Adepts of Modernism

Magical Magazine Culture, 1887-1922

by

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Abstract

This tome is both a "solar" dissertation and a "lunar" grimoire that performs its own argument. *Adepts of Modernism* argues that the infamous "little magazines" of modernism conjured their own enlightened, reading "counter-publics" by exploiting the same strategies and tactics of initiation and exclusion mobilized in occult circles. Figures from the literary and occult spheres from the *Fin de Siècle* and through the Great War converge in a *network of adeptship*. The magazines in this network disseminate knowledge from the occult "wisdom tradition" and share a common *adept attitude* that sets them apart from the public and the exoteric, mainstream media they consume.

Chapter 1 analyzes *The Little Review* and shows how Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap's editorial posture of *insouciance* reflects their initial commitment to both anarchism and esotericism, culminating in a thwarted *mystical anarchism*. A comparison of memoirs by Huntly Carter and Algernon Blackwood reveals how, for this magazine, poetry and spirituality go hand in hand.

Chapter 2 focuses on co-editors of *The Egoist*, Dora Marsden and Harriet Shaw Weaver, along with Leonard A. Compton-Rickett, Richard Aldington, H. D., and Ezra Pound. These figures have a complex, ambivalent relationship with mysticism, but their common investment in individualism and an elitist, exclusive, classical modernism holds them together. Olivia Shakespear's translation of the occult story, *Le Comte de Gabalis*, embodies these investments.

Chapter 3 considers the distinct "presentative" style of *The New Age* magazine in relation to editor A. R. Orage's *mystical socialism*. A series of articles by Florence Farr provides a feminist corrective to Orage's masculinist "brilliant common sense." This idiosyncratic, "Luciferian" socialism appeals to an audience of modernists, Fabians, and occultists alike, and its threads lead back to the great French magus, Eliphas Lévi.

Chapter 4 examines Aleister Crowley's *Equinox* in the context of modernist periodical culture. *The Equinox* is most committed to occult subjects and offers readers a course of study and a

method of self-initiation. Esoteric literature, in the form of a magical diary and a short story, "The Dream Circean," complements Crowley's formal program of initiation and blurs the boundaries between objective and subjective 'reality.'

Chapter 5 shows how *Lucifer* magazine, edited by H. P. Blavatsky and Mabel Collins, utilizes the same techniques of occult initiation replicated in the modernist little magazines that followed, thus revealing a continuity of esoteric editorial practice from the *Fin de Siècle* through the Great War. Blavatsky's controversial "Luciferian" editorials and Collins's serialized esoteric novella, "The Blossom and the Fruit," exemplify the adept attitude that inspired subsequent generations of adept writers.

Adepts of Modernism concludes with a personal reflection on occult pedagogy before outlining the legacy of these magical magazines and gesturing towards some new directions for future research.

Preface

This tome is the culmination of a lifelong investigation into the relationship between art and magic. Having grown up on TV shows and films such as *Ghostbusters*, *The X-Files*, *Millennium*, *The Outer Limits*, *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*, *X-Men*, and *Harry Potter*, I was always predisposed to the weirdness of the paranormal, the supernatural, and the magical. Before I became an academic, I was a public relations consultant and a professional vocalist. I have been singing for most of my life, but it was not until the age of sixteen that I joined my first rock band with my brother and his friends. On that journey of ten years, I grew increasingly aware of the power of performance; a charismatic vocalist can suggest, even *command*, and a receptive audience will obey—or at least play along. When I discovered that some of my favorite bands had also recognized this power and deliberately sculpted it into sonic magical rituals, the conscious cultivation of musical and lyrical force into magic became the primary aim of my own creative practice. Under the esoteric tutelage of Tool, Mudvayne, Björk, Alice Cooper, Marilyn Manson, The Mars Volta, Coil, and Skinny Puppy, I sharpened my intuitive understanding of magical gesture and vocalization.

After my attempt at a full-time musical career had run its course, I returned to Thompson Rivers University in 2009 to complete the last two years of my Bachelor of Arts. I knew I wanted to finish a degree majoring in English, but I did not know what I would do afterward. That all changed after taking "British Supernatural Literature" with Dr. George Johnson, where I was exposed to the esoteric poetry of William Butler Yeats. It dawned on me that there were actual historical magicians, and that they, too, understood that paintings, songs, and poems could become magical rituals. I committed myself to understanding theoretically and intellectually what I had always known intuitively.

Studying the literary magic of Yeats would guide me to a deeper understanding of my own craft, making me a more powerful vocalist, writer, and performer. The more I learned about Yeats,

the Rosicrucians, the Society for Psychical Research, the Theosophical Society, and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn that fall term of 2009, the more I felt somehow at home in the vortex of the Great War, among the writers living through it, speaking from it. My encounter with Imperator Yeats and the other High Modernists would push me into MA and PhD programs to formally study magic and literature; I would write a capstone essay on Yeats's *A Vision* to qualify for my Master of Arts at Simon Fraser University. Upon completing that task, I wondered: What other real-life magicians are out there? How many of these magicians are artists or performers? How else can visual art, music, and literature become a magical practice? Is there a career in this?

I was advised by my mentors at SFU, doctors Tom Grieve and James Gifford, that the print culture of little magazines was a growing field in the New Modernist Studies. My initial inquiries into modernist periodical culture soon led me to Mark Morrisson's 2008 article, "The Periodical Culture of the Occult Revival." Seeing this first foray into the knowledge gap between modernist little magazine culture and the weird world of magic and occultism was all I needed to recognize my mission as an academic. I would be the one to take up the call, to revive the magical magazines, to resurrect the modern magi.

Adepts of Modernism is the result. I have learned so much about modernism, magazine culture, mysticism and magic, as well as teaching and learning. Hopefully, inquiring minds will benefit from this study and enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed researching and writing it. The process was grueling, in many ways, but I would do it all over again if given the choice! My inquiries in magic led me into new musical collaborations and into an advisory role as a rune-reader and magus of Edmonton's electronic music and festival scene. While these other aspects of my life are not always visible in this dissertation, they are nonetheless present. My artistic, magical, and academic selves are fully integrated, and each aspect enhances the others. While the weirdness within may not appeal to everyone, this is who I am.

Dedication

To all adepts and aspiring adepts, eternally present.

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I also acknowledge that I researched and taught on Treaty 6 territory for seven years, so I humbly thank the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, and Nakota Sioux peoples who traditionally occupied those lands on which I lived and worked. ᑭᓈᓇᐢᑯᒥᑎᓈᐚᐤ.

I express my most sincere gratitude and love to my family and close friends who kept me going through all this: Mom and Gord, Dad and Karen, my brothers and sisters, Kerry, Erik, Jordon, Jill, Kait, and T. J.; Mémère, Aunty Lianne, Uncle Chris, and the now-grown-up cousins, Matthew and Hannah; the rest of my aunts, uncles, and "all those other cousins"; my glorious friends, Ryan McLeod, Stella Raven, Darrell Sharp, Nix Nihil, Trizzy Artzy, Some-Sum, Drewcypher, Dustin LaBoucan, Simon and Adam Whitaker-Wilson, Christie Boulter, Patrick Ennis, Carol Fraser, Kenny Maynard, Andrea Hasenbank, Sean O'Brien, Kim Mulder, Janice Dowson, Jumoke Verissimo, Conrad Scott, Ariel Kroon, Danielle O'Connor, Keighlagh Donovan, Anastasia Kutt, Olivia Kachman, Eugena Maguire, Chandon Griffin, Kalli Melenius, Murray Dodds, Kyle and Nikki Boyd, Andrew Longarini, Casey Paulsen, Shea and Travis Odland, and Cali-Flufe.

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The path of the adept can be a lonely one, but I have never felt alone. Thanks, *everyone*.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

A Viking Evocation

By the blue blades of Niflheim
and red tongues of Muspelheim—
beneath the piercing sight of Old One-Eye
who dangled from the Tree of Life
and cried for knowledge—so I cry!

By the mystic mistress of Vanir:
her shining maiden's golden tears;
the purest waters of Mimir;
Bragi's boasts and Loki's jeers;
drink the mead of fallen Kvasir!

I sing my fool-song to the wise,
intoxicating jarl and thrall alike!
I know the runes, the words of white!
I know the words of flaming light,
the words that still the sea at midnight.

I am the eagle, screaming!
I am the dragon, sneering!
I am the squirrel, in-betweening!
My sword-words ringing—swift careening!
My word-hoard treasures—brightly sheening!

This wisdom perseveres beyond the end,
though Ragnarok erodes this hand and pen.

Fig. 1. Guided by Raven, the Page commences his pilgrimage.

Introduction

Initiation: Rites of Magic, Modernism, and Magazines

> [The "wonderful effects" of magic] are delivered […] more by contemplation than by practice…. Some are spoken figuratively (as it were in a riddle) [and] sometimes those things, which with great study and diligence and curious seeking out we have obtained, are expounded to all ignorant vulgars. Therefore, in this book we have finished the hidden philosophy which is as the complement and key of the books of all Magical works: and we will give thee the precepts and most joyful experiments of the undefiled truth and unvanquished magical discipline of the holy Gods: that when thou readest these books of the hidden Philosophy thou mayest desire to know these things greedily. Therefore, read this book and thou shalt triumph of the truth… touch it within the secrets of thy religious breast and it will pierce with silence. But conceal it with a constant taciturnity.
>
> — Henry Cornelius Agrippa[1]

[1] Epigraph taken from Agrippa's manuscript, the *Fourth Book of the Hidden Philosophy of the Magical Ceremonies* (75), held in the Sloane Collection at the British Library. Edited into standard English.

Setting the Intention: Doing Justice to the Secret

Hail and well met, adept. This is a tome of testing, and of secrets. You have come to learn of mysticism and magic, of modernism and magazines. I have such secrets to show you.

This tome is initiation. It is both a secret and its unmasking, hinging on the revelation of the Big Secret of Modernism. It is a public secret—the secret that everyone already knows, but few publicly acknowledge or accept.[2] That is, that modernism was not only influenced by the occult, but that modernism is so thoroughly entangled with the occult that it cannot survive a separation.

Adepts of Modernism: Magical Magazine Culture, 1887-1922 illuminates the ignored or forgotten connections between mysticism and literary modernism through the study of those cultural objects that have attracted much attention in the New Modernist Studies: periodicals. The overlooked networks of mystically-influenced writers entangling transatlantic periodical culture transformed the wider body of modernist literature and, in doing so, compel us to rethink our received notions of modernism as a whole. Some of the esoteric beliefs held by the writers of this period might now seem outmoded, embarrassing, or even frustrating to literary scholars, but they were widespread and thus deserve their due consideration in the New Modernist Studies. They are an inextricable part of modernism—just like periodicals themselves.

The *editor-adepts* of modernism understood that art and spirituality are related, and they used their periodicals to explore, perform, theorize, and debate this relationship. Their magazines are not mere paper vessels for the propagation of art and literature; they are a form of contagious magic, living rites and rituals for conjuring an enlightened "counter-public." They are keys to the doors of

[2] This idea of the "public secret" comes from Michael Taussig in *Defacement* (1999). Taussig explains that the public secret constitutes an important form of social knowledge: "*knowing what not to know*" (2, emphasis his). It is, essentially, "*that which is generally known*, *but cannot be articulated*…" (5, emphasis his). In this context, the public secret of the New Modernist Studies is the saturation of mysticism, spirituality, religion, esotericism, and occultism in modernist texts. Academics in general are uncomfortable with or poorly equipped to talk about these topics and would rather ignore them, or "know not to know" about them, even as they read modernist periodicals from any number of other socio-political or socio-cultural angles.

wisdom, branches on the multifarious path to the Great Work. To read and comprehend these magical modernist magazines is to become "one of them," to become a modernist. Therefore, the central argument of this study is that the infamous "little magazines" of modernism rely on the exact same strategies and tactics of initiation and exclusion as do occult texts, ancient and modern. The writers in this study from both the literary and occult spheres disseminate their secret wisdom and share an esoteric, elitist attitude that sets them apart from the general public and the exoteric, mainstream media they consume. These editor-adepts play the role of the occult Master, casting the reader in the role of the seeker or apprentice. Further, this dissertation shows that any distinction between a 'literary' or 'modernist' sphere versus an 'occult' sphere becomes virtually meaningless, since both share a common network of writers and editors connected to the illustrious secret societies of the *Fin de Siècle* such as the Theosophical Society and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Like the rituals of the secret societies preceding modernism, these periodicals are magical. They are initiation—and they are the means by which their carefully cultivated, adept readers may initiate themselves.

At one time, the topic of mysticism (including occultism and other systems of esoteric spirituality) was largely taboo among academics in general, let alone in literary studies. But, over the years, thanks in part to Frances Yates, Antoine Faivre, and Wouter J. Hanegraaff, forerunners of the field now known as Western esotericism studies, and scholars of literature and culture in the twentieth century such as Leon Surette, Demetres Tryphonopoulos, Mark Morrisson, Alex Owen, and Matte Robinson, mysticism is increasingly accepted as a valuable and legitimate topic through which to approach twentieth-century literature and its print culture. My dissertation comes at a time when whispers of the occult in the New Modernist Studies are just on the cusp of becoming a roar. Within the field of Modernist Periodical Studies in particular, I am joined by only a few other voices as we whisper to each other under cover of darkness; but, the whispers are rising and the darkness is

slowly breaking. I hear these whispers at conferences, or in the footnotes of emerging essays or book chapters, even while the presence of mysticism and the occult in modernist periodicals is still largely a (public) secret.

When I speak of "doing justice" to the secret of a mystical modernism, an occult modernism, I look to Michael Taussig's metaphor of unmasking as articulated in *Defacement* (1999). Taussig, following Walter Benjamin, who in turn follows Plato, posits that "truth is not a matter of exposure which destroys the secret, but a revelation which does justice to it" (2). And this "carefully contrived process of the just revelation," he notes, "stands in juxtaposition to exposure, which, Benjamin warns, would only destroy the secret" (2). It is not my intention here to *expose* the modern occult as a peculiarity, an anomaly, or worse, some taint or flaw that spoils the reputation of some of the twentieth century's most beloved writers and periodicals. Instead, I aim to *reveal* the lively periodical culture that sprang up around occult circles. Now is the time—to borrow the initiatory affirmation of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn—to "quit the night" of the ignorance, devaluation, repression, or veiling of occult subjects within the field of Modernist Periodical Studies, and to instead "seek the day" of a *different* modernism, a mystical modernism where adepts brushed shoulders with litterateurs—or *were* those same litterateurs. In this new day of modernist studies, let us see with greater clarity the incalculable connections to mysticism and occultism within modernist periodical culture that have *always been there*, as a public secret, hidden in plain sight, unseen or unremarked upon by critics and scholars for far too long. Let the veil be lifted; let modernism be re-enchanted for those who choose to see the magic interwoven into its fabric by the great editor-adepts of some of the most influential literary and occult periodicals of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Who are the adepts of modernism? The answer is manifold: first, *you* are an adept of modernism if you wish to learn the secrets of this literary and cultural moment that I hope to reveal.

Second, *I* am an adept of modernism. As a PhD candidate at the University of Alberta, I have been initiated into the cult of academia, learning its methods, its rituals, its secrets, with the goal of learning more about modernism and mysticism so that I may, in turn, teach these secrets to others.[3] And, in learning the secrets of the modernist editor-adepts, I learn more about the philosophy, politics, and aesthetics of the great adepts of history. Finally, the editor-adepts under consideration are adepts of modernism. They are all, in their own way, literal adepts in the purest sense; that is, they are seekers of the spiritual life, those who have been initiated into one or more mystical traditions with the aim of understanding and changing the world in accordance with their Will. Moreover, they are metaphorical adepts of modernism; they are the gate-keepers and the key-holders, to an aesthetic and cultural movement notorious for its difficulty, eccentricity, and even elitism.

While many recent studies of modernism seek to shift or undermine this stereotype of modernism as being esoteric and elitist, this attitude, which I call *the adept attitude* is unmistakably present in the magazines I consider. The similarity between esoteric wisdom—accessible only for the chosen, the initiated, the elect, the *adept*—is ripe for comparison with modernism. And yet, that tension remains in the very act of founding a periodical for public consumption: should this wisdom (of modernist aesthetics or spiritual knowledge) be given freely to all? Or, should it remain held by the few, awaiting other dedicated seekers willing to seize the initiative and discover for themselves the nature of art and ultimate reality?

In this study, I examine five influential periodicals in reverse chronological order from when they first appeared, spanning the years 1887-1922: *The Little Review*, *The Egoist*, *The New Age*, *The Equinox*, and *Lucifer*. The first three of these are recognizably modernist literary periodicals, also

[3] Henrik Bogdan, a historian of Western esotericism, similarly feels that "the process of writing a book resembles a ritual of initiation" (xi). He characterizes the years spent writing his book as "a state of constant liminality," and recounts, "sometimes it has even felt as if I were undergoing some kind of mystical ordeal. The officiating officers of this great initiation, however, were not any mysterious adepts, but friends and colleagues" (xi).

known as "little magazines." The latter two are properly occult journals; however, they revel in their literary flair and connect to the little magazines through what I call a *network of adeptship*. In placing these quite different periodicals side by side, it becomes apparent how the editorial stylings, the literary techniques, and the themes, tropes, and symbols of these earlier occult periodicals came to influence the next generation of younger modernists in their quest to initiate a reading "counter-public" [4] into the "secret society of modernism." [5] Thus, a clear connection, almost a direct genealogy of editorial practice, manifests between the literary and the occult spheres of modernism through their periodical cultures.

It is easy to see how the methods, aesthetics, and initiatory practices of the occult made their way down into the literature of the modernist writers, with varying degrees of desacralization, or "sanitization." Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap, and Ezra Pound of *The Little Review* all studied and wrote under A. R. Orage of *The New Age*, and Dora Marsden modelled *The Egoist* in the image of that same magazine. Orage was an elder statesman of modernism who studied Theosophical thought and later became an emissary for G. I. Gurdjieff and his Fourth Way philosophy. Orage was also a long-time friend of Aleister Crowley, the most notorious occultist of them all. And, nearly all these figures had read the works of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky; many were Theosophists, and most were at least familiar with Theosophy. Common to all these editors is that they are adepts of both the occult and of modernism, and they demonstrate an understanding shared by all mystical writers and adepts: that their art, their periodicals, *are magic*. They present to us the wand, the cup, the pentacle, and the sword, so that we may, by the magical power of their art, initiate ourselves. When we take

[4] This term differentiates the magazines of the esoteric modernist and occult spheres from the more respectable, mainstream press of the bourgeois, Habermasian "public sphere." Scoffing at daily newspapers and mainstream magazines, these "counter-publics" made their own esoteric little magazines, legitimated their own beliefs and practices, and corresponded with and advertised for each other (Morrisson "Periodical" 5; 19n2).

[5] I borrow this language from James Longenbach, who chronicles Ezra Pound's literary and occult apprenticeship under William Butler Yeats in *Stone Cottage*. Longenbach uses spiritual and religious language to describe Pound's views on the elitist coterie of litterateurs he was founding. Examples include: a "'secret society' of modernism" (x), an "unfounded order" (26), and a "priesthood of the arts" (77), among others.

up these magical tools, we participate in the mythical "perennial philosophy" or the "wisdom tradition" of the ancients.[6] We join the modernists' fellowship of magical magazine culture. We become adept readers. We become adepts.

* * *

In recent decades, there have been many thorough treatments of the mysticism and esoteric spirituality that manifested in early twentieth-century English literature. *Literary Modernism and the Occult Tradition* (1996) by Leon Surette and Demetres Tryphonopoulos, *Modernist Alchemy* (1995) by Timothy Materer, and *The Place of Enchantment* (2004) by Alex Owen are just a few. While these important studies broke new ground for the study of mysticism, esotericism, and occultism in modernist literature, they tend to remain confined to novels, collected works, and long poems. As Mark Morrisson astutely observed in a 2008 article, "none of the work on modernism's occult inclinations has fully engaged with the periodical culture of the era's occult revival" ("Periodical Culture" 1). Even now, *twelve more years* have since passed and the call for more work in this area remains largely unanswered. The scholarly slowness in re-mapping this mysterious territory of modernism is surprising, given Morrisson's assessment that "the print culture of modernity and the modern public sphere predicated upon it were the driving engine of modern occultism" (3). If this is the case, and if it is also the case that that mysticism (including occultism) needs to be understood if we are to understand modernism, then why has mysticism, modernism, and periodical culture as a

[6] The term "perennial philosophy" was formulated by Aldous Huxley and published as a book of the same name in 1946, and it has been recently taken up for the purposes of literary criticism by Garrett Izzo in his 2009 book, *The Influence of Mysticism on 20th Century British and American Literature*. Izzo's chief task is to show that the human longing for connection to the numinous, the universal, the total, is "the impetus for the creative impulse, and thus the *raison d'être* underlying all art, consciously or unconsciously" (2). Like Theosophy, the perennial philosophy aims to comprehend the underlying principles of all world religions and attempts to relate these principles to the creative impulse. Izzo argues that "the wisdom of mysticism underlies and precedes all wisdom in any discipline," and thus, "mystical philosophy as a literary theory applies to all literary artists beginning with the first stories told by the primitive storyteller" (3).

triumvirate languished in the darkness for so long? Mysticism and periodical culture alike are both historically overlooked factors that penetrate modernism to its very core, and it follows that the study of the periodical cultures of modern mysticism could be nothing short of transformative for this field.

