Shortly before Chandria's death she was present at Battery Alexander in the Marin Headlands for one of these, a large Lammas camp-out which included a

production of the Rite of Venus.¹¹⁷ Chandria passed away on March 30, 1988 after enduring cancer for several years.

The next few cycles were held at Thelema Lodge's Horus Temple location on 63rd Street in Berkeley. Information for rehearsals was posted in their website:

<http://www.nuit.org/thelema/showpage.cgi?dir=theHex&page=home>:

SATURN practices 9/6, 9/20(runthru), 9/27(costume check), 10/4 & 5(stage and set), 10/11(dress rehearsal), 10/13(full dress)

JUPITER rehearses at Merkabah 9/13, 9/28, 10/15(dress rehearsal), 10/17(full dress)

MARS practices 9/12(after Lodgemeet), 9/26 (8 pm) and needs an army or two

SOL rehearses at 10AM at the Lodge: 9/10, 9/24, 10/8, 10/15, 10/22 - Full Dress rehearsal 10/27

VENUS meets 9/8 at 7 pm at the Lodge; rehearsals 2 pm 9/16, 9/24, 10/1, 10/8, 10/21, 10/28; Full Dress 11/1 time TBA

MERCURY invites you to call him if you wish to be a Probationer

LUNA will start announced practices again after the Equinox

(a Pronunciation/Spelling Note:

Eleusis = "Ee-loo-sis"

Eleusinian = "El-you-sin-ee-an"

O friendly English-Language advisers, I was right the first time!)

When lodge leadership briefly failed in 1990, in the wake of a Berkeley police raid against local members, the next several productions of the *Rites* were shifted to a member's house on Stannage Street.¹¹⁸ Several cycles were held very late in the year at this time, and when the 1991 *Rites* spilled over into 1992, on the occasion of a New Year's Eve *Rite of Mars* in a downtown Oakland bar, the following year (1992) was skipped to bring the *Rites* back to a summer-time schedule (see Figure 43).

¹¹⁷ Lammas is also known as Lughnassadh. The name means "festival of Lugh," the Celtic god of Light. It is also a harvest festival and is usually celebrated on July 31 or August 1.

¹¹⁸ The raid was based on suspected drug use, but the membership felt it was motivated by the "fringe" aspect of the membership. The police action resulted in no legal charges being filed against the members.

Although Crowley produced the original *Rites* on a series of Wednesday evenings, until 1991 the tradition at Thelema Lodge had been for the cycle to progress from full moon on the day of the *Rite of Saturn* to full moon on the day of the *Rite of Luna*. In 1991 they added two additional rites, the *Rite of Uranus*, which preceded the *Rite of Saturn*, and the *Rite of Earth*, to ground and close the entire working following the *Rite of Luna*. Thus, after the preliminary *Rite of Uranus* on December 18, the main cycle began with the *Rite of Saturn* at the full moon on the eve of the Winter Solstice, Saturday, December 21. The *Rites* were then given at five-day intervals, each on the day of its god-form :

- Rite of Uranus* - an experimental prelude to the cycle: Wednesday, December 18
- Rite of Saturn* - Saturday evening, December 21, the eve of the Winter Solstice
- Rite of Jupiter* - Thursday evening, December 26
- Rite of Mars* - Tuesday evening, December 31
- Rite of Sol* - Sunday afternoon, January 5, 1992
- Rite of Venus* - Friday evening, January 10
- Rite of Mercury* - Wednesday evening, January 15
- Rite of Luna* - Monday evening, January 20
- Rite of Earth* - Saturday afternoon, January 25

A number of the 1991 *Rites* were held in private performance spaces rented by the individual production crews for the evening. The *Rite of Jupiter* was hosted by Nefertiti Sanctuary in San Francisco, the *Rite of Luna* and *Rite of Earth* were outdoor events held in public camping facilities. The *Rite of Luna* was preceded by pre-ritual activities beginning at sunset, followed by the traditional rite beginning at 9:00 pm. Advertising circulars requested that attendees come prepared to participate, assist with food and drink, and to make a donation to help defray the costs of the productions.

As was mentioned, productions were not mounted in 1992, to bring the dates of performances back into synchronization. As a result of this, beginning with the fourteenth cycle in 1993, a scheduling innovation was adopted at the suggestion of Jim

RITE OF SOL
 ☉
 SUNDAY
 5 January
 2:22

RITE OF MARS
 ♂
 TUESDAY
 31 December
 8:00

RITE OF VENUS
 ♀
 FRIDAY
 10 January
 8:00

RITE OF JUPITER
 ♃
 THURSDAY
 26 December
 8:00

RITE OF MERCURY
 ☿
 WEDNESDAY
 15 January
 2:00

RITE OF SATURN
 ♄
 SATURDAY
 21 December
 8:00

RITE OF LUNA
 ☾
 MONDAY
 20 January
 9:00

RITE OF URANUS
 ♅
 WEDNESDAY
 13 December
 8:00

RITE OF EARTH
 ☷
 SATURDAY
 25 January
 2:00

ALEISTER CROWLEY'S LIBER DCCCL
The Rites of Eleusis
 FOURTEENTH ANNUAL CELEBRATION - THELEMA LODGE, O.T.O.

Figure 43: Poster for Thelema Lodge's 1991-2 productions

Graeb, whereby the Rites would be produced at twelve-day intervals instead of the old five-day system, drawing the sequence out to two and a half months rather than compressing it into a single lunar cycle. The original structure began with a production of the *Rite of Saturn* during a full moon on a Saturday evening, and ended with a production of the *Rite of Luna* on the following full moon. The next adjustment was opening the *Rites* in the dark of the moon for the *Rite of Saturn* and concluding them with the *Rite of Luna* at the full moon.

Productions in the 1990s included several *Rites* in the garden of Grace's Temple of Astrology in Berkeley. Grace was an older OTO member who specialized in astrological readings. Other *Rites* were performed at Sirius Oasis, Oz House, Rosslyn Camp, and Thelema Lodge. Several *Rites of Luna* were presented at Battery Alexander, as well as in the Blue Lodge Room of the Scottish Rite Temple in Oakland, and San Francisco venues such as a *Rite of Luna* at the John Wickets Exotic Museum.

Continuing with the twelve day interval system, *The Rites of Eleusis* were presented once again in 1995 by members of the local Thelemic community. Most of these productions were not specifically Thelema Lodge events, although the lodge community was extensively involved. The *Rites* were independent productions, each separately organized by the "god-forms" who played the central roles.

At 2:00 pm Sunday afternoon, October 1, 1995, *the Rite of Sol* was presented at the Cat's Alley Club in San Francisco, 1 190 Folsom Street at 8th Street, with a \$1 donation requested for admission to defray production costs. This ritual featured a completely re-written script with the subtitle *Christ as Apollo*, and included music by Larry Thrasher of *Psychic TV*, a Crowley-influenced performance group, and projections

by IAO Core. The subtitle of this re-written rite is an obvious next-step, since Apollo and Christ are both seen as variations of the Sun-god archetype. The rites of *Saturn*, *Jupiter*, and *Mars* also featured live music. This cycle of the *Rites of Eleusis* concluded with the *Rite of Luna* at the full moon on Monday evening, November 6, at 8:00 pm, and was presented as a multi-media masque honoring the wedding of Pan and Artemis. The new location for this *Rite* was the John Wicketts Exotic Museum at 2671 Sutter Street in San Francisco. This private conservatory housed Tantric and religious artifacts, tapestries, examples of taxidermy, and statuary representing diverse eras and cultures. A \$6 minimum suggested donation for admission was announced, citing the necessity of defraying the cost of engaging the performance space.