Morrisson's preliminary foray into the print history of three branches of mysticism—spiritualism, Theosophy, and Hermeticism—reveals many tantalizing possibilities of how wide and deep this network could reach. These three rough sub-categories of mystical traditions are distinct, but they are often difficult to distinguish due to the syncretizing nature of those who participate in them. We will see influences of each of these, along with elements of Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism, Neo-Hellenism, Kabbalah, Alchemy, Thelema, the Fourth Way, among many others, over the course of this study. As past studies have discovered, mystics and occultists have a tendency to borrow from any and all mystical traditions as they see fit, and they tend to do so in a fashion that makes it difficult to determine where one thread of tradition ends and another thread begins. As Matte Robinson quips in his 2016 book, *The Astral H. D.*, occultists are notoriously "bad at citing their sources" (xiv).

This study frequently uses the highest order term, "mysticism," in a general sense because it encapsulates most other branches of heterodox spiritual practice. However, my greatest investment lies in esotericism and occultism for their requirements of initiation and secrecy; these branches privilege acquired knowledge and learned discipline over unmediated mystical experience. Thus, the transmission of esoteric knowledge has acquired norms, strategies, and techniques which eventually became an esoteric wisdom tradition, and these traditions are followed, in a variety of forms, by both seekers and the adepts from whom they wish to learn.

Within these esoteric branches of mysticism, there is an apprenticeship model at work. This model persists in modern times. In *The Celestial Tradition* (1992), Tryphonopoulos argues that

Pound's *Cantos* are best understood "as a poem of initiation" wherein "the author plays the role of the mystagogue or hierophant presenting a description of a mystery in the hope that this presentation will exert upon the reader the same effect as an actual revelation or mystical experience" (62). Building on this argument, I submit that the editor-adepts of the little magazines of modernism likewise see themselves as "mystagogues and hierophants" to their readers. In the context of an esoteric periodical culture, readers play the role of the Seeker, with the editor-adepts playing the role of the Master (even if they are themselves novices in comparison to the greatest occult masters of their age). As readers acquire their own knowledge, they too can eventually become masters in their own right. To borrow from a contemporary pedagogical theory, occult initiation can be seen as a form of "discovery learning," since the goal is to actively and independently acquire knowledge, without passively and uncritically accepting the Master's teachings.[7] Thus, unlike conventional religion, occultism concerns itself not with producing followers, but with producing adepts—new masters. Whatever the particular branch of esotericism with which these editor-adepts choose to align themselves (or not), all believe in the magical power of art to shape thought and change the world; their magazines all seek to initiate their readers and produce new adepts—whether spiritual, artistic, or both.

Each branch of these esoteric traditions, or in total, mysticism, transformed transatlantic literary modernism. The analysis of mysticism in relation to its material forms of circulation makes particular sense within the context of the emerging field of the New Modernist Studies, a

[7] Arthur Bakker notes that, while an academic theory of discovery learning only emerged through the 1950s and 60s, its origins are ancient, going back to Plato and Socrates (Bakker 170). These classical philosophers are part of the same wisdom tradition so revered by occultists. Hence, occult masters share with discovery-based pedagogues the desire to balance direct instruction with a subjective style of learning that respects the autonomy of the student (or the seeker, disciple, or *chela*). This principle, in Gurdjieffian terms, is called "mental independence" (Woodson 21) and is a crucial component of the adept attitude. Critics of discovery learning argue that it is not suitable for "anxiously dependent" pupils who "may be paralyzed by demands for self-reliance" (Bakker 170), but from an occult perspective, students with such a disposition lack the will, discipline, and fortitude to join the illustrious guild of adepts in the first place. As Mabel Collins, co-editor of *Lucifer* clarifies, a questing adept seeking wisdom "cannot be fed like a babe with a spoon; he must eat for himself" ("Comments" 8).

multidisciplinary dialogue intended to enrich and expand the scope of modernism beyond its established canons and conventions. Studies of modernist print culture have come to play an increasingly prominent role in this field given that what we now recognize as modernism emerged from within the pages of its periodicals. But, how to study a tradition of knowledge that has often vexed, frustrated, or embarrassed scholars in the past?

Evoking the Elements: Reactualizing Modernism

Adepts of Modernism is the first sustained study of the periodical cultures of modern mysticism. It employs a methodological framework recognized within Modernist Periodical Studies, but it will also draw inspiration from the same mystical movements under consideration. I play the role of the seeker, the questing adept, in my communion with these masters of modern mysticism. I bring my own magics to the table, while absorbing the syncretic wisdom of these ghostly instructors.[8] This unconventional approach allows me to examine these periodicals, especially the earlier, more obviously occult texts, with an eye sensitive toward their beliefs, aesthetics, and politics—my purpose being a critical performance of key initiation strategies found in many works designated as mystical, esoteric, or occult. My rigorous performance of a mystical ontology and epistemology aims to advance recent developments made in harnessing mysticism as a mode of literary analysis. Such a mystical methodological approach could be a valuable contribution to the discipline of literary studies in English, as there is little by way of extant literary theory recognized by the academy that studies mysticism on its own terms. As mysticism and occultism continue to be recognized as

[8] Mary K. Greer is perhaps the most exceptional example of a fellow academic-adept that I have come across. Greer, who was once a faculty member at the New College of California in San Francisco, openly identifies as an "initiate of a Golden Dawn-based temple" (3). She treats supernormal incidences as if they were actually real and troubles the distinction between adept and scholar, *emic* and *etic*. While I myself have no formal esoteric affiliations, I find inspiration in her unflinchingly personal approach to studying the lives of Maud Gonne, Moina Bergson Mathers, Annie Horniman, and Florence Farr in *Women of the Golden Dawn* (1996). Farr especially will be given more attention in the third chapter of this study, which focuses on her mystically feminist articles in *The New Age* magazine.

worthwhile areas of study, such a method could help make texts in these areas more intelligible (if not more 'logical' or 'rational') to those studying them. Indeed, esoteric pedagogy values the subtle *performance* of principles over their open *statement*.

There have been some other recent attempts at legitimizing mysticism as a mode of criticism or analysis: Christopher Lehrich gestures toward the transmutation of occult knowledge into a literary-historical theory, and Christopher Bracken articulates a form of magical thinking he calls "savage philosophy." Both theorists, following Michel Foucault, start their projects by troubling the distinction typically made between scholar and research object. As Lehrich reminds us, "the methods and theories must be part and parcel of the analytical object, because the object is *constituted by the scholar*, not simply 'there' to be studied" (xii). Past studies on mysticism have not analyzed it in accordance with its own hermeneutics. Instead, they have opted to superimpose rationalist and secular frameworks over top of the mystical beliefs and practices under consideration. This not only distorts the object of research, but usually frustrates the researcher as well—the subtleties of the object escape them. It seems that in their quest for the Philosopher's Stone of Modernism, early critics were all too eager to cut the sulfur from their recipe in favor of more salt, thus destroying the whole endeavor. I propose adding just a bit more quicksilver and recovering some of that sulfur.

A classic example of critical frustration at esoteric modernism plays out in *Axel's Castle* (1931) by Edmund Wilson. While struggling through William Butler Yeats's *A Vision*, Wilson throws up his arms in exasperation: "What right has [Yeats] to bore us with it?" he demands, "what right has he to expect us to explore page after page of such stuff [?]" (54). Wilson's frustration with this masterpiece of esoteric literature is typical among those with a disdain for the mystical or the occult who then try to "make sense" of it through rational, academic means. He is unable to reconcile the esoteric text with his rational mode of exegesis. It is no surprise, then, that other past studies taking

such an indifferent, even hostile, approach to esotericism have been unable to lift the veil that enshrouds the texts of the modernist adepts.

For the purposes of my study, Lehrich's and Bracken's critiques complement sociologist Marcel Mauss's observation that "a fundamental feature of magic" appears to be "the confusion between actor, rite, and object" (108). When dealing with texts written by mystics, are they mere "objects," or do these objects act as circulating, materialized magic (or rites)? And who are the subjects? Are they the mystics of the past seeking to bring future change to the world through discourse? Or could it be me, a neophyte academic from the future returning to these artifacts from the past to change the way in which the academy understands modernism, mysticism, and magazines in the now? Or, could it be you, the reader-adept who evokes me?

The Occult Mind (2007) by Christopher Lehrich is a useful attempt to codify occult theories and practices into a mode of literary criticism. Arguing that "modern academe does not recognize a discipline devoted to the analytical study of occult, magical, or esoteric traditions" (xi), Lehrich asks of his readers to conceive of his book as "a product of a discipline that *could* exist, but does not" (xiii). While such a discipline is yet to be fully articulated, Lehrich's work presents a strong case for its existence and legitimation.

Looking to those rare scholars of mysticism who have attempted more sympathetic engagements with mysticism as a historical phenomenon, Lehrich gestures toward the methodological approach of the early historian of Western esotericism, Frances Yates. Lehrich concedes that Yates must "stand convicted of innumerable bad habits and faulty readings, as [her] many critics have noted mercilessly" (45). One such critic, Wouter J. Hanegraaff, has asserted that "the principle theoretical tool to safeguard scientific legitimacy… is the distinction between *emic* and *etic*," or the point of view of the believer and that of the scholar (qtd. in Lehrich 167). Rather than upholding this distinction, Lehrich points out, Yates sought a "dialogue" with her historical subjects;

she would project herself "mentally backward" in order to study the early modern occultist Giordano Bruno "on his own terms" (46).[9] Lehrich makes clear the importance of the scholar's role in historiography asking us if, rather than superimposing contemporary theories and paradigms onto those of the past, we can also apply those historical theories and paradigms to our present methods.

As a case in point, the excellent *Modernism in the Magazines* (2010) is becoming a standard of Modernist Periodical Studies methodology, yet it still strongly emphasizes the importance of Ezra Pound on the formation of the field. While Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman are certainly not wrong, it seems to me that if we really seek new approaches to modernism, then other voices can also help grant us new perspectives on how to write and study little magazines. Why not learn how to read mystical periodicals from the modern mystics themselves? If critics are comfortable looking to the problematic Pound to comprehend modernist periodical culture, why not also turn to some adepts to comprehend their magical magazine culture?

Reading is a ritual, and it is through the ritual of reading mystical periodicals in accordance with their own hermeneutics that I, as a questing adept of academia, "reactualize" modernism much like Yates attempted to do with Giordano Bruno and John Dee in their early modern milieu. As Lehrich explains it, "reactualization" is a concept formulated by historian Mircea Eliade used to describe the result of entering sacred space and time through ritual. Through reactualization, one may encounter "an always-present sacred event" (24).[10] This reactualizing power of upholding the magic and the mystery of the modern mystics compels me to study them with an appropriately

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[9] As Lehrich explains, Yates makes three important methodological moves to make the past live again: she writes in a "ringing, powerful prose," she "suppresses much of the historian's technical voice, going in the opposite direction from her contemporary French-influenced theoretical historians by reducing methodological discussion to nil," and, most egregiously, she "blurs the line between her discussions and those of her subjects, such that it is often unclear whether we are reading Yates the historian or Yates the paraphraser" (27). Lehrich calls for us to read Yates "as a reactualizer rather than a historian," arguing that when we do this, "her best qualities regain luster" (45).

[10] Lehrich provides an example of reactualization familiar to Christian church-goers: "every Mass *is* the Last Supper, for through the ritual acts, participants actually encounter the living space and time of Christ" (24). Also, consider the practice of Humanities scholars in citing historical subjects in the present tense; in reading and writing, we keep writers alive.

mystical methodology: how could I dispel the magic that these adepts have so painstakingly crafted? This is what I mean when I say I intend to "do justice to the secret" of an esoteric modernism. I am but the latest actor in a magical network, and it is my vocation to reactualize modernism through rituals of reading and writing—rituals of magical observation guided by their subject matter—thus participating in the unfolding of the spirit of a new age, the "rising psychic tide" foreseen by mystics past and transmitted through their literary culture.[11]

Positioning myself on the middle path between academic and adept, I seek dialogue with my archive in speaking with its spirits as I consciously summon them forth as evidence in my case for acknowledging the mysticisms of modernism; I aim to deliberately commit the 'scandal' of Yates in an informed and productive manner. That is, I will dramatize the magical gesture of confusing actor, rite, and object (Mauss 108). To this end, I turn to my own Norwegian heritage to perform my rites of research through Norse Runes. As I made my way through the archives of the editor-adepts in my network, I performed a master rune-casting for each archive, addressing its ghostly archons to guide my lines of inquiry. I supplemented these major castings with simple daily castings to set the tone for each research day.[12] The voices of the ghostly archons speak at the beginning of each chapter in this study, affirming the pact between myself and these specters to do justice to them and their works, to analyze and animate, and not to dissect and desecrate.

In taking such an approach, I follow Alan Ramon Clinton, a scholar of modernism who used the Tarot and the *I Ching* to determine the argumentative twists and turns in his essays on Yeats, Eliot, and Pound. Clinton, who borrows from the Surrealists the view that the Tarot can be harnessed as "a machine for constructing stories," extends this view to show how these divination

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[11] G. R. S. Mead, Theosophist and founder of the Quest Society, coined the phrase "rising psychic tide" to describe the ubiquity of interest in occultism in Europe from 1880 through 1920 (Tryphonopoulos *Celestial* xv). In a 1912 article of the same name published in his *Quest* magazine, Mead observes, "the idea of the adept and initiate in secret knowledge, the ideal of the divine man or woman, of the god-inspired, or at any rate of the human with superhuman powers, is in the air" (qtd. in *Celestial* 26).

[12] For a more detailed explanation of rune-casting as research method, see the Appendix.

systems can also be used as "machine[s] for constructing criticism" (72). As Clinton explains, the Tarot and *I Ching* were useful for their placement of "artificial restraints on the particular image clusters analyzed," and the divination techniques "forced [him] to think in patterns [he] would not have ordinarily chosen" (199). Regardless of whether or not one believes in magical or supernatural forces, the exercise of turning to the subconscious, or even to pure randomness, was still productive for Clinton. And so, in the ritualistic act of setting aside space for my editor-adept masters to speak through me, I hope to similarly allow my work to be guided in a direction that is not entirely of my own choosing, rather from an imaginative collaboration with my research subjects, my masters in magic and literature.

Given that the study of modernist periodicals is itself a developing field, this deliberate participation in modern mysticism has the potential to expand its methodological possibilities. I maintain that this unorthodox strategy is necessary for facilitating such an expansion. In a mystical epistemology to which many of my research subjects subscribe, the microcosm must reflect the macrocosm; my dissertation must therefore reflect the mysticism in which it participates. In the ringing proclamation attributed to the ancient Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistus: "as above, so below!"

Furthermore, academic scholarship can be, like some traditions within mysticism *and* modernism, highly esoteric in itself. Like esotericism, the academy requires of its initiates years of training to master specialized language and methods that allow them to participate in discourses and traditions both emergent and established. Once the initiation is complete, new doctors and their faculty mentors don their magical robes in the highly ritualistic convocation ceremony. I too strive for the degree of PhD beneath the vigilant gazes, and purgatorial trials, of my supervisory committee of mentors and masters. So, mysticism can not only teach us about modernism, but its periodical cultures can, in turn, inform methods of contemporary periodical scholarship and the institutions

that produce them. My dissertation sets out to exorcise any pretense that modernism is a secular affair and offers up a new vision—a new *myth* of modernism, so to speak—as told by a network of reanimated and resurrected voices that once lived in it.[13] Through the gesture of looking forward into a new future of modernism by participating in a dialogue with those voices from the past, I perform a divination, a *reactualization* of modernism. Ritual enables seekers of magical nostalgia to step into a time outside of time—into *illud tempus*, or mythological time. Reading is one such ritual: it is, as Bracken reminds us, a "resurrection" (17).

As for you, Dear Seeker, I herewith bestow upon thee the tools with which to comprehend the works of the modern editor-adepts. Thou wilt become a wiser adept, a wiser scholar, a wiser modernist. Open thine third eye: read between the words and between the lines, between text and paratext, between past, present, future, and eternity. I initiate thee into the network of adeptship through this tome, just as the modern mystics have initiated me into this same network through their magazines, their sacred rites of art and politics.

Quit the night. Seek the day. So mote it be!

Reciting Magic Words: Key Concepts and Definitions

What exactly is "mysticism" and what do I mean when I speak of a mystical "wisdom tradition"? What can we learn about modernism by studying aspects of its periodical culture that are intertwined with this tradition? While "mysticism" is a nebulous term, the mystic-philosopher Evelyn Underhill provides an effective working definition:

[13] According to Bracken, one utility of myth is that it functions as a "means of group identification, which occurs in two stages. First the members of the group mold themselves in myth's likeness. Then they mistake its form for their own. In this way myth 'assures' them of their shared identity" (62). The modern mystics in my network of adeptship fostered myths about their own mystical traditions, and many of them sought to craft a new myth for the world and their place in it: that is, a myth of modernism, the dawning of a 'new age.' As a scholar, I am now connected to these myths, as both have irrevocably shaped the trajectory of my studies and my career as a whole—I too am implicated in this "shared identity." And now, so are *you*.

> [Mysticism is] the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order; whatever be the theological formula under which that order is understood. This tendency, in great mystics, gradually captures the whole field of consciousness; it dominates their life and, in the experience called "mystic union," attains its end. (*Mysticism* xiv)

Orthodox religion is one path to fulfilling the human impulse toward such an experience, but mysticism in its broadest sense is not limited to any particular theological dogma. Occultism, however, is a specific type of mysticism (within which Theosophy and Hermeticism can be located) that assumes an initiate must undertake special training in order to gain hidden knowledge and the ability to perceive the secrets of existence (unlike in spiritualism, where anyone "sensitive" to the spirit world can presumably act as a medium).[14] Since the closed culture of occultism closely parallels that of modernism, I am particularly drawn to this facet of mysticism.

Surette clarifies that occultism, despite its more sensational connotations (Satanism, black magic, etc.), can be understood as simple "metaphysical speculation… about the nature of ultimate reality and of our relation to it" in such a manner that typically assumes the possibility of direct contact between humans and some "ultimate" or "divine" reality (13).[15] The keys to unlocking this

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[14] For those unfamiliar with these specific traditions within mysticism, some more brief definitions are in order. "Spiritualism" refers to a belief in spirits, the survival of the human personality after death, and the possibility of contacting spirits through mediums (Oppenheim 3-4). Theosophy, literally "god-wisdom," is a particular occultism formulated by H. P. Blavatsky, who claimed to have received her wisdom from her spirit masters, the discarnate entities Morya and Koot Hoomi (Surette 26). Lastly, Hermeticism is, at its core, a body of philosophical and magical writings ascribed to the ancient Egyptian sage, Hermes Trismegistus (Van den Broek and Hanegraaff 5); S. L. Macgregor Mathers's Order of the Golden Dawn and Aleister Crowley's Argenteum Astrum are two specific modern magical orders inspired by Trismegistus's teachings. These magical orders, however, indulge in theurgy or ritual magic, whereas the Theosophical Society did not.

[15] Tryphonopoulos further differentiates this sort of "philosophical occultism" from "the practice of theurgy or occult arts" (*Celestial* xii). For my own purposes, both veins of occultism come into play. "Philosophical occultism" has a broader applicability in the sense that most of the editors and writers under consideration see themselves as belonging to an illustrious lineage. Few figures in my network of adeptship *literally* engaged in theurgy or ritual magic, but they are nonetheless present in this study—Yeats, Farr, Crowley, H. D., and Collins are exceptional in this regard. Still, little magazines work on a *metaphorical* level as vehicles of initiation, transmitters of contagious and transformative artistic magic.

divine wisdom are supposedly passed down from ancient times, continuing unbroken to this day. This idea of an unbroken tradition of metaphysical speculation is "fallacious," as Demetres Tryphonopoulos points out in *The Celestial Tradition* (28). Still, the seductive prestige of participating in an unbroken, arcane tradition was nonetheless compelling to those mystics and writers that have inspired this project. Henrik Bogdan has a much more sympathetic view of these "fallacious" origin myths, and he suggests that they "should not be viewed as a simple fraud or an attempt at deceiving would-be members…. More often than not, stories regarding the foundation of closed societies are by its members interpreted symbolically rather than literally" (124).[16] While I cannot claim to be in direct contact with the wisdom of the Thrice-Greatest Sage, the ancient Brahmans, the Secret Chiefs, the Mahatmas, or the Eleusinian priesthood, I can still participate in the wisdom of the modernist writers, who in turn imaginatively found themselves in these origin myths.

That said, which kind of modernism are we dealing with here? Following Surette, I resist what he has called "the standard view." In this view, critics have long held that

> …with the anomalous exception of Yeats, mainstream modernists have spurned the fables, supernatural incidents, and superhuman agents that their nineteenth century predecessors had boldly displayed. The absence of these spectacular elements has persuaded scholars of modernism that there is no important persistence of occult themes and postulates in modernism. (Surette *Literary Modernism* xiv)

Surette points out in his 1994 book, *The Birth of Modernism*, that the "official" manner of modernist scholarship involving the specter of occultism is to "admit the fact of some infection or relationship but to argue that occult ideas are absorbed into an aesthetic or psychological theory and are thereby rendered 'harmless'" (9). Surette's analysis of modernist occultism "flies in the face of the standard

[16] In this case, Bogdan refers to Freemasonry and its claim to the biblical Adam, "the first parent," a man "skilled in the art of geometry," as the progenitor of Freemasonry (124).

view first formulated by T. E. Hulme, and endorsed by Eliot, that modernism was a turn away from the mysticism and emotionalism of Romanticism and towards the hard, dry, clear edges of classicism" (29). To be sure, this formerly "standard" view has indeed shifted in the twenty years that has passed since Surette wrote these words. But, to again echo Morrisson, this shift still has not translated over to the study of modernist periodical culture.

Surette further argues that the occult elements in modernism cannot be reduced to mere aesthetic appropriation. He draws attention to the lag in scholarship relating to Western esotericism in modernist art and provides a historical context for modern occultism before focusing on the application of this wisdom tradition (or, "secret doctrine" as Blavatsky would have it) in key works by Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and others. Surette takes issue with what he perceives to be an inappropriate dismissal of all things occult within the academy at large. Whether this dismissal comes in the form of "lofty disregard" (9), simple discomfort, or even outright embarrassment, it seems that what Surette identifies as that "scholarly ailment that might be called 'occultophobia'" (Surette and Tryphonopoulos xiv) is still a factor in recent studies of periodicals, even though many illuminating accounts of mysticism in the lives of modernist writers have been published since. In *Literary Modernism and the Occult Tradition* (1996), Surette and Tryphonopoulos allege that "literary scholarship has neglected—even suppressed—the important contribution of occult speculation to the theories and practices of the High Modernists" (xiii). While the presence of the occult in modernism has made many a scholar uncomfortable, it has become standard academic practice to render it "harmless" through its subsumption to aesthetic or psychological theories (9). Fortunately for those who seek to study, rather than ignore, the polarizing presence of mysticism in modernity, this attitude is slowly falling to the wayside.

Given that literary modernism grew and spread in no small part through its magazine culture, the necessity of carrying on the work of interrogating the modernist moment through the

study of its cultural artifacts seems readily apparent. That said, what do periodical scholars mean whey they speak of the "little magazine"? A foundational definition comes from Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich in their landmark 1946 book, *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography*:

> A little magazine is a magazine designed to print artistic work which for reasons of commercial expediency is not acceptable to the money-minded periodicals or presses…. Little magazines are willing to lose money, to court ridicule, to ignore public taste, willing to do almost anything—steal, beg, or undress in public—rather than sacrifice their right to print good material…. (2)

This preceding sketch has since become a classic. Yet, as impressive as their undertaking may be, Hoffman et al. could not include *every* little magazine or tackle *every* issue, theme, or tendency within them. While they have set the standard by which many subsequent accounts of little magazines would measure themselves, practically every recent engagement in the field of modernist periodical studies begins by setting itself up against some problem or deficiency perceived in Hoffman et al.'s ground-breaking work. Certainly, the texts in this field that I have identified as key to my project have all made this gesture, as will I. More recent considerations from Jayne E. Marek, Mark Morrisson, and Dean Irvine have expanded Hoffman et al.'s definition of what little magazines are, what sort of cultural work they do, which themes and tendencies merit discussion, and which voices should be heard. It should also be stated that, in my study, only *The Little Review*, *The Egoist*, or *The New Age* would be considered "little magazines" proper, and *The Equinox* and *Lucifer* would be better described as journals.[17] My point, though, is that these early occult journals had a profound influence

[17] I am not invested in arguing that *Equinox* or *Lucifer* be reclassified as "little magazines"; I am simply pointing out that these publications could have been conveniently overlooked not only for the fact of their occultism, but also for their not being considered proper enough "little magazines" to warrant study under the more rigid parameters established earlier in the history of this field. In line with the expansive principles of the New Modernist Studies, Churchill and McKible remind us in *Little Magazines and Modernism: New Approaches* that certain magazines

on the modernist little magazines to come, even if they do not technically meet the criteria of a "little magazine."

As stated at the outset, this dissertation traces what I call a *network of adeptship*. But, what do I mean by "adept"? As my starting point, I turn to the *Theosophical Glossary* (1892), written by the founder and arch-matriarch of the Theosophical movement, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. In this work, Blavatsky defines an "adept" as one who has obtained wisdom and "reached the stage of Initiation, and become a Master in the science of Esoteric philosophy" (6). As will become clear, there is a significant overlap of mysticism and modernist periodical culture in the sense that "initiation" seems to slip beyond a strictly spiritual sense and into a literary one: this sense of "initiation" or "adeptship" in its double meaning (spiritual and aesthetic) seems appropriate, especially given that most of these "adepts" are both mystics *and* writers.

So, to become an adept, one must be initiated. But, what is initiation? Mircea Eliade, a forerunner of the field now known as Western esotericism studies, provides a helpful definition in *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth* (1965):

> The term initiation in the most general sense denotes a body of rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a decisive alteration in the religious and social status of the person to be initiated. In philosophical terms, initiation is equivalent to a basic change in existential condition; the novice emerges from his ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possessed before his initiation; he has become *another*. (x)[18]

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important to the development of modernism have been historically excluded based on traditional (and sometimes arbitrary) criteria such as "a small circulation," "financial instability," short lifespans, "aesthetically experimental writing," or even independence from an "institutional affiliation" (6). Rethinking these boundaries allows for the inclusion of mystical periodicals to find a home in modernism, even if they are not proper little magazines, or even if they have not been strictly avant-garde, or overtly political, or if they are indeed affiliated with burgeoning movements such the Theosophical Society, the Argenteum Astrum, or the Society for Psychical Research.

[18] A more current take on initiation, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (2007) by Henrik Bogdan, resists one of Eliade's key ideas on the initiatory process. To Bogdan, "death is not central in *every* initiation, even though it is a common characteristic of rites of initiation that are structured as *rites de passage*" (33). Bogdan, citing Victor Turner, thinks "liminality" is a more efficient term to encapsulate that state of an initiate's coming into wisdom:

Again, this definition allows for a slippage between the religious and the social. One can, through contact with the intellectual and creative elite of modernism, become one of "We Moderns," and thus enjoy the social prestige of reading classic works of literature, some of them occult, and penetrating the "difficulty" of the modernist aesthetic to exclaim in some café filled with Very Important People, "Aha! I understand!" Similarly, one may well exclaim these things in apprehending a deeper, existential truth that was hitherto unseen, but that one has now entered into.

In dealing with the modernist editor-adepts, the initiation through a periodical culture can apply to *both* of these impulses simultaneously. Unfortunately, Eliade maintains that true initiation has all but "disappeared" from the modern world (ix) and, where it does survive, it is usually "reduced to instruction obtained from a book" (133-134). In modern times, initiatory books and periodicals are *really all we've got*. Since Western culture at large is lacking in true initiation, we must rely on "poems, novels, works of plastic art, films," to fulfill a *need* for initiation, a need that "remain[s] alive chiefly in modern man's unconscious" (134). So, that need to belong to a group, whether literary or spiritual, finds some fulfillment in artistic products. The magical magazines under consideration are capable of satisfying that need for belonging, as readers from both literary and occult spheres found a home in a complex and variable counter-public united in its disdain for the 'outsiders' of the exoteric mainstream press dealing in conservative art, conventional religion, and *status quo* politics.

Given that much modern initiation is conducted through works of art or given as instruction through books (and periodicals), this dissertation contends that magical magazines rely on *esoteric*

"liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon" (qtd. in Bogdan 33). I find this term useful because it still implies a transition, an inside/outside dynamic, without the assumption that every initiate must "die," thus sparing me from having to argue that the modern editor-adepts must first "kill" their audience with heavy-handed death imagery in their magazines before "resurrecting" them as modernists or occultists. For an excellent overview of how ideas of a spiritual death and re-birth (palingenesis) are encoded in modernist long poems, see *The Celestial Tradition* by Tryphonopoulos.

literature to transmit occult wisdom and initiate readers into an esoteric counter-public. I adapt this term from Mark Morrisson's "esoteric fiction," a literary subgenre he describes as "a modernist synthesis of ritual, transpersonal epistemology, and contemplative fiction" ("Apocalypse" 100). Esoteric fiction aims to re-enchant the modern world with a spiritual perspective on global affairs through the dramatization of initiation, spirit communication, and ritual magic (98). While this term is useful, I prefer the broader *esoteric literature*, since life writing (autobiography and biography, diary, memoir, semi-fiction, creative non-fiction, etc.) also seems to be such an important genre for the dissemination of esoteric wisdom.

From an occult perspective, it is difficult to separate subjective and objective truth (together, a synthesized 'occult reality'): virtually any text can achieve the same initiatory and pedagogical effects as esoteric "fiction" in its strictest sense. Since the inner world of the occultist is a subjective reality of its own, I prefer not to privilege one type of reality over another when dealing with the highly subjective world of magic and individual psychology. As this dissertation will show, the diaries and memoirs published by Huntly Carter, Algernon Blackwood, and Aleister Crowley do the same intellectual and spiritual work as do the "fictional" texts of Olivia Shakespear, Aleister Crowley, and Mabel Collins. They all describe or dramatize initiation, transmit 'genuine' occult doctrine, and name key occult thinkers and writers for further study. Thus, an adept reader can receive rich instruction on occult matters from any esoteric text, regardless of whether or not the events from the text 'really happened.' Moreover, when occult masters put their readers in the position of having to figure out 'the truth' from their texts (fictional and non-fictional alike), they follow the occult tradition of respecting (and testing) the mental independence of the adept reader.

This raises another important question of initiation: *who can initiate?* Writing about closed initiatory societies in general, and Freemasonry in particular, Bogdan posits,

> The esoteric knowledge must be transmitted from master to disciple according to set rules. The knowledge that is transmitted cannot be questioned, and it is seen as part of a tradition that must be respected and regarded as an "organic and integral ensemble." The importance of this idea for initiation is clear: there must be someone who initiates the disciple—he cannot initiate himself. (12)

This tenet of initiation complicates my thesis, but it also seems contestable. Aleister Crowley and G.I. Gurdjieff both thought that seekers could self-initiate, even as they assume the roles of masters, or at least guides. Crowley explicitly offers his *Equinox* journal as a means by which readers may do so; Kathryn Hulme notes in *The Undiscovered Country* (1966) that the tedium, trickery, and even the cruelty of Gurdjieff's dinner parties and toasts were all an elaborate deception to spur his followers to new heights of self-discovery. "It was a liberating discovery," she writes,

> the implications of it seemed perfectly clear—this must be, in this Work, a factor of self-initiation that could appear after a certain period of apprenticeship. *You initiate yourself! Why*, I asked myself excitedly, had Gurdjieff *never told this*? The answer was there in the next breath: Because he wanted you to discover it for yourself. (164)

To reiterate, although there are undoubtedly norms of initiation in the occult wisdom tradition, and there is a master and apprentice—or teacher and student—dynamic in modern initiation through books and periodicals, readers are ultimately responsible for their own mental independence and their own informal initiations. Moreover, all the occult masters in this study (namely, Blavatsky, Yeats, Crowley, and Gurdjieff) warn their pupils not to believe anything that they cannot integrate into their own personal occult reality. In short, the politics of initiation may be more complex in modernist periodical culture than Bogdan accounts for in his general analysis.

A final note on initiation: Eliade, like Surette and Tryphonopoulos who came after him, similarly notes that the "'rites' [of modern occult groups] are either sheer inventions or are inspired

by certain books supposed to contain precious revelations concerning the initiations of antiquity" (134). Eliade does not name these groups, but the Theosophical Society, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the Argenteum Astrum, the Fourth Way, etc., all come to mind. While he decries the "deplorable spiritual poverty" of these "pseudo-initiatory sects and groups," he does acknowledge their "positive function," or their ability to "help modern man to find a spiritual meaning for his drastically desacralized existence" (134). Like Surette, Eliade has a very low opinion of the literary value of modern occult writings. With breath as cold as death, Eliade pronounces his verdict:

> The majority of the pseudo-occult groups are hopelessly sterile. No important cultural creation whatever can be credited to them. On the contrary, the few modern works in which initiatory themes are discernable—James Joyce's *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*—were created by writers and artists who make no claim to have been initiated and who belong to no occult circle. (134)

I resist both Surette and Eliade on this point. It is, frankly, preposterous to argue that "no important cultural creation whatever can be credited to them," full stop. As I will show, even the properly occult journals were in the minds and periodicals of the modernists, and that alone amounts to some importance, to say nothing of how their ideas are thoroughly interwoven with modernist aesthetics and politics. Indeed, the politics of mysticism and occultism are utterly inextricable from the politics of modernism, and they have far-reaching consequences for the socio-political ideologies of anarchism, individualism, socialism, and feminism.

The periodical and political culture of modernity came into its own in sync with the flourishing and dissemination of occult philosophy. As this dissertation will demonstrate, these traditions are inseparable from the experimental little magazine cultures, or *magical magazine cultures*, that eventually took the early twentieth century by storm. My focus on mysticism provides a continuity within the continuity of print culture that precedes modernity and outlasts *modernism*:

"new age" speculation continues to thrive today in a culture that, no different from that of the moderns, still attempts to seek meaning in the bridges and gaps alike between science and conventional religion.

Resurrecting the Adepts: Rituals of Reading and Writing

My research highlights the complex dialogue that took place between mysticism on the one hand and modernism on the other: it aims to understand modernism differently by gazing upon it through the lens of mysticism, thereby analyzing understudied print cultures with a decorous yet similarly underdeveloped theory. I have accordingly selected the rise of some of the most popular modernist little magazines as the starting point of this project and then worked backwards, moving through the *Fin de Siècle*, constructing my network of adeptship in reverse chronological order. I hope to glimpse a new vision of modernism that reminds us that there is a vital and unapologetically mystical modernism submerged in the dust of the archive, patiently awaiting its resurrection.

My approach to constructing this network of adeptship is a performative critique of the same sort of *a priori* system-building that, while fallacious, is actually practiced by the modern mystics. In his essay, "The History of the Occult Movement," Demetres Tryphonopoulos explains how such an approach is mobilized:

> First, [occult system-builders] formulate a particular frame-work or value system; then, they proceed by searching, discovering and incorporating into the original system elements from various cultural heritages which appear to them to be analogues to those elements belonging to the original frame-work; finally, they use the resulting syncretic sub-structure as proof of the legitimacy of the original structure. (*Literary Modernism* 32)

In these terms, my first-order framework is literary modernism. My "various cultural heritages" are the different facets of modern mysticism. My "resulting syncretic sub-structure" attempts to provide

a useful framework for understanding the esoteric themes and initiatory techniques of modernist magazine culture, even though my initial formative technique is based on fallacious, irrational, or better yet, *magical* thinking. Yet, this reading is entirely legitimate, as I will show how the *fin-de-siècle* occultists definitely influenced the modernist writers that came after them. While it may not be the case that these modern mystics have received an unbroken lineage of wisdom reaching back to antiquity, the wisdom tradition from 1887-1922 is certainly continuous, and unites the late Victorian, *Fin de Siècle*, Edwardian, and properly modernist writers in a broad, syncretic, mystical tradition. This wisdom is shared among them, but also with us, as adept readers.

For the purposes of my study, I began by constructing this network around Blavatsky, who founded the Theosophical Society to fill the void left in the wake of spiritualism, a preceding exoteric mystical movement that had lost much of its momentum by the dawn of the twentieth century. This network expands through Blavatsky, reaching back to one of her inspirations in the French magus Eliphas Lévi, and reaching forward through her co-editor Mabel Collins and successors in Annie Besant and G. R. S. Mead. Through these Theosophical figures, this network grows to include such learned modern adepts as G. I. Gurdjieff, S. L. MacGregor Mathers, W. B. Yeats, Florence Farr, Aleister Crowley, A. R. Orage, Rabindranath Tagore, Evelyn Underhill, Algernon Blackwood, and Olivia Shakespear. Then, it expands to include other figures more recognized in modernist literary history: H. D., Ezra Pound, Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap, Holbrook Jackson, Huntly Carter, Leonard A. Compton-Rickett, Richard Aldington, and Dora Marsden. These latter adepts tended to incorporate their mystical heritage, sometimes in a more sanitized or desacralized form, into the literary aesthetic that became known as high modernism. Yet, these major figures are thoroughly implicated in mystical philosophies and practices, even

though some of them have denied or downplayed this fact—along with some critics that would later study them, as Surette has persuasively argued.[19]

These periodicals are materialized magic—circulating, aestheticized rites of initiation intended for those who possess the knowledge and open-mindedness to recognize it. As Marie Roberts mentions in *British Poets and Secret Societies* (1986), William Butler Yeats, the paragon Archmage of Modernism, understood that "poetic language had the potential to unlock the secrets of magical initiation and mystical experience," and that "a work of art could be used as a mandala or symbol for meditation as a means of advancement upon a path of mystical awareness" (126). Aleister Crowley, Yeats's Golden Dawn nemesis, and subject of the fourth chapter of this study, similarly understood the initiatory potential of written and printed texts. He considers writing and publication a form of "magick," even though these practices unfold in the material world and its social institutions.[20] This is all well enough for two of the most well-known modern magi, but, as noted above, Eliade lends academic credence to their beliefs, even though the literary form of initiation endorsed by Yeats and Crowley constitutes a 'debased' or fallen form. *Adepts of Modernism* contends that these magazines *are* magic, that they *are* initiation, while resisting the notion that these movements, and the art associated with them, are somehow worthless, or aesthetically and morally

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[19] While Surette's work on the occult in literary modernism is well known to those in Modernist Studies, it may come as a surprise to some that the whole field of Western esotericism studies is, at the time of this dissertation, scarcely twenty years old. The occult *in general*, not just *vis-à-vis* modernism, was not a subject deemed worthy of academic study until fairly recently (Bogdan 1).

[20] Lehrich draws attention to Crowley's connection between "magick" and print culture in his book *Magick in Theory and Practice*. According to Crowley: "MAGICK is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will. (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 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 Changes to take place in conformity with my Will)" (qtd. in Lehrich 158). Sociologist Marcel Mauss would recognize the concept of printed objects as containing *mana,* the "transmissible" or "contagious" essence within magical objects; it is "represented as a material body" (109). Magazines as a form of circulating, materialized magic in flux—interacting with other agents, forging on into the future—makes sense in a poetic (or magical) logic.

bankrupt. Upon consideration of the vastness of the network of adeptship, and of how many writers, editors, periodicals, and political movements were entangled within it, this position becomes, simply, untenable.

The study of esoteric periodicals as circulating forms of materialized magic is consistent with the direction in which the contemporary scholarship of modernism is heading. In a 2008 article entitled "The New Modernist Studies," Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz describe the formation of this relatively new field and sum up its primary objective in a single word: "*expansion*" (emphasis theirs, 737). They list temporal, spatial, and "vertical" expansions as three broad categories within which this work can be done. My methodological approach operates within all three categories, though "vertical" offers the most striking benefits for expansion by way of interest in mysticism.