In 1996, and for several years after, several members of Thelema Lodge began adapting the scripts to reflect the influences of other religious paradigms, and to demonstrate how the rites were truly universal in their philosophical applicability. One member, Leigh Ann, adapted *Luna* (1996), *Mercury* (1997), *Venus* (1998), *Sol* (1999), *Mars* (2000), and *Jupiter* (2001). 2001 was especially creative. In addition to Leigh Ann's *Jupiter*, Eric authored *Mercury*, Kallah rewrote *Venus*, and Samuel rewrote *Mars*.

The 1998, *Rites* were presented with the concept of uniting the productions as a whole by having each rite be represented by a specific food which had some relevance to that rite. Thus, for the *Rite of Saturn*, which was held on Saturday, July 25 at 8:00 pm at Grace's Temple of Astrology, and the food of the evening was stewed goat. For the *Rite of Jupiter* at Sirius Oasis on August 6, a giant salmon was served. During the *Rite of Mars* on August 18 the audience was given a highly spiced chile con carne. At the *Rite of Sol* on Sunday, August 30 a barbecue was held following the rite. The barbecue was

symbolic of a crucifixion, representing Jesus as an aspect of Apollo. Oysters and other shellfish were served at the *Rite of Venus* held at Sirius Oasis on Friday, September 11, and fish was the theme again for the *Rite of Mercury* on Wednesday, September 23. *The Rite of Luna* was held on Monday, October 5 at Sirius Oasis, and the *Rite of Earth* on Saturday afternoon, October 17 at L.V.X. Lodge, North Hollywood, closed the cycle. In 2000 *The Rite of Saturn* was held in Grace's garden at her home, as was *The Rite of Jupiter*. *The Rite of Mars* was staged at the Julia Morgan Theatre in Berkeley, and the script was reworked incorporating the martyrdom of the Knights Templar. At the climax, the ashes of the executed knights changed to roses, providing an impressive stage effect. *The Rite of Sol* was held outdoors at Sirius Oasis in the afternoon, to take advantage of the setting sun. This *Rite* was costumed as the myth of Isis and Osiris, reflecting the Sun-god aspects of those deities. *The Rite of Venus* was also at Sirius Oasis, and *The Rite of Mercury* was held at the Arkadia ritual space in Richmond. *The Rite of Luna* was performed at the Japanese tasting room of the Takara Sake factory. This *Rite* was reinterpreted as a troupe of Buddhist monks searching out the secrets of the goddess Tara. Nine rounds of sake were served as libation by the staff of the winery, and "the processions of orange-robed probationers chanting through the hall to the shockingly beautiful shrine of the goddess marks another high point for Eleusis" (<http://www.billheidrick.com/tlc2000/tlc0900.htm#lunm>).

For the 2001 productions, *The Rite of Saturn* was held outdoors at Cheth House on July 21 at 8:00 pm. It was directed by Kat Sanborn. *The Rite of Jupiter* was presented on Thursday evening, August 2, at Sequoia Lodge, 2666 Mountain Boulevard, in the Oakland hills. Attendees were requested to arrive at 7:30 so as to be in place for the 8:00

pm curtain time. No latecomers were allowed entrance. The *Rite* was interpreted as a presentation of the *Banquet of Trimalchio* from the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter. It was presented with “a complete feast,” which required advance reservations. *The Rite of Mars* was celebrated on Tuesday, August 14 at 8:00 pm at Metaversal Lightcraft. Metaversal Lightcraft, which is located in Berkeley at 1708 University Avenue, is a studio space for yoga, dance, qabalah, astrology, and Thelemic culture. It is open for classes and events throughout the week, and describes itself on one of its program fliers as "the center for the cultivation of the post-apocalyptic renaissance." Mars was adapted into the cultural patterns of ancient Rome, with inspiration taken from the life of Emperor Flavius Claudius Julianus (known in Christian history as "Julian the Apostate"), one of the last pagan rulers of the western world. *The Rite of Sol* was held at 2:00 pm on August 26 at Metaversal Lightcraft. *The Rite of Venus* began at 8:00 pm on Friday evening September 7, at Metaversal Lightcraft. *The Rite of Mercury* was also held at Metaversal Lightcraft, at 7:00 pm on Wednesday evening, September 19, and *The Rite of Luna* closed the twenty-second cycle on Monday evening October 1, during the full moon.