Vertical expansion, as Mao and Walkowitz describe it, is one where "canons have been critiqued and reconfigured; in which works by members of marginalized social groups have been encountered with fresh eyes and ears; and in which scholarly inquiry has increasingly extended to matters of production, dissemination, and reception" (738). In focusing on understudied groups of mystical writers and tracing their contributions to modernism through the production, dissemination, and reception of culture through periodicals, I take a multicentric approach, one in which mysticism is brought to the forefront and politicized, rather than repressed and sanitized. As this study took shape, it revealed some surprising implications for anarchism, individualism, socialism, and feminism. The adept attitude bridges the chasm between anarchism and individualism; it clashes with the collective-mindedness of some varieties of socialism while resonating with other, elitist varieties. The editorial preoccupation with lunar symbolism and a spiritual new age has striking feminist undertones—radiant in moonlight, the contributions that

Shakespear, Farr, and Collins made to an occult modernism bring them to the center of the conversation rather than to the margins.

In terms of temporal expansion, my beginning with Blavatsky and Collins's *Lucifer* in 1887 positions my study near the earlier limits of when modernism is supposed to have 'begun.' Mao and Walkowitz would accept this shifting of temporal boundaries as part of the expansive principles the New Modernist Studies. They observe that "periods seem inevitably to get bigger," citing "the long eighteenth century" as one example. Since Theosophy was such a connecting force in modernist periodical culture, the proto-modernist *Lucifer* magazine of the *Fin de Siècle* demands consideration in conversations about the esoteric literature of modernism.

Spatially speaking, my project primarily concerns itself with periodicals published out of England or the United States. Through the lens of mysticism, however, it turns away from specific nations as isolated literary cultures, opting instead for a "transnational turn," which, as Mao and Walkowitz affirm, "is widely seen as crucially transformative and will certainly remain so for many years…" (738). After all, it is the common syncretic wisdom tradition that connects these magazine cultures over and above national (and temporal or aesthetic) boundaries. In doing modernism differently through a performative analysis of modern mysticism *vis-à-vis* its periodical cultures, I embrace the expansive principles of the New Modernist Studies and hope to complicate established notions of what modernism is and what little magazines are.

Current attempts at theorizing the little magazines of modernism have made much headway since the days of Hoffman et al. However, they are all still currently wanting; they are, consciously or unconsciously, perpetuating "occultophobia." In *Little Magazines and Modernism: New Approaches* (2007), an edited collection of essays, Suzanne Churchill and Adam McKible rightly point out that Hoffman et al.'s seminal work regularly "neglected, belittled, or misunderstood" the contributions of women, political radicals, and people of color in the emergence of little magazines as a significant

cultural force (9). What they do not say, and that I would add, is that mysticism, spirituality, and religion at large are paid little mind in Hoffman et al.'s canonical work; this decision automatically sets the stage for the exclusion of dozens of modern periodicals in spite of their varying degrees of political, aesthetic, and spiritual radicalism.[21] Unfortunately, Churchill and McKible do not emphasize the importance of these topics either, though a chapter by Bruce Clark ably handles the "cosmic" philosophy of Dora Marsden.

Following Jerome McGann, Sean Latham, Co-director of the Modernist Journals Project, argues that periodicals ought not to be viewed simply as "container[s] for texts" (412), but that their material complexity is a site for interactivity: poems and articles are not the only objects of interest in a magazine: so are the advertisements, letters to the editor, and even the structure of the magazine itself, which is not necessarily intended to be read in a linear fashion, especially once innovations in periodical layouts begin to distinguish them from books to a greater degree (compare the book-like *Lucifer* volume 1, issue 1 with the strikingly visual *Blast* volume 1, issue 1 for a prime example). To demonstrate the potential for interaction within the bibliographic codes of periodicals, Latham performs close readings of some modernist little magazines using a modified version of what N. Katherine Hayles has termed "recombinant flux," where themes and tendencies emerge as wholes greater than the sums of their parts.[22] In a sense, such a method allows the magazines, mere *things*, to

[21] While Hoffman et al briefly mention the Bengali mystic and Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore as a contributor to *Poetry* magazine, Annie Besant and G. R. S. Mead, influential rival Theosophists and editors of important Theosophical periodicals (some of which ran through and beyond 1912), get no such recognition. The total omission of A. R. Orage and his *New Age* magazine seems particularly glaring, given that this publication ran from 1907-1922 under Orage's editorship alone. Hoffman et al.'s omissions are further compounded by their participation in the now-familiar move of sanitizing (or, more kindly, "aestheticizing") mystical influences on literary works and movements.

[22] In her 2007 article, "Intermediation," N. Katherine Hayles explains that "recombinant flux" is an aesthetic particular to electronic texts which "gives a much stronger impression of agency than does a book," as each component works with the others, and with the reader, to form a partnership or actor network (106). Transplanting this term into modernist periodical studies, Latham argues that recombinant flux allows for the assembly of "a weak but nevertheless persistent associative structure that proffers thematic links and connections without insisting directly on them" (414). This emergence of meaning within an acting network of material objects and the other entities that interact with it sounds suspiciously like *mana*. Is a growing magazine audience generative of *mana*?

speak for themselves. This is something of a magical proposition, a confusion of subject, rite, and object. In his articulation of a magical criticism, Bracken evokes Walter Benjamin's postulation that "a properly 'magical' criticism does not decipher the meaning of the artwork. Instead it brings it back to life. Interpretation is therefore animation" (17). And it is this reanimation, this resurrection, that "does justice to the secret." This is no dead history of unfashionable mystical movements. When we listen to what the editors say, to how readers respond, and to what the advertisements tell, we will see that modernism is full of mysticism and, despite its supposedly ancient heritage, there is something *new* about this mysticism, this mysticism of modernity. And, as the editor-adepts and their communities attempt to figure out exactly what that is in their periodicals, they invite us to join them, for we, too—like them—can become adepts of modernism.

Moving from Macrocosm to Microcosm: Chapter Summaries

This dissertation unfolds over five chapters. Each chapter covers a single magical magazine, paying special attention to the following: its strategies of initiation; its central network of adept editors and contributors; its editorial and contributor positions on mysticism and the relationship between art and spirituality; its reader responses to the same; and its paratexts, such as advertisements trafficking in mystical books and magazines. To realize these ends of skrying a new vision of modernism, this study commences with a reconsideration of three popular transatlantic modernist little magazines: *The Little Review, The Egoist*, and *The New Age*. My objective is to foreground the influences of mystical beliefs and practices on the modernist aesthetics and politics of these well-recognized periodicals before jumping back in time to the year 1909, when Aleister Crowley published *The Equinox*, and then further back to 1887, when Helena Blavatsky and Mabel

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Mauss describes this essence of materialized magic that "works at a distance between sympathetic beings" as "a kind of ether, imponderable, communicable, which spreads of its own accord" (Mauss 112). Just as the magazines themselves circulate, so does the meaning within and among them.

Collins debuted *Lucifer*. In so doing, I foreground the rich occult heritage of modernist periodical culture and open possibilities for new approaches to the themes, tendencies, and figures that extend beyond the established idioms of "the standard view" of modernism.

Chapter 1, "An 'Insouciant Little Pagan Paper': *The Little Review* as (Poetic) Initiation, 1914-1922," shows how Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap promote a new spirituality as a panacea for the ills of modern living. The editorial posture is one of *insouciance*, a calculated irreverence, a seeming lack of commitment to a specific viewpoint (or, with specific "cults," as they put it). In reality, their 'hands-off' editorial policy reflects their initial commitment to both anarchism and esotericism, culminating in a thwarted *mystical anarchism* that never fully materialized in their magazine, or in America. Anderson and Heap's adept performance valorizes the lunar archetype of alchemy, thus positioning them as imaginative, intuitive, fun, 'irrational,' and feminine. They set themselves against the so-called Practical Person (symbolizing the uninitiated Masses), an excessively solar stereotype found in many other sources of esoteric literature. This calculated ridicule serves to exclude the general public to which they claim to make no compromise, even as they invite the Elect to join the "secret society of modernism"; questing adepts can follow suit in adopting their adept attitude and reading their assigned texts to make their own inquiries into modernism, anarchism, feminism, and mysticism.

Further, an essay by a senior member of the modernist circle, Huntly Carter, exemplifies *The Little Review*'s general belief that art and spirituality are one and the same. Carter's Theosophical approach to art in "Poetry Versus Imagism" bears an uncanny resemblance to that of Algernon Blackwood, a Theosophist and Golden Dawn adept who published his "Diary of a Theosophist" in *Lucifer* magazine over two decades earlier. Anderson and Heap have always been mystics—it is not as if they were suddenly 'converted' out of nowhere by Orage to Gurdjieff's Fourth Way in their later years. Paying attention to their editorial practice as spiritual and literary initiation in *The Little*

Review thus makes more understandable their desire to abandon the paper—it also makes more intelligible their transition from mystical anarchists to individualistic modernists.

Chapter 2, "Modernisms of Some Charming Egoists: Literary and Mystical Elitism in *The Egoist*, 1914-1919," focuses on Dora Marsden, the editor-adept who oversaw the transition of *The New Freewoman* from a feminist magazine into *The Egoist*, an "individualist review." The editorial decisions of Marsden and Harriet Shaw Weaver, along with co-editors and key contributors Leonard A. Compton-Rickett, Richard Aldington, H. D., and Ezra Pound, demonstrate a keen interest in esotericism and all things classical. These figures have a complex and ambivalent relationship with mysticism, but their common investment in individualism and an elitist, exclusive, classical modernism holds them together, bridging the gap between the philosophical egoists and the poetic imagists who dominate the first volume.

Illustrative of this ideological instability is a work of esoteric literature called "Memoirs of a Charming Person." This text was translated from its original French by Olivia Shakespear, mother to Dorothy Shakespear, eventual mother-in-law to Ezra Pound, and an under-appreciated modernist adept who brought the work of the French Renaissance occultist Abbé Nicolas-Pierre-Henri de Montfaucon de Villars to a new audience, thus facilitating the founding of the "secret society of modernism" in Europe. "Memoirs" is notable for its dramatization of the solar and lunar archetypes of alchemy, as well as for its introduction to the elemental or occult correspondences through its discourse on gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, and undines. Also notable is its engagement with Hellenic and Hermetic philosophy, and its citation of dozens of occult thinkers from this intellectual lineage. This catalogue of classical philosophy allows readers to initiate themselves into the same wisdom tradition venerated by the Master in the story and also by the modernists who translated and published it. Accordingly, Shakespear's role in the translation of Montfaucon's text is also given renewed consideration; she acts as a self-appointed *soror mystica* or "mystical sister," an alchemist's

assistant, or a force of the feminine subconscious, to Montfaucon and his patriarchal text—as well as to the "male ego" of *The Egoist* as a whole, which sought to exorcize the feminism from its individualistic brand of modernism.

Chapter 3, ""Towards [a Mystical, Feminist] Socialism": The Sun and Moon of *The New Age*, 1907-1922," shows that, unlike the coy posturing of the previous two magazines, *The New Age* does not bother hiding its occult inclinations. Near the end of the magazine's first volume, Orage bluntly aligns himself and the journal with the occult wisdom tradition. A mystery, then, as to why this side of the *New Age* has been so frequently overlooked. Past studies have blamed Orage's fascination with mysticism after the Great War for the decline in the magazine's quality, but this "mystical note" was present from the outset. I contend that Orage's brand of *mystical socialism* was key to the development of his "presentative" style that made his magazine such a success in the first place.

Orage, with his famously lucid editorial style of "brilliant common sense," personifies the occult sun reflecting against the mysterious, humorous, and outrageously feminist moon of fellow adept Florence Farr. Farr, no mere *soror mystica* to Orage, is an alchemical master in her own right, and she gives her readers (male allies and New Women alike) the tools to initiate themselves into a *mystical feminism*. Farr's Medusa mask and her emphasis on the magical power of laughter eerily anticipates the *Écriture feminine* of Hélène Cixous as laid out in her groundbreaking 1975 essay, "Laugh of the Medusa." Farr's knowledge of alchemy and her performance of its lunar archetype makes for powerful feminist writing; although Farr never attained enduring fame as a modernist writer, any adept of feminism would be inspired by her *New Age* offerings.

Together, Orage and Farr theorize a feminist, mystical socialism that moves beyond strictly economic or materialistic concerns. As is to be expected, this idiosyncratic socialism is interwoven with many Theosophical strands, appealing to the elitist posture of both occultists and Fabians. When these strands are traced further and further back, they lead to the great French magus Eliphas

Lévi, whose philosophy was instrumental not only in the development of modern occultism, but in modern socialism as well.

In Chapter 4, "Magick, in Dreams and Diaries: The Spider's Web of Initiation in *The Equinox,* 1909-1914," I examine the first properly occult periodical of this study. Although Crowley is not generally considered a 'modernist,' his involvement in modernist periodical culture leaves him inextricably implicated in modernism—as much as he might resent that observation. He contributed articles and poems to venues in which we might expect them to appear, such as *The Occult Review*, but dozens of his poems, essays, and short stories appear in modernist journals including *The International*, *The English Review*, and the liminal *New Age*. He is mentioned in all the little magazines previously discussed in this dissertation.

The Equinox is most committed to occult concerns, such as offering readers a course of study and a method of self-initiation. However, esoteric literature, in the form of a magical diary and a short story, plays an equally important role in initiating readers. Crowley's story, "The Dream Circean," was intended for publication in Orage's *The New Age*, but the magus instead published it in his own journal. The story dramatizes the magical power of lucid dreaming and contains an esoteric message of mental mastery decipherable through an understanding of the elemental correspondences and the thinking of Eliphas Lévi. "The Dream Circean" is a paragon of esoteric literature and showcases its ability to transmit esoteric wisdom to a reader, whether the narrative is 'real' or 'fictional.'

Chapter 5, "'Bring[ing] Light to the Hidden Things of Darkness': The Occulted Proto-Modernism of *Lucifer*, 1887-1891," deals with the Theosophical journal edited by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Mabel Collins. *Lucifer* instructs readers in the alchemical reading method, which should now be a familiar tactic of initiation since the modernist journals considered in this dissertation have all done the same. This journal also situates itself within the "Luciferian Tradition,"

and the "shock value" of its name dramatizes its adept attitude; it attracts theosophical seekers and repels the unworthy Practical Public. These strategies of initiation and exclusion precede modernism, but they undoubtedly made an impression on the periodical culture of the modernist editor-adepts.

Like *The Equinox*, this magazine is primarily committed to discussions of occultism, but it too is chock full of literature. The first and second volumes of *Lucifer* serialize Mabel Collins's esoteric novella, "The Blossom and the Fruit: The True Story of a Magician." This novella utilizes the same techniques of occult initiation that we have seen performed in all the preceding modernist little magazines, and the works of esoteric literature within them. Thus, *Lucifer*'s editorial practice and its transmission of occult wisdom through esoteric literature extends the temporality of modernism into the *Fin de Siècle* and joins three generations of writers in an extended network of adeptship.

Closing the Portal: Ceasing, but not Concluding…

I am no stranger to esoteric literature with strategically fluctuating meanings. I have learned much from my own past astral duel with Imperator William Butler Yeats for the qualification of Master of Arts. Yeats's notorious book, *A Vision* (1938), is my ideal model of a supposedly serious occult work that playfully subverts expectations in a complex literary game while fashioning a mythic panorama of history. I argued that Yeats's book has frustrated many critics and scholars through its dramatic performance of its own themes: the "vision" promised to us by Yeats is ours to construct if we stop looking to him as some sort of guru, passively accepting his acts of sorcerous misdirection at face value. His playful interactions with fictional characters as though they were real, his purposeful abuse of paratexts, his subtle assignment of an occult course of reading, and especially his cheeky flouting of scholarly convention have convinced me that he is demonstrating a mystical ontology, epistemology, and methodology rather than guaranteeing the "answers to all his questions," and ours—a myth endorsed by the Macmillan publishing company, repeated and

mobilized on the book's dust jacket. In that study, I played along in the process and twisted my own paratexts as well, thus participating in Yeats's chicanery and *revealing the magic*, rather than *exposing his smoke and mirrors*.

Yeats's book is an "antithetical" or "lunar" book—a performative tool of Yeats's magical thinking, rather than a purely logical, rational, or "solar" technology for explication. The periodicals I have studied here do similar work. So too does this dissertation, for that matter. In a sense, this dissertation has become (or always was) an *antithetical dissertation* for its adept attitude, its engagement with mysticism as criticism, its deliberate confusion of actor, rite, and object, its ascribing of agency to periodicals, and its performance of occult initiation techniques within its pages. The clashing components of Yeats's book facilitate the emergence of new meanings; to borrow from the language of Modernist Periodical Studies, the tensions within and between Yeats's texts and paratexts dramatize the recombinant flux to which Latham refers when he speaks of the various components of periodicals interacting with one another to create new readings, new dynamics.

In *A Vision*, these tensions essentially manifest as Yeats's ghostly Frustrators, the mischievous spirits who intervened at inopportune times to thwart his progress in writing the book. Personifying Agrippa's "taciturnity" that conceals occult wisdom, the Frustrators warn us: "we will deceive you if we can" (13). This is the true esotericism of Yeats's book; if we waste too much of our time trying to grapple with his abstract systems in the hope that they can somehow predict the future, we miss the ways in which Yeats tries to push us to seek our own vision, to become our own creative, antithetical selves. This adept mode of instruction, this discovery-based pedagogy, bears the same implied credos held dear within most occult systems: there is no religion higher than personal truth, and we must all strive to find it for ourselves. What secret instructions can we receive from the other modern mystics? What do their magical magazines really want to tell us once we lift the

veil to hear their truths? What else can we see as the smoke drops, the mirrors glimmer, and the strings sway?

Studying these five influential periodicals of modernity, *The Little Review*, *The Egoist*, *The New Age, The Equinox,* and *Lucifer* leaves me with a similar feeling as when I had studied Yeats's text of mystical initiation. The 'hands-off' editorial leanings of many of these editor-adepts, their disavowal of inept readers or Practical People, their engagement with the solar and lunar archetypes and elemental correspondences of alchemy, their refusal to allow us to deceive ourselves into investing too heavily in any single source of authority, and their trust in us to accept or reject their knowledge so as to find our own truths—all of these elements are present in the network of magazines covered in this study. I am not concerned with whether or not the esoteric wisdom tradition of reading, writing, and editing has an actual, unbroken line of transmission to some mythical origin in Egypt or Greece or India. The fact of the matter is that the editors of these publications are adepts, to various degrees, and they chose to performatively align themselves with this same tradition, whatever its actual origin, however broken or unbroken. Their choices, and the effects on the literary and political culture of the twentieth century stemming from these choices, should be taken seriously, even if the origin myth motivating these choices is "fallacious," or, more charitably, "symbolic."

Mysticism and modernism go hand in hand, and periodicals were instrumental in the development and dissemination of both. The forthcoming pages will further our understanding of how these all worked together within the actual pages of periodicals as their contributors ponder, pontificate about, mock, and study what it means to be an adept—or a Modern. This network of adeptship sprawls wide and deep, whether the periodicals associated with this network are outwardly portrayed as secular or otherwise. These magazines all initiate. Their purpose of initiation unites them in unexpected ways.

Knowing that Yeats encoded esoteric messages in his modernist works, should it come to us as any surprise that those mystics that came before and after him would make similar gestures? What do we make of the editorial style of Margaret Anderson of *The Little Review* when she aligns herself with anarchy, lunacy, and femininity? Does this gesture perform an occult aesthetic or a modernist aesthetic? What about when Florence Farr of *The New Age* does it? Or, when Mabel Collins of *Lucifer* does it?

In the whirling and twirling of seeker and master, of mysticism, modernism, and magazine, how can we tell the dancers from the dance?

Chapter 1

An "Insouciant Little Pagan Paper": *The Little Review* as (Poetic) Initiation, 1914-1922

NIX NIHIL
"Margaret Anderson:
brilliant beauty with quicksilver tongue;
big name in a Little Review;
mystical maven, laughing raven,
speak to me and let me see!"

ANDERSON
"Commence your new quest,
page-adept; nice to meet you,
so I greet you.

You seek Art and find me.
I've a lot to say—
much less so for Jane.

Savor the silence
in warm winds.
Even when walking through slums,
have your day in the sun!"

* * *

This opening chapter foregrounds the connections between mysticism and literary modernism in the ground-breaking periodical, *The Little Review*. With the easy availability of *The Little Review* online courtesy of the Modernist Journals Project, along with the colorful personalities of its editors, this journal has become a popular object of study. I look at this magazine from a different angle, an esoteric angle, and show how its meaning changes when such a shift in perspective occurs. How does our understanding of *The Little Review*—and modernism in general—change when we

view its editors as not just aesthetic curators, but also as mystical initiators to those seekers of artistic *and spiritual* fulfilment?

The masthead of the early issues of *The Little Review*, established in 1914, professes to focus on "Literature Drama Music Art," and this little magazine is most often considered on these terms. However, almost as much editorial focus is given to matters of spirituality as it is to matters of art. I argue that *The Little Review* was as devoted to spreading ideas of a 'new' religion as it was devoted to spreading innovations in art—indeed, the editors saw little difference between these two fields. "If you've ever read poetry with a feeling that it was your religion, your very life," Margaret Anderson muses in her first editorial, "then you'll understand our hope to bring them nearer to the common experience of the people who read us" ("Announcement" 2). In accordance with the views of its editors, *The Little Review* was invested in initiating its readers into an elect clique of artists—many of whom also happened to be interested in mysticism and esotericism. Under the editorship of Anderson, and later, Jane Heap, *The Little Review* serves as a course of study on esoteric philosophy; it was a spiritual practice, a cultural artifact serving as a circulating, aestheticized rite of initiation for the curious and the open-minded. It welcomed its readership into a complex community where mysticism, feminism, modernism, and anarchism co-existed—sometimes uncomfortably.

These rites of initiation are hidden in plain sight: through editorials and letters to the editor, and through paratexts, such as book reviews, floating quotations, and advertisements. This is the 'insouciance' of *The Little Review*, its public secret; to maintain an air of 'cool,' irreverent detachment in the face of its earnest quest to spread its passion for art and for poetry, often using esoteric terminology in its mission. This literary journal spoke to aspiring artist and adept alike, but the former may not always recognize the presence of the latter. And, the critics and scholars that have noticed these esoteric elements in *The Little Review* have not studied them in depth or reinterpreted the meaning of the magazine on these terms. This chapter will show how this avant-garde magazine,

for all its emphasis on the 'new,' owes much to an occult heritage going back to the 1880s and 1890s, and its editorial rituals of initiation re-actualize those performed by the editor-adepts of the *Fin de Siècle*, who in turn re-actualize a wisdom tradition reaching back to the Renaissance, which itself then supposedly reaches even further back to ancient times. Undoubtedly, *The Little Review* was new and exciting in 1914—but its posture and politics of initiation, which manifest as an American brand of *mystical anarchism* are not as new as they initially appear.

This chapter first considers Anderson and Heap's editorial position and situates their anarchistic, avant-garde posturing within a larger mystical praxis. Then, it compares "Poetry Versus Imagism," a short essay by Huntly Carter published in *The Little Review* in 1915, with "Diary of a Theosophist," an essay by prolific occult author, Theosophist, and Golden Dawn initiate Algernon Blackwood, published in Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's *Lucifer* magazine in 1892. This comparison illustrates how Carter's view of the relationship between art and spirituality is rooted in Theosophical ideas and participates in a larger esoteric tradition of literary initiation. Being a senior member of the modernist circle, Carter imports these older ideas into this newer, anarchist-modernist context; his self-described "metaphysical" approach to poetry is consistent with philosophical ideas espoused by other writers in *The Little Review*, including Anderson and Heap. Yet, his essay is notable for going a step further by explicitly using Theosophical terminology in a way that most of these other contributors do not, and he had already covered similar ground in *The Egoist* a year earlier, in even more bluntly spiritual terms, in an article called "Towards a Human Aesthetic." Even though Carter's earnest, Romantic approach to poetry feels somewhat quaint in this magazine when compared to some of its more aesthetically or politically radical modernist offerings, the way in which it couches poetic inspiration in terms of a spiritual initiation recalls a similar technique that Blackwood uses in *Lucifer*. Thus, *The Little Review's* promotion of mystical and esoteric articles underlines and complements Anderson's and Heap's own approach to art as a spiritual practice, or

poetry as a form of spiritual initiation—even if they ultimately find fault with Carter's critique of Imagism, and even if Carter himself ultimately failed to make an enduring impression as a great modernist writer and critic.[23]

To be clear, *The Little Review* is not generally considered to be an occult-centred publication, like the more properly occult periodicals considered later in this study, such as Aleister Crowley's *Equinox* or H. P. Blavatsky's *Lucifer*. This does not mean, however, that these elements are not present in the journal. Some scholars have made brief mention of the editors' mystical leanings before: for example, Jayne Marek's 1995 book, *Women Editing Modernism*, and Linda Lappin's 2013 essay, "Jane Heap and Her Circle," both note the importance of the philosophy of the Russian mystic, George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, on Anderson and Heap's spiritual development since these women set off to Fontainebleau, France in 1924 to study under his tutelage at the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man. While both studies are excellent for their attention to women's labour and spirituality in a general sense, neither pursues in detail the influence of the editors' mystical leanings on the aesthetics and politics of the magazine itself. This chapter remedies a widespread critical neglect in drawing attention to *The Little Review*'s performance of an elitist, esoteric attitude found not only in other modernist magazines, but also in occult journals. I call this mode of performance the *adept attitude*, part of which includes the participation in an esoteric tradition that privileges the mental independence of its readership and employs a vocabulary recognizable by other adepts and aspirants.

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[23] Huntly Carter is one of those marginal modernists whose name frequently appears in Modernist Studies books in big bricks of text naming contributors to various little magazines, such as *The Little Review*, *The Egoist*, and *The New Age*, among others. Despite his frequent appearances on such lists, Carter never did become a leading modernist writer—Les Garner, the biographer of *Egoist* editor-adept Dora Marsden, describes his writing as "execrable" and determines that Marsden must have been "desperate" to publish his "drivel" (75). Bruce Clarke notes that Carter was "singled out for needling…for metaphysical mumbo-jumbo" by C. E. Bechhöfer, *The New Age*'s deadliest satirist. While Carter's ideas are frequently attacked in reader-response columns (by Anderson herself, and by Richard Aldington here in *The Little Review*), his work is nonetheless a testament to the importance of mystical and esoteric thinking in modernist periodical culture.

Marek's study does recognize the importance of art as a pathway to spirituality; she reminds readers that a short description of the Nobel Prize-winning poet and Bengali mystic Rabindranath Tagore ("And—[Tagore]") was one Jane Heap's first contributions to be printed in *The Little Review* and that the interest in Tagore evidenced by the early issues of *The Little Review* "foreshadows both editors' attachment to Gurdjieff's mystical community in France in later years, an attachment that reveals the integrative nature of their critical and artistic beliefs" (76). Marek also notes that Heap refuses to "spell everything out" and suggests that this posture "challenged traditional expectations about what a critic should do" (76); beyond being an individual quirk on the part of the editors, or even a larger quirk among modernist editors at large, this editorial practice is one aspect of the adept attitude that participates in an esoteric tradition of mystical initiation and appeals to their mystical anarchist sensibilities.

Also telling is Marek's observation that Heap's "first longer piece for the magazine," called "And—[Paderewski and Tagore]" again returns to the Bengali mystic as subject (77). In this longer piece, Heap paints a portrait of a serene Tagore watching a symphony, a scene that Marek interprets as a metaphor for "spiritual elevation" (78). Indeed, Heap is so taken with Tagore that she seems to forget that there is a concert going on. Together, the music and the Master merge into a total mystical experience:

> I watched him until I was almost in a trance: the angle at which his head was put on, the cheek bones that were like an extra feature …. Everything that lies beyond the reach of thought and wonder seemed concentrated in that dark Stranger. I trembled, frightened by my imagination and a little melancholy. At last Paderewski came out to his piano, *elegante* and impenetrable. I seemed to see him quite differently beside Tagore—a bright heaven beside a still universe. I was so filled there was no room left in me for the music. ("And—[Paderewski and Tagore]" 8)

This brief episode should serve as an important reminder that the artistic life that so famously compelled Anderson and Heap is intertwined with their spiritual life in complex ways; even though the music is a form of enchantment in itself, it is ultimately secondary to spiritual experience—this realization will eventually lead both Heap and Anderson away from their magazine and into a communal, spiritual life with Gurdjieff and his circle. Marek indeed deserves credit for noticing the importance of mysticism to the editors of *The Little Review*, at least as far as Tagore is concerned, but the short observation on "spiritual elevation" is all that is said on the matter. Her intervention lies primarily in highlighting the women's labour in *The Little Review* and decoupling it from the overdetermining presence of Ezra Pound, who joined as foreign editor in April 1917.[24] Accordingly, little space is given over to discussing *how* the interest in mysticism and spirituality on the part of the editors actually affected their magazine's aesthetic and political vision.

Similarly, Lappin's 2013 article leaves no doubt about the importance of mysticism and spirituality in the lives of Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, though, again, the role of spiritual practice in relation to the creation and publication of the magazine itself is not discussed in any detail. Lappin observes that a 1924 production of sacred dances and gymnastics by a troupe from Gurdjieff's Institute "proved to be transforming" to Heap and Anderson; she also notes the significance of the fact that the introductory speaker for the event was none other than A. R. Orage, a well-studied occultist and editor of *The New Age*, a labour and socialist magazine contemporaneous with *The Little Review* (80-81). Like Anderson and Heap's magazine, *The New Age* was not explicitly

[24] In my mystical consideration of *The Little Review*, I will perform a small gesture of sleight of hand. Following Marek's approach, I will, for the moment, make the overdetermining presence of Ezra Pound—disappear! Like Marek, I focus more on the women who founded the periodical—and their own politics and aesthetics of art and spirituality—instead of Pound's dramatic and tumultuous arrival on the scene. Part of my reason for doing so is to differentiate my study from the foundational works of the New Modernist Studies, some of which still give Pound the first and last word, almost literally. For example, in *Modernism in the Magazines*, Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman credit Pound as a "progenitor" of Modernist Periodical Studies in their introduction. While they do their Great Work in setting the foundation of the New Modernist Studies by "belatedly following in [Pound's] footsteps" (3), my task is to find other footprints and follow them instead.

occult in nature, but it had an editor that was heavily invested in the occult and wove mystical threads into the fabric of his magazine during its long run.[25] Lappin describes this meeting of minds as follows:

> Both Heap and Anderson were deeply struck by the ideas expounded by Orage, by the dancers, and by the figure of Gurdjieff who proffered a method of self-development and awareness enhancement, in itself an exciting concept for these two women who dreamed of making life itself an art and had dedicated themselves to the quest for new ideas. Gurdjieff's teaching centered upon the awakening of a higher self lulled to sleep by the mechanical quality of modern life. This project surpassed all Heap and Anderson had known and done before: radical politics, radical life style, and the promotion of the avant-garde…. (81)

Anderson would go on to write two books on Gurdjieffian philosophy: *The Fiery Fountains* (1951) and *The Unknowable Gurdjieff* (1962).[26] It seems quite clear that Tagore, Gurdjieff, Orage, and other modern mystics profoundly influenced both Anderson and Heap. Yet, the full implications of these influences on *The Little Review* remain largely unexamined. This critical neglect is symptomatic of the scholarly ailment of "occultophobia" as theorized by Leon Surette; it has persisted through most of the twentieth century and lingers now into the twenty-first. Unfortunately, it remains entrenched in the New Modernist Studies, despite this critical movement's best intentions and its mission of expansion and recapitulation.

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[25] For example, Orage wrote in "Towards Socialism II" (1907): "Every student of traditional wisdom knows that the core and heart of esotericism is this very nature of man about which the half educated dogmatise so freely. Whoever has not realized the mystery of man is fit only for journeyman's work in the art of human reform" (375). Like Anderson and Heap, Orage also assumes that his readership is familiar with esoteric traditions and philosophy, and he too caters to an adept readership.

[26] Anderson's *The Unknowable Gurdjieff* is part of the A. R. Orage book collection, held by the Brotherton Library Special Collections at the University of Leeds. Its presence there underscores not only Orage's reverence for Gurdjieff, but also his respect for Anderson; and it further cements the spiritual kinship between these two editor-adepts and their periodicals.

Initiation

As I sit in the reading room of the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford, I prepare myself for my first initiation ceremony, following the astral trail of the modernist occult masters. I hold the first issues of *The Little Review*. These magazines hang together with staples grown rusty with age, infecting the surrounding paper with brown blotches. The paper itself, measuring about 17.5 cm by 25.5 cm, is yellowing around the edges. The first issue is jacketed in a rather ugly brown-green-beige card cover. A crudely glued-on white, paper label is affixed, reading, "The Little Review Literature Drama Music Art Margaret C. Anderson Editor." In spite of its magical aura, this relic looks cheap and slapped together. The *Little Review* is most definitely a true "little magazine" in respect to its physical appearance—not very impressive-looking at all, especially given what I have read about the extravagant covers of the illustrious occult magazines, *Equinox* and *Lucifer*. Yet, here I am holding a century-old magazine that helped launch modernism in America! The experience is thrilling.

Lifting the first issue, I intuitively visualize Anderson and Heap working together at Fontainebleau with the other women of The Rope. I also see Anderson camping down by Lake Michigan, destitute, suffering for her art. But for her, it was all worth it, and now, a century later, I benefit from the wisdom that she had suffered to bestow upon me. I bow my head in gratitude.

What mysteries await? What secrets will be revealed? How will these young modernists, *les jeunes*, do justice to the ancient wisdom that in turn inspired them?

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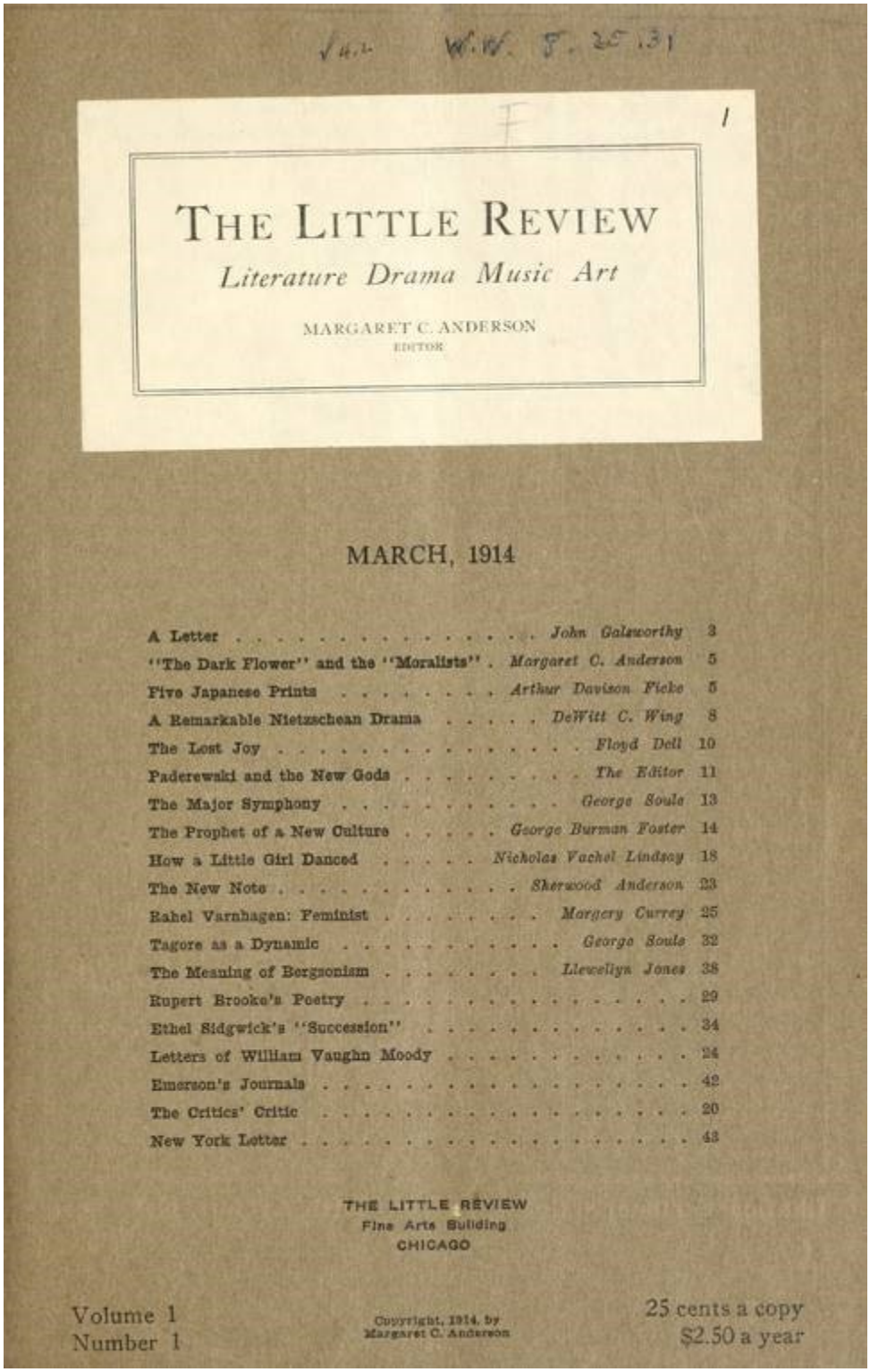

THE LITTLE REVIEW

Literature Drama Music Art

MARGARET C. ANDERSON
EDITOR

MARCH, 1914

THE LITTLE REVIEW
Fine Arts Building
CHICAGO

Volume 1
Number 1

25 cents a copy
$2.50 a year

Fig. 2. Cover of *The Little Review*, volume 1, number 1. *Modernist Journals Project*. https://repository.library.brown.edu/viewers/image/thumbnail/bdr:509281/

Modernist Esotericism and the Adept Attitude

Virtually any text written with intention by an adept can serve as a vehicle for initiation. Whether that text is 'fiction' or 'non-fiction' is of little consequence. In applying this principle to the little magazine form, and magazine networks in general, I argue that Anderson and Heap share this same conviction; their mystically anarchistic editorial practice, their engagement with mystical philosophy, their regular usage of esoteric terminology, and their advertising of occult treatises all make *The Little Review* an ideal vehicle for literary, political, *and spiritual* initiation.

As will become clear over the course of this chapter, and indeed this entire study, esoteric periodicals emphasize readerly autonomy as part of their adept mode of reading and writing. Part of Anderson and Heap's performance of an adept attitude lies in their 'hands off' editorial posture. Their stated reason for having no set policy is to foster rich discussion (or, even better, fiery debate) on a wide array of topics from a multiplicity of perspectives ("Our First Year" 1). In reframing the editors' mystically anarchist 'hands-off' style as a continuation of a longer esoteric tradition of initiation that appealed to all the modernist editor-adepts considered in this study, I demonstrate that this magazine best known for "making no compromise with the public taste" sought to produce and cater to an adept audience, to foster a turning inward toward a personal mysticism, with art (especially poetry) as a path to enlightenment. Margaret Anderson's editorial (non-)policy is an important clue in considering how *The Little Review* works as a vehicle of initiation; in an overview of the magazine's first year of existence, wherein Anderson articulates her vision of its purpose, she playfully celebrates the magazine's policy, or lack thereof.

> We have not set forth a policy; we have not identified ourselves with a point of view, except in so far as we have been quite ridiculously appreciative; we have not expounded a

> philosophy, except in so far as we have been quite outlandishly anarchistic; we have been uncritical, indiscriminate, juvenile, exuberant, chaotic, amateurish, emotional, tiresomely enthusiastic, and a lot of other things which I can't remember now…. ("Our First Year" 1)

Anderson claims not to have a policy, which is in line with her "outlandishly anarchistic" stylings of the magazine's early volumes. Paradoxically, this non-policy is a policy in itself, following in both anarchistic and esoteric traditions; it is an adept-driven challenge in the tradition of alchemy that foreshadows a similar method of training that she would grow familiar with in her days to come as an initiate of Gurdjieff's Fourth Way.[27] Like many adepts before her, Anderson likewise invites readers to discover for themselves the deeper meaning of her magazine's *raison d'être*.