The 2002 productions began with *The Rite of Saturn*, which was held at 8:00 pm on Saturday, August 10, as a New Orleans funerary carnival. It was staged in the Labyrinth at Market and 20th Streets in Oakland. *The Rite of Jupiter* was performed on Thursday, August 22, at 8:00 pm at Sirius Encampment. *The Rite of Mars* was held on Tuesday evening, September 3. The performance began at 8:00 pm, and was held at Sequoia Lodge, 2666 Mountain Boulevard in the Oakland hills. This cycle's military rite was modeled upon the conflict in the War of the Roses, specifically the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485, where Richard III was killed, and Henry VII assumed the

English throne. Red and black were the thematic colors for the evening, with Richard leading the black army, opposed successfully by Henry's reds. *The Rite of Sol* was held at noon on Sunday, September 15, in north Berkeley, at Sirius Encampment. Performed as a hieratic ceremony, this ritual included a feast open to all attendees. *The Rite of Venus* at Sequoia Lodge, 2666 Mountain Boulevard in the Oakland hills, began at 8:00 pm on Friday evening September 27. *The Rite of Mercury* took the form of a dance rave, with the dramatic portion of the ritual opening the evening at 8:00 pm, and lasting only half an hour or so. This was followed by a night of free-moving, ecstatic dance-worship. *The Rite of Luna*, held at 8:00 pm at Cafe de la Paz, 1600 Shattuck Avenue at Cedar Street in Berkeley, on Monday evening October 21, brought the twenty-third *Rites* cycle to a close. The rite reflected the crisis occurring at that time by being adapted to reflect the controversy about bringing a nation into the hazards of foreign war after a shocking sneak attack.

Scarlet Woman Lodge – Austin, Texas

In addition to the annual productions of the *Rites* sponsored by various OTO lodges in California, 1995 was the beginning of a seven year cycle of productions staged by a group calling themselves the Willful Players. The name is a pun, referring to both the headstrong, individualistic attitude of its members, and also a reference to the importance of the concept of Will in Crowley's philosophy¹¹⁹. This was a subgroup of the Scarlet Woman Lodge of the OTO in Austin Texas. For the first series of *Rites*, the Austin group's production methodology followed the model of the Thelema Lodge system in several ways. The Scarlet Woman Lodge concept included staging one of the

¹¹⁹ e. g. "Love is the Law; Love under Will," (*The Book of the Law*, 1:57).

seven sequential plays every five days, and thereby moving through an entire cycle of planetary energies in a single month. They also adopted the Thelema Lodge practice of dividing the production responsibilities among a number of different members, so that no one individual carried the weight of producing seven shows. This division of responsibility also reduced the risk of any single individual becoming too egotistical during their involvement with the productions.

1997 Productions:

Rite of Saturn: Saturday, October 25; directed by Oalimm and Paradoxox Alpha

Rite of Jupiter: Thursday, October 30; directed by Xephyr

Rite of Mars: Tuesday, November 4; directed by P. Perilous and Nicholas

Rite of Sol: Sunday, November 9; directed by Lillith

Rite of Venus: Friday, November 14; directed by Brianna Ashtara

Rite of Mercury: Wednesday, November 19; directed by N. V. C. P.

Rite of Luna: Monday, November 24; directed by Khu

In 1999, the *Rites* were held at the Threshold Theatre at the OffCenter Theatre complex located at 2211A Hidalgo Street, Austin, Texas. Tickets were \$7 at the door and were also available from several business locations such as Desert Books at 1904 Guadalupe, and the High Time Tea Bar & Brain Gym. Just as with the original London productions, season passes good for seven admissions to any of the Rites could also be obtained.