Not only is this stance in line with what other editors were doing in contemporary modernist journals such as *The Egoist* and, to a lesser extent, *The New Age* (which is explicitly geared toward an invested socialist audience), it also reflects the editors' early anarchistic leanings, which privileges the autonomy of individual readers, acknowledging their intelligence and agency. This editorial appreciation for multiplicity, contradiction, shock, instability, and juxtaposition meshes with the aesthetics of the mystical anarchism that emerged out of Russia in the early 1900s.[28] As Rose-Carol Washton Long explains in her reading of the pioneering abstract art of Wassili Kandinsky, whose

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[27] Louise Welch, another disciple of Gurdjieff, comments on the importance placed on self-discovery and mental independence in the Fourth Way teachings: "In the end, after taking in and testing what knowledge one was given, it was necessary to trust what was reliable in oneself. On the one hand, obedience to a teacher for a time was essential. On the other, it had to lead to obedience to one's own higher nature" (102). Gurdjieff had also given a similar message to Anderson directly. In her personal notes, held at the Beinecke Library at Yale University, a note from Gurdjieff states: "The fact of the matter is that in occult literature much has been said that is superfluous and untrue. You had better forget all this. All your research in this region was a good exercise for your mind; therein lies its great value, but only there. It has not given you knowledge. Judge everything from the point of view of your common sense; become the possessor of your own sound ideas and don't accept anything on faith; and when you, your own self, by way of sound reasoning and argument, come to an unshaken persuasion, to a full understanding of something, then you will have achieved a certain degree of initiation" ("Note to Margaret Anderson").

[28] As Washton Long explains in "Occultism, Anarchism, and Abstraction: Kandinsky's Art of the Future" (1987), after the Russian revolution of 1905, the Russian Symbolist poets, Georgii Chulkov and Viacheslav Ivanov self-identified as "mystical anarchists" and "sought to combine individual freedom with collective responsibility" (39). They were also known to be "interested in the occult." These mystical anarchists "were all concerned with the radical transformation of a society they considered too materialistic and authoritarian" (Washton Long 39).

book, *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*, is featured prominently in *The Little Review*'s advertisements, "Kandinsky wanted the viewer to be shocked into meditating on the mysterious themes of struggle and regeneration in the paintings. In so doing, Kandinsky believed he could involve the viewer in the process of replacing confusion with understanding" (43). This visual discord has a sonic parallel in the music of Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg (42), who is also praised prominently in the early issues of *The Little Review*. While the term "mystical anarchism" has not really caught on in academic discourse outside of a very specific circle of Russian activist-artists and their acolytes, the label seems to fit Anderson and Heap's 'hands off,' "outlandishly anarchistic," and spiritually-minded style quite comfortably.

Moreover, this technique of editorial discord finds an esoteric precedent in Blavatsky's *Lucifer* magazine; Christine Ferguson describes *Lucifer's* similar "rejection of stable editorial identity" as "almost anarchistic," and notes that Blavatsky similarly "holds her readers responsible for forming their opinions. They are directed to consult not the Mahatmas or the editors but their own reason" ("The Luciferian Public Sphere" 83). While Anderson would lose her faith in political anarchism and move toward an elitist, culturally modernist individualism—which so happened to parallel Pound's joining as foreign editor—these anarchistic elements overlap with the adept's focus on the individual's inner universe. As the magazine abandoned its anarchism and lost touch with its original core of radical philosophers and activists in favor of emphasizing its literary interests so as to appeal to a broader audience (see La Casse), the esoteric angle provides a continuity between the magazine's early mystical anarchism and its later elitist, modernist individualism.

There are still more connections to be made between Anderson's non-policy and the occult tradition. For example, Anderson claims that *The Little Review* "exists to stimulate […] thinking rather than dictate thought" ("Our First Year" 2). Anderson later proclaims in the same article that she would much rather have "the limitations of the visionary or the poet or the prophet than those of

the pedant or the priest or the 'practical' person" ("Our First Year" 2) before bluntly concluding that "… as 'sanity' increases in the world, *The Little Review* will strive more and more to be splendidly insane" ("Our First Year" 3). Anderson's enthusiasm for artistic or aesthetic innovation places her, and other self-described modernists like her, at odds with a didactic Victorianism, a pedantic masculinism, and a dogmatic Christianity (or conventional religion in general). Anderson's editorial statement makes two important gestures that place it within an esoteric tradition: her identification with "anarchistic," "exuberant," "chaotic," and "emotional" traits; and her positioning of these traits as opposite to the much-ridiculed strawman known as the "'practical' person." The list of traits with which she identifies could well include "feminine," as these are all characteristic of the lunar archetype of alchemy, which is complemented and counterbalanced by the solar archetype.

In her notes on alchemy, published in 1894 through the Theosophical Society, Florence Farr, an expert on alchemy, a former Theosophist, and William Butler Yeats's superior in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, outlines these principles that govern everything from the individual soul to the entire universe and beyond:

> 3. To the perfection of Sol and Luna—These words are much in favour with masters of the mysteries who are desirous of hiding their meaning. They are used in a hundred different ways, signifying active and passive; male and female; sudden rapid vibration, and solid resisting substance; gold, and silver; red rust of iron; blue vitriol, i.e., sulphate of copper, green sulpate of iron [sic], and sulphide of antimony. Throughout the Alchemic processes they have been used to denote the force and the substance; the transmutor and the transmuted. And wise is he whose solar power has the penetrating force to discern the truth in the lunar shades with which he is surrounded. (S. S. D. D. "Notes" 46)

As Farr explains, the solar light of reason is necessary for the adept to find the truth in shadows. These traits are complementary; a true magus must master both sides of oneself. When one is

consumed in solar thinking at its most rigid and close-minded, that person becomes the so-called Practical Person, a strawman figure in esoteric philosophy. This Practical Person is the stubbornly rationalist, materialist, scientistic, dry, and academic critic who commonly appears in esoteric literature. Jon Woodson, a scholar of the "Harlem Gurdjieffians"—those writers of the Harlem Renaissance who drew inspiration from the teachings of Gurdjieff and his most prominent emissaries, A. R. Orage and P. D. Ouspensky—outlines in *To Make a New Race: Gurdjieff, Toomer, and the Harlem Renaissance* (1999) some of the key esoteric techniques appearing in the popular novels of Fourth Way writers. Some of these same techniques are readily visible in *The Little Review*. Anderson, mystical artist that she was, was not yet introduced to the Fourth Way at this phase of her life, but her wide reading of other esoteric texts, which make the same gestures, would have revealed to her these same techniques.

According to Woodson, a Gurdjieffian esoteric text will perform an "attack on reading"—that is, "the text is its own gloss, explicating the means by which it may be read. Included in the attack are characters who are incompetent readers" (26).[29] In Anderson's editorial, this Practical Person is the incompetent reader, the solar shadow of the adept reader. In *The Little Review*, Anderson reveals her alchemical influence through her valorization of the lunar archetype and, by extension, poetry and the imagination. Again, the mastery of both solar and lunar thinking is necessary for a true adept to reach one's fullest potential, but Anderson and other modern magi, including Yeats, celebrate the lunar to counterbalance the disproportionate value given to the solar archetype in a mechanistic, modern world, with its propagation of a 'rational,' capitalistic, and

[29] In a broader, non-Gurdjieffian context, Tryphonopoulos has argued that some of the canonical texts of high modernism, such as Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Pound's *Cantos*, and H. D.'s *Trilogy* and *Majic Ring*, also contain within themselves the reading techniques that assist readers in overcoming their incompetence and becoming adept. It should come as little surprise, then, that the little magazines of modernism employ this same pedagogical strategy of initiation.

colonial logic of exploitation and homogenization.[30] Anderson's attack on The Practical Person reactualizes these past ritualistic attacks on the archetypal Incompetent Reader (and failed mystic) in other esoteric traditions. The philosopher and Christian mystic Evelyn Underhill uses this same strawman in her book,[31] *Practical Mysticism,* published in 1914—the same year in which Anderson debuted her little magazine.[32] Anderson may have encountered this term in Underhill, who was a dear friend of Tagore, but even if she had not, Anderson, Heap, and Underhill alike could all have encountered this archetype in esoteric literature of the past, as poking fun at outsiders is tradition. In her book, Underhill warns that

> the life of pure sensation is the meat and drink of poetry, and one of the most accessible avenues to that union with Reality which the mystic declares to us as the very object of life. But the poet must take that living stuff direct from the field and river, without sophistication, without criticism, as the life of the soul is taken direct from the altar; with an awe that admits not of analysis. (45)

Underhill, like Anderson, advocates for an open-minded, adaptable approach to the spiritual life. The Practical Person fails to learn from the "living stuff" of life (and art), suffers from a sort of

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[30] A series of articles entitled, "My Friend, the Incurable" runs through volume 1 and dramatizes this clashing of solar/lunar, Apollonian/Dionysian logics. The author, Ibn Gabirol, plays the sane, rational voice documenting the 'incurably insane' art and literary criticism given by the titular character. It so happens that, in his first appearance, the Incurable's ranting and raving gives glory to the Russian painter and mystical anarchist Wassili Kandinsky and praises his technique of shocking a viewer into consciousness through his abstractions. Furthermore, the piece has a footnoted citation for *The Art of Spiritual Harmony* (44), which is advertised in many issues of *The Little Review*.

[31] Tellingly, the subtitle to one edition of the book is "A Little Book for Normal People." Thus, normal, or practical, people are set in opposition to the enlightened mystics. Thankfully, though, even they can still be helped.

[32] Evelyn Underhill tends not to be understood as a modernist, but her mystical and literary path intersects with modernism in interesting ways: her literary agent was the well-known J. B. Pinker, who also represented James Joyce. Further, press clippings from her archive at the Strand Library, King's College, reveal that Underhill was actively engaged in the periodical cultures of both modernism and the occult: she reviewed Tagore's *Sadhana* for *The Nation*, and her work was reviewed in many publications: *The Grey World* was reviewed in *Athenaeum*; she was compared favorably to another modern mystic, May Sinclair, in *The Dial*; *The Miracles of our Lady Saint Mary* were discussed in Ford Madox Ford's *English Review*; and*, Concerning the Inner Life* was reviewed in *The Quest*, G. R. S. Mead's Theosophical publication (Underhill, "Various Press Cuttings"). While Underhill's works are not formally radical like those of the 'proper' modernists, her philosophy clearly resonated with both modernist and occult reading circles.

"single vision" (35), and "forgets the existence of other conscious creatures, provided with their own standards of reality" (26). The Practical Person suffers from a mental and spiritual myopia contracted through "'business training,' a 'legal education,' and the 'acquirement of a scientific method'" (52). The remedy for this rigidly capitalistic, legalistic, scientistic malady of perception is a "spiritual communion" involving "an attitude of complete humility and of receptiveness; without criticism, without clever analysis of the thing seen" (109). This perspective marks the "'Simple Vision' of the poet and the mystic," and is "the antithesis of the single vision of practical men" (109). It is a perspective that simultaneously rejects the mass mores of a mechanistic and unconscious society while allowing for the possibility of a more authentic way of being and becoming with others. These traits are the exact opposite of what *The Little Review* stands for, and their rejection by Anderson and Heap affirms their own views and appeals to those of its audience of aspiring adepts, apprentice artists, and curious anarchists.

Heap, who later became co-editor, displays her understanding of Underhill's concept of a "simple vision" in her article "And—[Tagore]." When she encourages readers to witness a Tagore lecture during his American speaking tour in 1916, she implores, "let him put that white spell of peace upon your complex futility" (21). As these mystics make clear, the critical faculty is not always useful, particularly when spiritual and artistic growth is at stake. To reinforce their point, the editors again evoke Tagore: in the lower margins of page 37 of the third issue, in the form of a floating quotation from his stage play, *Sadhana*, Tagore admonishes, "the men who are cursed with the gift of the literal mind are the unfortunate ones who are always busy with their nets and neglect the fishing" ("Quotation"). The sentiment expressed in this epigraph should again recall the unfortunate Practical Person of Underhill, Yeats, Crowley, Blavatsky, Lévi, Agrippa, and others—the "incompetent reader" who cannot appreciate, much less *live*, a life of poetry, or of magic.

Another connection between *The Little Review* and the alchemical tradition of solar and lunar thinking can be found in the second issue, where Anderson printed an excerpt from a speech on imagism that W. B. Yeats, one-time member of the Theosophical Society and former Imperator of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, delivered to an audience of American poets in New York. Yeats laments that, over the course of his talk, he was guilty of "becoming rhetorical" after being "driven into Irish public life" ("William Butler Yeats to American Poets" 48).[33]

To Yeats, the vital, dramatic speech of poetry is antithetical to the formal, instrumental language of science and rhetoric that he calls "primary." That type of speech is, of course, reserved for that poor dullard, the Practical Person.[34] Yeats also ridicules the practical or "primary" person in his esoteric text, *A Vision* (1925; revised 1937). The practical man, Owen Aherne, is constantly frustrated by the chaotic and mystical Michael Robartes, and is guilty of always taking everything too literally, and never seeing the poetic beauty in the grand drama that is life. Yeats's concepts of the primary and the antithetical are akin to the Nietzschean concepts of the Apollonian and Dionysian (which are frequently referenced in *The Little Review*, given Nietzsche's popularity amongst this circle), which is itself akin to the solar and lunar archetypes of the alchemical tradition.[35] Anderson's endorsement of Yeats's performative, lunar anti-rhetoric participates in a longstanding esoteric tradition that encourages seekers to find their own meaning in life, to complete their own Great Work, and to avoid seduction by the rhetorical 'black magic' of pedants, priests, and politicians. In

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[33] In his speech about the current state of poetry, particularly the emergence of imagism and the waves it was making in avant-garde circles in Britain and America, Yeats explains that "the whole movement of poetry is toward pictures, sensuous images, away from rhetoric, from the abstract, toward humility. But I fear I am now becoming rhetorical. I have been driven into Irish public life—how can I avoid rhetoric?" ("William Butler Yeats to American Poets" 48). As is so typical in Yeats, this excerpt ends with a question, rather than a definitive answer—as do some of his most famous poems like "Leda and the Swan," "The Second Coming," and "Ego Dominus Tuus." The question is a lunar pedagogical technique, while the assertion is solar.

[34] In his collection of essays, *Ideas of Good and Evil*, Yeats writes that the "separation of knowledge and life, of word and emotion" is a byproduct of the "sterility of scientific speech" (63).

[35] In a more secular sense, these concepts have an analogue in Hegelian dialectics (thesis and antithesis), but Yeats himself warns readers of *A Vision* not to bother with philosophy—perhaps because he had little belief in synthesis, preferring the Blakean contrariety of eternally unresolved propositions.

so doing, Anderson and Heap valorize the lunar—the "splendidly insane" domain of emotion, imagination, and *fun*—which is fitting for their younger audience questing after all things edgy, exciting, and 'new.'

Just as Anderson eschews pointing her readers in a specific direction, in a prescribed, dogmatic fashion, as the "pedant or the priest or the 'practical' person" would be inclined to do ("Our First Year" 2), Heap similarly scorns the "complex futility" of the modern Western mind. We can see an earlier precedent for a similarly hands-off editorial practice used by editors H. P. Blavatsky and Mabel Collins two decades earlier in their Theosophical publication, *Lucifer*. Although *Lucifer* is the subject of the final chapter of this study, its editorial position demands mentioning here at the outset because the modernist magazines considered here, *The Little Review, The Egoist*, and *The New Age*, all assume this same stance, or a variation thereof, based on the particular syncretic preferences of their editors.[36] *Lucifer* participates in a similar aesthetic and worldview linked to a common esoteric lineage of spiritual and philosophical syncretism that Anderson and Heap would have been familiar with, even if they had never read the magazine.

In an introductory editorial in its first issue, published in September of 1887, Collins speaks of "another way of reading"—that is, with an esoteric or "alchemical" perspective:

> It is reading, not between the lines but within the words. In fact, it is deciphering a profound cipher. All alchemical works are written in the cipher of which I speak; it has been used by the great philosophers and poets of all time…. A man who desires to live must eat his food himself: this is the simple law of nature—which applies also to the higher life. A man who would live and act in it cannot be fed like a babe with a spoon; he must eat for himself. ("Comments" 8)

[36] Besides, I must also follow in the footsteps of the masters: any good esoteric work begins at the end and returns to the beginning upon reaching another end—the spiral must widen, the gyre must turn and turn…

Hence, Anderson and Heap's editorial posture as facilitating readers on their autonomous quests for knowledge, or for art, is in line with Collins's views, along with those of Gurdjieff, Orage, and the Harlem Gurdjieffian writers, whose practice of reading and writing likewise demands "mental independence" (Woodson 21). Moreover, their references to the Practical Person, their valorization of the lunar concepts of imagination, emotion, and by implication, femininity, and their advertisements of occult books signal to an adept readership that *The Little Review* participates in this esoteric tradition, while 'making it new' through the promotion and dissemination of anarchist philosophy and avant-garde literature.

Although Anderson and Heap appear to share this mystical attitude, participate in the alchemical tradition in their editorial styles, and align themselves with a lunar perspective, this is not to say that their unconventional editorial style can be attributed purely to their participation in an esoteric tradition. But, it is worth aligning these viewpoints to see that, like the adepts of Blavatsky's Theosophical Society or Gurdjieff's Fourth Way, Anderson and Heap espouse a vigorous mental independence in the service of spreading the magic of art to seekers of aesthetic, political, and spiritual fulfilment.

One notable technique that *The Little Review* shares with *The Egoist* and *The New Age* on the modernist front, and with *The Equinox* and *Lucifer* on the esoteric front, is the prescription of an occult reading program. While Aleister Crowley explicitly tells his readers that the content of his *Equinox* magazine will be difficult to comprehend without first reading over a dozen classic occult books (which he then assigns), Anderson and Heap do not make this gesture outright. Instead, they provide this reading program in the form of advertisements and floating quotations from key thinkers. Just as *The Equinox* and *Lucifer* allied themselves with other occult magazines, or made other classic esoteric texts available to their readership, the modernist journals in this study similarly

take advantage of advertisement—most obviously with literary and political writers and their magazines and books, but also with occult writers and texts.

For example, their advertisements boost other modernist periodicals including: *The Glebe* (promoting the *Des Imagistes* anthology) (vol. 1, no. 3, p. 63); *Poetry* magazine, featuring mystics Yeats and Tagore (vol. 1, no. 6, p. 62); *The Egoist*, taking up a full page, with extra attention given to the special Imagist number (vol. 2, no. 2, rear cover), among others. Politically, there are advertisements for the collected works of Friedrich Nietzsche (vol. 1, no. 1, 53); for the Radical Book Shop specializing in "libertarian thought in religion, economics, philosophy, also revolutionary fiction, poetry and drama" (vol. 1, no. 7, p. 59). Then, there are the less-obvious mystical and occult texts: *The Message of New Thought* by Abel Leighton Allen (vol. 1, no. 1, p. 57), *Modern Mysticism* by Francis Grierson (vol.1, no.1, p. 60), *The Gardener* by Tagore (vo.1, no. 2, p. 56), *Myths of the Buddhists and Hindus* (vol. 1, no. 4, p. 57), and *Pan's Garden* by Golden Dawn initiate Algernon Blackwood (vo. 2, no. 10, p. 39). Most strikingly, an epigraph promoting *The International* magazine in volume 2, issue 4, performs the same anti-imperialist ideology and elitist disdain for mainstream newspapers as favored by Anderson, Heap, and the other modernists—it also happens to have been written by Aleister Crowley, the Great Beast and magus himself:

> If only every Celt will refuse to fight for anything but the freedom of his own country, the English will soon destroy themselves altogether, and we shall inherit their language, the only worthy thing they have, and which their newspapers have not yet succeeded in debauching and degrading beyond repair. There are still universities in England. However, they have made it a crime in England to write good English—for style itself is a form of truth, being beauty; and truth and beauty are as welcome in England as detectives in a thieves' kitchen. (55)

Taking each of these lists on their own—the modernist and the mystical—we can see the importance of periodicals in disseminating for their readership the hippest new journals and the weightiest tomes, both in modernist and occult spheres. But, one ad in particular bridges the gap between these spheres: *The Art of Spiritual Harmony* by Wassili Kandinsky. This book is advertised in several issues in the first volume, but it appears in illustrated form for the first time in number 8. Kandinsky, who was mentioned earlier as a prominent mystical anarchist in Russia, was a proponent of Theosophy; he called it "one of the greatest spiritual movements" of its time (qtd. in Washton Long 40). Although Kandinsky was critical of Theosophy's "tendency to theorize," he saw it as a beacon of hope for those "enveloped in darkness and night."

Significantly, the ad is in the shape of a church; the 'cross' upon the 'steeple' is formed from the words FUTURISM and IMPRESSIONISM across, and CUBISM down (fig. 3). This image dramatizes, in concrete fashion, the relationship between spirituality and occultism on the one hand and modernist art and literature on the other. Here, in *The Little Review*, these two hands join seamlessly together in prayer—an offering to the High Church of Modernism."[37]

[37] I adapt this language from Longenbach, who uses spiritual and religious language to describe Pound's views on the elitist coterie of litterateurs he was building. Examples include a "'secret society' of modernism" (x), an "unfounded order" (26), and a "priesthood of the arts" (77). While a church connotes a more established religion than does a secret society, the metaphor works for *The Little Review* as it eventually 'sold out' its anarchist roots in favor of becoming an institution of modernism.

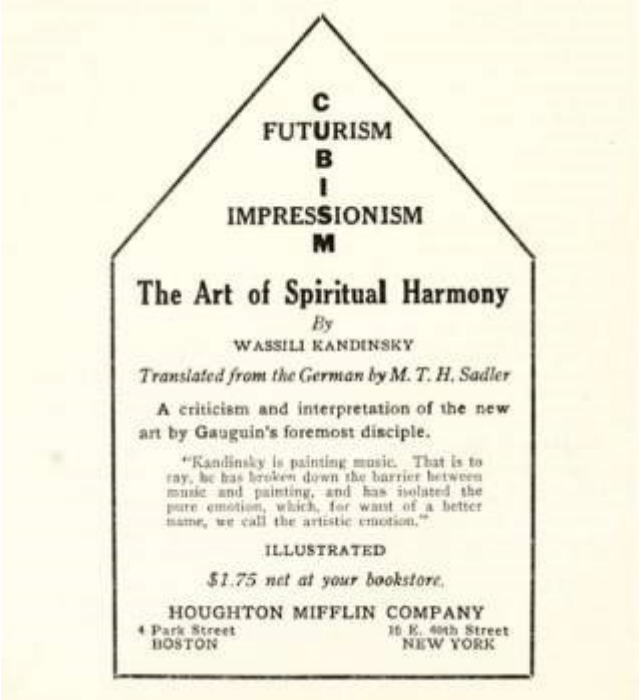

Fig. 3. Advertisement for *The Art of Spiritual Harmony* by Wassili Kandinsky in *The Little Review*, volume 1, number 8, p. 70.

Huntly Carter and Algernon Blackwood: Proto-Modernists, Poetic Adepts

While numerous other short essays in *The Little Review* theorize the emergence of a 'new' or modern religion (see George Burman Foster, George Soule, and DeWitt C. Wing), an essay by Huntly Carter merits special attention. Among the *Little Review* crowd, Carter stands out as an elder among youths dabbling in modernism: he was born in 1862, making him three years older than even Yeats, who was himself an elder statesman of modernism. Carter's views are at odds with those of Anderson and Heap when it comes to imagism as a poetic movement. His writings also appear in *The Egoist* and his overtly sincere, Romantic style seems a bit out of place in both of these insouciant magazines' performance of a 'cool' aloofness. Carter's essay is remarkable for its open use of Theosophical terminology, and when read from an esoteric perspective, it serves as an important statement on the initiatory power of poetry and shows how this power would appeal to the younger

modernists. Hence, "Poetry Versus Imagism" typifies how modernist literary magazines such as *The Little Review* and *The Egoist* share these experiences of initiation with their counter-publics and, in essence, teach them how to initiate themselves.

Carter's ten-page essay appears in volume 2, number 6, and fully commits to positioning the artist as a questing adept. The essay first describes Carter's poetic (and spiritual) awakening before criticizing Imagism for its privileging of style and experimentation over feeling. Put in alchemical terms, imagism is too solar for Carter—too calculated, too intellectual, and lacking in 'soul.' This essay, he explains, is his explicitly "metaphysical" theory of poetry (27). He begins by briefly contextualizing his forthcoming literary critique with his poetic and spiritual initiation: during a time in his youth living in the Falkland Islands and raising sheep, he "experienced a new emotion" and felt the "transcendent energy" of the universe (27). In the following lengthy quotation, Carter's blending of nature, spirituality, and art during his poetic awakening (or mystical initiation) is readily apparent:

> I felt the currents of transcendent energy which I felt in my childhood. But I now felt them more frequently, and I saw that I was elevated by them beyond the normal course of every-day life. At such moments I forgot the sheep, the pastures […;] I even forgot the strong colour and form of nature. I saw something ridding me of solid things and leaving nothing but a fluid universe. I saw distinct forms melting to formative motions. I had been caught in the midst of an intense current—a transforming current of livingness. Moreover, I was free to the current, with the result that I became a part of itself—fluid—unresistingly, and was actuated accordingly. For the time being, I moved as the fluid element most moved me. Later reflection showed me that I was moved by some ineffable thing which I believe to be poetry. (27)

While Anderson writes at the outset of the essay that she "entirely disagree[s]" with Carter's critique of imagism (27), she could probably relate to this passage. The same likely applies for most other readers, given the preoccupation with art as a transcendent, vital, or spiritual force that runs strongly through the magazine's early volumes. Within this already limited circle of *Little Review* readers, Carter appeals to its innermost circle:

> It may be that the soul is made of poetry, and after the human soul has freed itself from the fetters of materialism it becomes re-converted to poetry; that is, a part of its own flow or motion. I do not think materialists will understand this. But it will be clear to the spiritual-minded. (27)

This plain appeal to a spiritual inner circle goes a step beyond what Anderson and Heap propose in the early issues, where art is like a religion of its own. Carter's appeal is personal, sentimental, and vulnerable in a way that other articles on art and religion featured in the magazine (such as Foster's, Soule's, and Wing's) are not. Carter's definition of poetry as "the transmutation of some natural element (motion, sound or what not) into simple emotion (motion passing into e-motion)" likewise evokes alchemy and reveals his interest in Theosophy (28).[38]

Carter goes even further in laying down his assumptions on how poetry is actually conceived, and unashamedly waxes spiritual in a way that none of the more self-consciously avant-garde contributors do in earlier issues:

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[38] In "Theosophy and Revolution: Huntly Carter and the 'New Spirit' in Early Soviet Theatre," theater historian Robert C. Williams notes, "Carter's writings display a religious enthusiasm and an unusual vocabulary which suggest that he was engaged in his own personal search for a revolution in life and on the stage that would involve spirit more than matter" (395). He attributes Carter's enthusiasm for Soviet theater in the 1920s to the "theosophical currents in prewar Germany and Edwardian England" (395), and observes that *The New Age* editor-adept A. R. Orage was "obviously a major influence on Carter" (400), as he was on Anderson, Heap, and Pound (400). Evidently, Carter's theosophical writing style lingered well beyond his days as a contributor to *The Little Review*, *The Egoist*, and *The New Age.* Also of significance to *The Little Review*'s early political alignment, Carter went on to brush shoulders with political radicals, including mystical anarchist Vsevolod Meyerhold, during a trip to Russia in 1922-1923 (396).

> Let us assume that the poet's soul receives rhythms or vibrations from the Infinite, which it instantly converts into its own. Just as a magnetic needle receives its own currents and points aright. Where is one to look for poetry? (28)

Here, Carter makes quite the assumption indeed, leaping from an "art as religion" position to a full-blown spirituality, complete with Theosophical diction, that would not be out of place in Crowley's *Equinox* or Blavatsky's *Lucifer*—especially considering his comingling of spiritual and scientific discourse.[39] Not just anyone would buy into this idea, but for an audience of young, idealistic artists, where columns on the spiritual nature of art run in almost every issue in the first few volumes, it would not seem so outlandish.

Further siding on the mystical (lunar), rather than the intellectual (solar) side of poetry, Carter sees the true poet as one who "proceeds upon instinct and despises methodical verse-making, recognizes the stupidity of trying to express poetry in terms of intellectual states of mind" (28). To Carter, and to the poets he describes, "the vision of poetry in terms of cerebralism can only have one effect, namely, to kill poetry" (28). The Sin of Imagism, to Carter, is an "inordinate love of the intellectual qualities of style, and consequently, a feverish quest for figures" (33). For Carter, imagism is style over substance, image over feeling. He professes:

> … poetry is this spiritually saturating element. I would say it is a unifying element, bringing a like element in each of us into a unity of Soul or Spirit-consciousness… But I cannot possibly imagine such a poet finding poetic expression in pots and pans and tup'ny tubes, and the confused and meaningless odds and ends of material life. (32)

So much for finding poetry "In a Station at the Metro" like Pound; Carter would prefer a pilgrimage to Yeats's nostalgic vision of "Innisfree" any day.

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[39] In her *Collected Writings*, H.P. Blavatsky uses the technological metaphor of the telegraph to explain occult consciousness and phenomena such as telepathy (101-102); on the cover of his *Equinox* magazine, Aleister Crowley describes Thelema as "the method of science, the aim of religion."

Anderson likewise aligns herself with the lunar archetype in her editorials, and surely shares many of Carter's beliefs: that art nourishes the spirit; that it is transformative; that it expresses the inexpressible; and that the poet is a living conduit expressing the will of the universe through art. She would not contest his claim that "a significant poet is not one who writes verse, but one who lives poetry, *is* poetry" (28). Thus, Carter's tale of poetic initiation is one individual's path to literary and spiritual enlightenment, which *The Little Review* gladly prints, for it too was a larger vehicle for initiation. In the Hermetic sense, the macrocosm reflects the microcosm. Yet, Carter specifies that poetry is more than just initiation; it is also an end in itself. He writes:

> It seems then that the reason I could not feel the Imagist verse was because I was trying it by a law or principle which told me that poetry makes itself felt through the senses, not through the intellect. Furthermore, it makes itself felt not only by passionately initiating us into some mystery or other of reality, but by making us an active part of that mystery. The poet is a signature of poetic reality. (33)

While Carter is, or at least wants to be, a part of this group of avant-garde art-lovers, his approach seems more mystical than esoteric—more emotional than intellectual. Mystics believe that anyone can commune with the universe at any time without any training, and that the path to divinity is already known by anyone who cares to look inward; occultists, on the other hand, place more emphasis on tradition and training so that an aspiring adept can follow a rigorous procedure to arrive at a somewhat predictable destination. Carter explicitly attacks the Imagists for their literary esotericism, even going so far as to call them a "cult":

> Indeed they regard the production and advertisement of their particular kind of goods, which have become a sort of cult among a large number of persons who believe in hard study and discipline, rather than in spontaneity and livingness, as the beginning and end of

> earthly existence. But if one comes to the bottom of the whole business it really amounts to no more than this. (36)

While Anderson can abide by Carter's mystical connection to poetry, Carter's attack on imagism as devoid of soul, or as "no longer visited by the Muses" (Harold Monro qtd. in Carter 30), is a bridge too far. She can only gasp in editorial italics, "*How horrible!—to treat miracles like this!*" (27). Carter's emphasis on emotion and sentimentality—more Georgian or Romantic in his sensibilities than *les jeunes* surrounding him—would ultimately place him at odds with the avant-garde writers who would grow to outshine him. In short, he fell on the wrong side of modernist history.

Carter's essay takes on an even deeper significance when paired with an article written by Algernon Blackwood that appeared almost two decades earlier in *Lucifer*. Blackwood was a *fin-de-siècle* novelist as well as an initiate of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. He was also one of the founding members of the Toronto Lodge of the Theosophical Society in Canada, which was established in 1891 (Davy 212). Known for his prolific output of esoteric literature and ghost stories, Blackwood found an outlet in *Lucifer*. His 1892 offering, "From a Theosophist's Diary," recollects his former conventionally religious life that he had since repudiated, and chronicles how his views have changed since coming into contact with Theosophy. Despite the evident joy that Theosophy brought Blackwood, his essay gently critiques *Lucifer* for publishing overly esoteric, abstract, or theoretical material, and encourages the editors (who were, at this point, Mead and Besant, since Collins had quit in 1889 and Blavatsky had died in 1891) to publish less esoteric doctrine and more material from *life*. Like Carter, Blackwood calls for a more mystical, and less esoteric, approach. Storytelling, whether fictional or non-fictional, is one such way to attempt to make the theoretical personal, and it provides readers of *Lucifer*, some of whom may be new initiates or inexperienced spiritual seekers, with a more concrete map as to how a Theosophist thinks and lives. As Blackwood observes,

> The large majority of readers of LUCIFER in the West are, in the real meaning of the word, beginners on the Path. Many are not even that—but simply read from curiosity. Hundreds are hovering round waiting for more practical hints, not as to occult development so much as for the daily life of a Theosophist—wondering, hoping, waiting, but not yet working. To many of these, doubtless, a great obstacle is the somewhat vague character of the general instructions for real beginners…. (395)

Essentially, the work that Blackwood does for readers of *Lucifer* (using a method of lunar storytelling as opposed to solar proselytization) is the same sort of work that Carter does for readers of *The Little Review*—and, is the same sort of work that many editor-adepts and their contributors do for every magazine considered in this study.

In "Diary of a Theosophist," Blackwood recounts his wandering in nature, and how he came to realize that he was a Theosophist. Recalling an experience in the Canadian National Park, Blackwood writes,

> On that occasion I was still asleep—spiritually asleep; dead to the possibilities within me—dead to the grand knowledge of Universal Brotherhood—dead to all the elevating truths contained in a knowledge of Esoteric Religion… I was totally unconscious of the existence of underlying truths, and only the lower and intellectual parts of my nature were alive. (391)

Like Carter, Blackwood describes how the beauty of Nature awoke him to his inner spirituality. He waxes Romantic as he absorbs the sublimity of the mighty Niagara Falls:

> And as the wind rose above the roar of the angry waters and whirled the heavy vapours through the listening air, it seemed to me that the songs it sings with such ineffable sadness, and indeed the whole music of the rolling world, sounded like a dirge for the gross injustice that is heaped on mankind by the misleading dogmas of exoteric religions with a personal Deity at their head. (392)

Nature, for Blackwood, and for so many artists and spiritual seekers, is art. It sings; it is a song. And that song stirred his soul to a recognition of the interconnectedness of all beings. The process itself is unexplainable—and, like mysticism, is incomprehensible through mere intellect and inexpressible through rational means—so Blackwood defers to quoting "A Dirge" by Percy Bysshe Shelley.[40]

Carter would likely appreciate Blackwood's metaphysical approach that fuses nature, spirituality, and poetry together; indeed, Carter's somewhat *passé* Romantic, sentimental approach to writing about poetry finds a precedent in Blackwood's *fin-de-siècle* style. Blackwood's "Diary" is significant as a documentation of his informal mystical initiation into the mysteries of nature and the universe, before his official initiation into the Theosophical Society or the Golden Dawn. Before entering either of these secret societies, he first had to have his own personal awakening. And, in order to convey that experience, he brings poetry into an esoteric journal, while Carter brings Theosophy into a literary journal. In both cases, the purpose and the technique is clear: to get beyond doctrines and show a reader how a poet (and aspiring adept) lives. The key difference, however, is that Carter is content to use Theosophical terms and ideas to steer readers toward poetry in general (even as he sees it as inextricable from spirituality), while Blackwood uses poetry to steer readers toward Theosophy proper. Thus, the same Romantic appreciation for nature, and the metaphysical value of poetry, persists from the occult sphere through Blackwood and finds kinship with some of the modernist writers, such as Carter, who then harnessed this current of thought to carry on the tradition of poetry as initiation and pass it along to the younger modernist audience.

In essence, Blackwood wants prospective Theosophists to be able to initiate themselves, or at least cultivate the right mind frame, before joining an organization in the formal sense if they are unready, or unable to do so. *Lucifer* is a tool for initiation in that sense. This is exactly the sort of

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[40] Shelley's poem reads: "Rough wind, that moanest loud/Grief too sad for song;/Wild wind, when sullen cloud/Knells all the night long;/Sad storm whose tears are vain,/Bare woods, whose branches strain,/Deep caves and dreary main,—/*Wail, for the world's wrong!*" (qtd. in Blackwood 392).

work that Anderson and Heap, as well as Carter, encourage—even if Anderson finds Carter's dissection of the "miracle" of imagism "horrible" (Carter "Poetry" 27). Hence, despite their differences, Anderson, Heap, and Carter alike seize on the little magazine form to provide seekers with the means by which they can become adepts—or modernists.

Conclusion: Towards a (Thwarted) Mystical Anarchism in America

The call for something new in American spiritual life was made not only by the editors of *The Little Review*, but also by its contributors. Huntly Carter's personal tale of literary and mystical initiation is one notable example but certainly not the only one: Theologian George Burman Foster's Nietzsche-inspired column frequently discusses the relationship between art and religion through most of volumes 1 and 2; George Soule advocates for a "modern" religion for both "man" and "woman" from a Tagorian perspective, the key factor being that such a religion must not be "imposed" (in the manner of priests, rhetoricians, and other Practical People)—instead, there ought to be a *personal* religion ("Tagore as Dynamic" 33);[41] and as DeWitt C. Wing declared, "the new pagan is not saddened but gladdened at the sight of factories and the development of commerce" ("The New Paganism" 21).[42]

[41] Tagore, like Gurdjieff and most other spiritual masters, also espouses a mental independence, which could be read as individualism, or even anarchism, which could be another reason for his popularity in *The Little Review*'s circle of mystical anarchists. Maia Ramnath makes the connection between Tagore's thought and anarchist philosophy in *Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle* (2011). Ramnath reminds us, in language reminiscent of that used by Gurdjieff and Orage, that "Nation, for Tagore, is a machine, an engine of oppression that crushes what is best within humanity" (165). Ramnath further points out that "Tagore's critiques of colonialism and nationalism were of a piece with his diagnosis of modernity's ills. Commerce and state were the deadly symptoms, but the criticism was sociocultural rather than socioeconomic in origin. The emphasis is on greed and consumption, not on class exploitation, and Tagore's objections to industrial modernity are primarily moral, spiritual, and aesthetic—decrying selfishness, materialism, and utilitarianism." Like the other politically active mystics in this study (such as Orage and Farr in Chapter 3), Tagore's vision of political reform begins from within.

[42] Tagore also accepts a spirituality consciously co-existing with science and technology. He clarifies, "we must therefore accept the machine freely and without mental reservations, but we must use the machine as the slave of man, not his master" (qtd. in Hogg 10).

These articles illustrate how important a "new" religion is to the audience of *The Little Review*, even if there is no clear consensus as to what exactly that religion should look like: it must be self-fashioned, actively and consciously created, and not passively received and replicated—fitting for a readership of anarchists and aspiring adepts. Will this new faith be an anarchistic community of enlightened individuals coming together as one unstoppable force to effect political and social change? Or will it be a bourgeois individualism, where a clique of elitists ostracize everyone else and capitalize on the ensuing public drama? Anderson and Heap lean toward the anarchistic model early on, while presenting the other views—even if they disagree with them. While this accommodation could be seen as an abdication of editorial responsibility for maintaining a radical "party line," that same lack of party line is still in keeping with both the anarchistic and adept attitudes. It performs the anarchistic respect for individual autonomy within a larger community of readers while replicating the alchemical or Theosophical stance of providing seekers with the means to discovery, but leaving the actual undertaking to them.