On Saturday, October 23, 2000, *The Rite of Saturn* was presented in a rewritten style reminiscent of the ancient Greek tragic form incorporating the use of a chorus and character masks. The Rite was directed by Bel Almaquah and Bon V. Davis. The form

was described in advertising as “exotic yet familiar.” Performers emerged from the chorus to assume the roles of Mater Coeli and the Magister Templi. The chorus as a whole assumed the role of the Furies. The script was adapted to include lines from *The Eumenidies*, *Agamemnon*, *Oedipus*, *Electra*, and *The Libation Bearers*. At the conclusion of the cycle, following the Rite of Luna, a Rites cast party and drumming was held. Attendees were invited to bring their own drums and noisemakers, and to stay for the dancing and celebration after the performance. It was also announced that an altar would be set up at the front door for charging items with Lunar energy and for offerings to the Goddess.

The 2001 productions, presented by the Willful Players of Scarlet Woman Lodge, were adaptations and updatings of the original scripts. The tickets were seven dollars per performance, or forty dollars for the entire series. The advertising included information on their flyer that it was their “purpose to create the space and opportunity for our audience to expand their consciousness through participation in our Temple of Ritual Theatre.” The Rites were held in a performance space at 10500-A Newmont Road in Austin. The first of the cycle, the *Rite of Saturn*, was held on Saturday, November 3. It was directed by Kevin Kinkade and set in a house serving as an artists’ commune at the edge of an industrialized city. This was followed by the *Rite of Jupiter*, directed by Content, on Thursday, November 8, and *The Rite of Mars* directed by Dionysos on Tuesday, November 13. *The Rite of Mars* had an Egyptian motif, with Heru-Tesher replacing the role of Mars, and was constructed as a chamber opera with original music. *The Rite of Sol* was directed by Tzaddi and performed on Sunday, November 18. It was presented as a shamanic ritual which incorporated Native American methodology with

the qabalistic Tree of Life, following the journey of a small tribe from the center of the Tree of Life to a higher level of manifestation. *The Rite of Venus*, subtitled "Venus Conqueror," was directed by Frater Lux Canon. It was performed on Friday, November 23rd, and set in ancient Greece. The ritual portrayed the opposition Venus encounters from Pallas Athena and her cadre of virginal Muses. *The Rite of Mercury*, directed by Ash and performed on Wednesday, November 28, was set in a medieval alchemist's tower. *The Rite of Luna* was directed by Trinity Monday, and performed on December 3. It addressed questions regarding the power of the subconscious, destiny, and the necessity of the mind and the heart working in harmony.

During the last year of the Scarlet Woman Lodge productions the group posted on their website some of the coincidences they noticed during the course of the Rites that year:

Just a few of some of the strangely magical synchronicities that have occurred during the Rites follow: the temple carpet was burned by a kamikazi charcoal briquet during a Mars rehearsal, an unhinged door fell over and knocked a plaque of the sun off of a wall during Sol, women have become pregnant right after Jupiter, members have had encounters with the law right after Mars, the temple owners secured a contract to host a lucrative S&M party at the temple during Saturn. (n.b. restriction and bondage are very Saturnian), and just this year a lunatic from another Thelemic organization started harassing me over the internet right after Luna (<http://www.scarletwoman.org/>).

In Autumn, 2002 the Scarlet Woman Lodge ended their cycle of the *Rites of Eleusis* and moved into their next theatrical phase: *Beyond Eleusis: The Rites of Initiation*, in which they began developing more original pieces which grew out of the experiences of the original *Rites*. These plays were described as "three original plays about personal transformation," and were each performed for just one weekend¹²⁰. The

¹²⁰ See their website: (http://www.scarletwoman.org/projects/frame_projects.html)

series opened on November 15 with *The Pharmakon*. This was followed by *The Apocryphonium* on November 22 and 23, and *Phases* on November 29 and 30.

On Monday, January 6, 2003, the Scarlet Woman Lodge presented the first act of a reader's theater version of Crowley's *The World's Tragedy*. This is planned to be a monthly ongoing presentation/discussion of this work.

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