Yet, this adept-driven quest for a "personal" religion,[43] or a "new occultism" as Alex Owen calls it in *The Place of Enchantment*, with its preoccupation with self-discovery and mental independence, runs the risk of perpetuating a capitalist, bourgeois individualism (14)—most aptly encapsulated in Wing's enthusiasm for "the sight of factories and the development of commerce" ("The New Paganism" 21). Although Anderson's individualistic tendencies lead a reader closer to a

[43] Much like the way that "quietism" and "defeatism" have become condescending euphemisms for anarchism and pacificism, the term "personal" could similarly be read as an apolitical individualism. However, a network of late modernist writers emerged in the 1930s and 40s to claim the term "Personalism" as a stance opposing all forms of authoritarianism, whether it be liberal, communist, or fascist. In their Personalist manifesto, Apocalyptic poets Henry Treece and Stefan Schimanski assert that Personalism rejects "all politics which do not grow, organically, from living…; it rejects those fascist systems which control the defects of society by curtailing the liberty of the individual, which subordinates the destinies of men to the whims of a Leader…, which denies them from their Selves…. Personalism rejects all forms of government which ignore spiritual values, which do not see in man an autonomously creative unit whose supreme vocation is the understanding and healing of the Self" (Treece and Schimanski, 'Towards' 13) (78). Tagore's "dynamic" and "personal" approach to religion, as advocated by Soule, and Anderson's own approach to art and spirituality as seen in *The Little Review*, could both be seen as precursors to the more politically committed Personalism of World War II.

mystical anarchism early on, the danger of capitalist co-optation is undeniable—even inevitable. Indeed, that danger manifests in *The Little Review* only a few volumes later: in volume 4, issue 4, Anderson laments in an editorial called "What the Public Doesn't Want,"

> I decided that the only way to prevent the exceptional from being sacrificed to the average was for everybody to become anarchists [;] I preached the simple and beautiful but quite uninteresting tenets of anarchism. I have long given them up. (20)

This disavowal of direct political "preaching" seems to resonate with her earlier assertion that, as an editor, she would rather have "the limitations of the visionary or the poet or the prophet than those of the pedant or the priest or the 'practical' person" ("Our First Year" 2). But, this shift toward individualism took her (and Heap) away from the magazine's roots, and its connection to an anarchist community, both within Chicago and internationally. As Christopher La Casse observes in his 2015 article on "*The Little Review*'s Wartime Advances and Retreats," this little magazine's bold vision of a mystical anarchism may have simply been (in Yeatsian terminology) 'out of phase' with the times; the Great War demanded patriotism and conservatism, and the repercussions for not falling in line were severe. La Casse argues, "Economic, political, and cultural pressures… eventually forced the editorial agenda to retreat gradually from its multiple oppositional positions—altering the publication context that produced the cross-pollination between politics and art" (581). La Casse sees the infamous "Blank Issue" of September 1916 as "marking the moment Anderson dissolved the magazine's marriage of political and artistic countercultural activism in response to wartime pressures" (596). Hence, Anderson abandons the political anarchism, but retains the personal mysticism—and the individualistic, sometimes elitist, attitude of the occult sphere.

While Anderson would grow increasingly disillusioned with the masses (594), thus becoming a bad anarchist, she makes for a typical modernist—and, in many ways, a typical adept. Thus, her ongoing commitment to mysticism and occultism provides a continuity spanning Anderson's

anarchist days and her more mainstream modernist days. When the importance of Anderson and Heap's path to adeptship is more seriously considered, it helps make more intelligible their magazine's shift from anarchism to individualism as it grew in cultural influence; the occult sphere is a constant, and it too grapples with these same tensions of inner and outer transformation—work to be done individually, in one's inner universe, versus that which must be done collectively, in politics, in the material world. Much to the disappointment of the more politically active anarchists who read *The Little Review*, Anderson retreated into the realm of inner transformation and removed herself from the realm of direct political action.[44]

While scholars today seem not to have taken much interest in the strong undercurrent of mysticism in *The Little Review*, the magazine's readership picked up on it right away. Like most literary magazines, *The Little Review* had space set aside for publishing reader correspondence, here called "The Reader-Critic." In the second issue, many readers wrote in to share their impressions of *The Little Review*'s debut. One reader, Sade Iverson, cheekily congratulates the editor: "what an insouciant little pagan paper you flourish before our bewildered eyes!" he relishes, "please accept the congratulations of a stranger" ("Letter" 49). Not only did Iverson and other readers note the esoteric content in the first issue and write in to comment on it, but Anderson, as editor, *chose* to print this letter, above all others, as the very first reader response to her magazine. She does not shy from these "pagan" associations—on the contrary, she seems to revel in it.

[44] The individual's withdrawal into one's inner world is often read as an unpolitical act. In *Personal Modernisms*, however, James Gifford recoups the agency of the late modernist, anarchist, pacifist, and occult writer Henry Miller. Gifford reads Miller's deliberate disengagement as a valid political stance—a conscious refusal to participate in any sort of conversion or coercion (to which the priest, pedant, or politician is inclined). Miller has been branded as a "quietist" or "defeatist," but these terms are, Gifford argues, "frequent euphemisms for 'anarchist' and 'pacifist'" (31). Significantly, Miller read Emma Goldman and Peter Kropotkin, two of Anderson's anarchist role models (31); he also read in the Gurdjieff network and was, as both anarchist and occultist, inspired by Anderson, Heap, and *The Little Review* (Nesbit 29). Thus, Anderson's withdrawal from overt political activism as an editor can still be read as an anarchistic gesture, especially once Anderson reached Gurdjieff's Institute at Fontainebleau, where communal living, shared labor, and spiritual group-work became the norm.

Such an "insouciant" attitude towards conventional religion is bound to stir up some controversy. In the eighth issue, "A. D. R.," an angry reverend, writes in to cancel his daughter's subscription. Admonishing Anderson, he fumes: "discontinue sending your impertinent publication to my daughter who had the folly of undiscriminating youth to fall in the diabolical snare by joining the ungodly family of your subscribers" ("Letter" 69). The reverend heaps a special wrath upon "Antichrist-Nietzsche-Foster," and other "inhuman villains" such as Oscar Wilde, Paul Verlaine, and the "blood-thirsty Daughter of Babylon," anarchist Emma Goldman. The reverend is all fire and brimstone to a hyperbolic degree, but his concern shows that *The Little Review* was more than just a review on "Literature Drama Music Art"—it heralded new ideas in philosophy and spirituality with a brazenness that threatened the established order. In this magazine, everything new and daring coalesced into one exciting package: mystical anarchism, feminism, and modernism.

Commenting on the daring spirit of the magazine, Marek observes, "when Anderson began her magazine with a flourish, declaring her allegiances to feminist and other radical ideas, she deliberately tapped into the social discomfort about, as well as the social movement represented by, 'New Women' of the time" (66). This same sort of "social discomfort" must surely apply to mysticism or occultism as well; its opposition to mainstream religion marks it as a threat to 'normal,' Practical People. Anderson's editorial strategies purposefully play with and prey on these social discomforts; her proud display of the cheeky new moniker of "insouciant little pagan paper" reveals her glee in doing so, and her printing of A. D. R.'s angry letter suggests that she succeeded in creating a mystically anarchist counter-public galvanized by its opposition to the Practical, patriarchal, preachy, bourgeois masses.

What this chapter has highlighted, and what the next two chapters will also emphasize, is that any understanding of the aesthetics and politics of the little magazines under consideration will necessarily be incomplete until the actual occult beliefs and practices of this network of adeptship

are given due consideration. Here, occult philosophy undergirds the anarchism of *The Little Review*, and makes more intelligible its abandonment of a more direct political activism. The chapters ahead will show that occultism has interesting implications not only for anarchism, but also for egoistic individualism, socialism, and feminism. Each of *The Little Review*, *The Egoist*, and *The New Age* has its own ideological underpinning, yet all of these little magazines are considered 'modernist.' The aesthetics and politics of occultism, then, is the glue that, almost as if by magic, holds them all together.

Chapter 2

Modernisms of Some Charming Egoists: Literary and Mystical Elitism in *The Egoist*, 1914-1919

NIX NIHIL
"Harriet Shaw Weaver,
Executrix of *The Egoist*,
Patron of Joyce and Marsden,
I ask your advice
for navigating your archive."

WEAVER
"You continue to surf
on your wave of success;
be not deterred by your frustrations
in figuring out formalities—
there is much to discover,
but in the midst of plenitude,
there will always be the need for more."

* * *

Along with *The Little Review*, *The Egoist* is another classic "little magazine" that launched modernism into the world. A November 1914 tract anticipating the magazine's first issue reads like a veritable "Who's Who" of what would come to be known as literary modernism:

> Dora Marsden, Ford Madox Hueffer, James Joyce, Remy de Gourmont, Ezra Pound, Richard Aldington, Allen Upward, Madame Ciolkowska, Saint Fiacre, Rebecca West, Leigh Henry, Huntly Carter, Storm Jameson, John Cournos, R. W. Kauffman, Steven T. Byington, Benj. R. Tucker, Henri Bergson, Frances Gregg, H. Gaudier-Brzeska, John Felton, E. A. Mowrer… Skipwith Cannell, H. D., J. G. Fletcher, F. S. Flint, Robert Frost, Otoka Brzina…

(Trans. P. Selver), D. H. Lawrence, Amy Lowell, Charlotte Mew… John Rodker, William Carlos Williams, and others…. ("*Egoist* 1914 Promotional Tract")

Many of these writers and editors were, to varying degrees, invested in the connection between art and spirituality. Accordingly, this magazine swirls with an undercurrent of mysticism. Several esteemed modernist figures oversaw this periodical during its turbulent six-year life. The story of who ran it and when is rather convoluted; even Robert Scholes, formerly of the Modernist Journals Project, admits that, given all the changes in editorship, titles, and subtitles, "it is not easy to sort out the relationships" among the "Marsden Magazines" ("General Introduction"). This editorial board is, by far, the most unstable of the five magazines considered in this study. It does not have the consistent vision of Orage's *New Age*, Crowley's *Equinox*, or Blavatsky and Collins's *Lucifer*. Yet, in spite of its editorial inconsistency, *The Egoist* still traffics heavily in the occult. This periodical ran from January 1, 1914 through December 15, 1919, and was most successful during its first six months of publication, when it boasted its largest circulation of 400 copies per issue (Ardis "Dialogics" 431n53). As in the previous chapter, I focus mostly on the first volume of this prototypical modernist little magazine, though I occasionally gesture toward future volumes where appropriate. This strategy allows me to draw attention to the presence of occult materials appearing in *The Egoist* from the outset while allowing me to circumvent the convoluted nature of its editorial instability.

This chapter highlights the initiatory qualities of this publication, both in the structure of the magazine itself (editorials, letters, reviews, and advertisements),[45] and in a particular (and peculiar)

[45] Like in *The Little Review*, the advertisements for modernist periodicals in *The Egoist* sit comfortably next to advertisements for politically radical books and mystical and metaphysical treatises. For example, *The Egoist* promotes *Blast*, which proclaims the "END OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA," as well as *The Little Review*, *Poetry*, and *The Drama*. In the ad for *The Drama,* Tagore's name appears in bold. Mystical books are advertised, including *The Divine Mystery* by Allen Upward. These are joined by ads for political books including *The Ego and His Own*, *Anarchism*, and *State Socialism and Anarchism*.

piece of esoteric literature embedded within it. The macrocosm and the microcosm reflect one another; as above, so below. Above, at the level of the periodical, *The Egoist,* like *The Little Review*, attempts to position its editors as initiating masters and mobilizes some of the same esoteric strategies introduced in the previous chapter: it evokes and alludes to the occult wisdom tradition to distinguish the editors from their more casual audience, and it performs an elitist, adept attitude of mental independence that invites devotees into a privileged inner circle, while attacking and excluding incompetent readers or other outsiders. Below, at the level of a single exemplary text, the occult *tour de force*, "Memoirs of a Charming Person," demands attention. Attributed to "M. de V.-M.," this serialized work of esoteric literature, presented to readers as fiction, is a translation by Olivia Shakespear from the original French. Shakespear was an erstwhile lover to Yeats, a dabbler in Theosophy, and an occult author in her own right.

In "Memoirs," an unnamed narrator and a (possibly mad) sage, the Count, personify the solar and lunar archetypes of alchemy. "Memoirs" then builds on these archetypes through the debate between the narrator and the Count on the nature of the four classical elements and the spirits associated with them. This introduction to the elemental correspondences is essential to any occultist seeking to understand the metaphors of esoteric writing; it is likewise useful to any aspiring poet seeking to learn about symbolism in general. Further, "Memoirs" also mobilizes all the same esoteric strategies that *The Egoist* and *The Little Review* use to create their own auras of mystique: it too performs an adept or "artistocratic" attitude,[46] and serves as a miniature template for occult initiation contained within the larger magazine, which itself serves as a template for modernist (and occult) initiation.

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[46] In *Stone Cottage*, Longenbach argues that the modernist attitude, as formulated by Yeats and Pound, has parallels in esotericism and can be suitably described as "aristocratic." The aristocratic, modernist technique is "allusive and obscure for the same reason that occult literature conceals its secret knowledge in a language that only a small circle of initiates can understand: to explain their work to the public would be to destroy its beauty and undermine their priest-like status" (92).

"Memoirs," though overshadowed by Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is arguably the beating heart of the first volume of the *Egoist*. The sheer length of this serialized work of esoteric literature is testament to its importance; "Memoirs" spans five issues and the dedicated space it receives actually enhances and adds context to the other, shorter texts or paratexts surrounding it. While these shorter texts make the odd occult allusion, their significance might escape the attention of a casual, uninitiated reader. "Memoirs" exists, in part, to grab the reader's attention with its spectacle and alert them to a very definite occult presence in the magazine. Given that this work of esoteric literature is so central to the first volume of *The Egoist*, it is worth reevaluating for its own sake. In so doing, I also reconsider the importance of the occultist and novelist Olivia Shakespear in helping launch modernism in Europe—while modernist history casts her as an understated matriarch content to remain in the shadows, her (mostly) silent presence in *The Egoist* nonetheless speaks to how the modernist little magazines inherited much from the strategies of initiation and the adept attitude of the occult sphere that preceded it.

Initiation

Grey clouds fill the sky outside as I sit in the reading room of the Beinecke Library at Yale University. I atone for my sin of neglecting to initiate myself into *The Egoist* while in London last summer. In my inexperience and eagerness devouring other texts, I waited too long to obtain the original copies of this classic modernist magazine; they could not be brought in to the Bodleian before I would return home.

Now, my eyes fall upon the cover. THE EGOIST: An Individualist Review. Formerly the NEW FREEWOMAN. No. I., Vol. I. Thursday, January 1st, 1914. Sixpence. LIBERTY, LAW, AND DEMOCRACY. Editor: Dora Marsden. Assistant Editors: Richard Aldington and Leonard A. Compton-Rickett. Published the 1st and 15th of each month. The paper, measuring 19 cm x 31 cm, is cheap and flaking on the edges. Visually, very sparing. No illustrations. It looks *a lot* like *The New Age*.

The Egoist lures me in with its provocative attitude and its promises of avant-garde literature. But, weirdness lurks around every corner in references to Greek Gods, Kabbalah, and magic. Compton-Rickett's time is short, but Marsden, Weaver, and Aldington will remain. Classicism and mysticism will remain. The psychic threads of H. D., *Imagiste* and master alchemist, emanate from future issues to ensnare my thoughts, and Olivia Shakespear smiles from the shadows.

These old pages smell sweet—but also sharp and cold.

* * *

Published the 1st and 15th of each month.

THE EGOIST

AN INDIVIDUALIST REVIEW.

Formerly the NEW FREEWOMAN.

No. 1. Vol. I. THURSDAY, JANUARY 1st, 1914. Sixpence.

Assistant Editors: RICHARD ALDINGTON. LEONARD A. COMPTON-RICKETT.

Editor: DORA MARSDEN, B.A.

CONTENTS.

LIBERTY, LAW, AND DEMOCRACY.

THE concepts with which one age will preoccupy itself, and in which it will invest its surplus emotional heat have shown themselves to be so essentially casual as to be now a matter for mirth rather than wonder with its successors. The subject of an age's Master Passion round which its interest rages will be anything accidental and contingent which will serve: stand the heat, that is, and last out until enthusiasm tires. The amount of genuine enthusiasm which Athanasius, Arius and their followers were able to cull from the numerical problems in the concept of the Trinity was—incredible though it may seem—equal to that which this age culls from the figures of the football scores. The Crusaders who were so concerned about the possession of the Tomb of Christ looked forward to finding as much diversion and profit as a Home Ruler expects to get from the possession of a Parliament on Dublin Green. It is only from a distance that these dead dogs look so determinedly dead. Nearer to, one would swear the body had stirred; and we who are so near to an age when the mere mention of "Universal Law" would produce lyrical intoxication, "All's love, All's law," a very swoon of security, do not purpose here to break in upon the belated obsequies of that dead or dying concept. As the sport of the ribald and the mockers "Universal law" is the perquisite of the youth of 1950, not of 1915. And we will not here trespass on the future.

The reference in the title of this article is limited to statutory law, a prosaic and earth-bound branch which not even Apollo himself could have strung to the lyrical note, and it must be allowed that however excellent a run "Universal Law" as a symbol and idealised concept may have been accorded by a generation now settled in obesity, its society representative, so to speak, with which we are here concerned, has never been held in any too high esteem. The increase in its bulk and scope of application, which oddly enough, grows rapidly alongside something called the "Liberty of the people" have proved matters for complexity even when they have not created indignation and alarm. Visions of those not the least penetrating, have seen in the steady advance of the statutory law a devastating plague in which the parchment of the politicians has seemed as capable of devouring the spirit of the people as a swarm of locusts devouring green grass. Proudhon writing in 1850 on the subject says:

"Laws and ordinances fall like hail on the poor populace. After a while the political soil will be covered with a layer of paper, and all the geologists will have to do will be to list it, under the name of *papyraceous formation*, among the epochs of the earth's history. The Convention, in three years one month and four days, issued eleven thousand six hundred laws and decrees; the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies had produced hardly less; the empire and the later governments have wrought as industriously. At present the 'Bulletin des Lois' contains, they say, more than fifty thousand; if our representatives did their duty this enormous figure would soon be doubled. Do you believe that the populace, or the government itself, can keep its sanity in this labyrinth?"

And yet, while no one would care to dispute these facts or deny they had significance, it is the libertarian interpretation of them which provides the clue

Fig. 4. Cover of *The Egoist*, volume 1, number 1. *Modernist Journals Project*. https://repository.library.brown.edu/viewers/image/thumbnail/bdr:519946/

A Most Unstable Concoction

When *The Egoist* debuted on January 1, 1914, at a cost of six pence, it was edited by Dora Marsden, with Richard Aldington and Leonard A. Compton-Rickett as assistant editors. This configuration only lasted for twelve issues. The July 1 issue of 1914 saw the departure of Compton-Rickett; Harriet Shaw Weaver became the new chief editor, and Dora Marsden remained on the board, now as a contributing editor, though she was still very much a driving force behind the magazine. Even when Marsden was not the chief editor, however, Weaver "always consulted her over any decisions" relating to the magazine's publication (Carr 618). To make matters more confusing, Aldington gave up his position in 1916 to serve overseas in France during the Great War. For the next year, H. D., Aldington's partner and then wife, took over his editorial duties while he continued to contribute content to *The Egoist* from France. In June 1917, T. S. Eliot in turn took over the assistant editor position from H. D., and he helmed the magazine with Weaver (and Marsden, playing a diminished role) until its final issue in December 1919. Since this chapter is concerned with the debut of the *Egoist* and the presence of the occult strategies of initiation that left their mark on this magazine from the very beginning, I am mostly concerned with Marsden and Weaver, who had their hands in the magazine from its dawn until its dusk.

The Egoist arose from the ashes of *The New Freewoman*, another journal edited by Dora Marsden that, like the original *Freewoman*, was primarily concerned with women's suffrage and other issues of its day such as contraception, divorce, homosexuality (or "uranianism"), and "free love" (Thacker 180). Although Marsden certainly wrote with a "cosmic" streak,[47] her mystical thinking had

[47] Suzanne Churchill and Adam McKible note in *Little Magazines and Modernism* that "an interest in the cosmic permeates Marsden's leaders in her magazines, and also percolates in the work of such contributors as H. D., W. C. W. [William Carlos Williams], Pound, and Lawrence" ("Introduction" 17). The book has a chapter by Bruce Clarke examining Marsden as a "cosmic" poet. According to Clarke, "The cosmic brings to light the paradoxical unity of distinction between the known and the unknown, the scientific and the mystical. Even so, distinctions between science and mysticism were often deployed to mark a division between 'hard' and 'soft' or avant-garde vs passé

not yet taken clear shape—this interest seems to have manifested a few years after the magazine's debut. Yet, an esoteric presence lingers in *The Egoist* from its inception.

Les Garner provides useful insights into the origins of Marsden and her magazines in his biography, *A Brave and Beautiful Spirit* (1990). The "Thousand Club" was ambitiously created to provide start-up and working capital for the fledgling magazine. Marsden was Chair, Weaver was treasurer, and Winifred Leisenring was Secretary. Leisenring was not only Secretary of the Thousand Club; she was also Secretary of the Blavatsky Institute, a body created for the study of esoteric philosophy, particularly that of the Theosophical variety (97). Garner also notes that, in July 1913, Marsden participated in a debate hosted by the Institute at a Blavatsky summer school in Peebles, Scotland, where she took pleasure in "destroying the arguments of the Theosophists and selling many copies of *The New Freewoman*" (97). Interestingly enough, despite this state of friction between this cosmic egoist[48] and the Theosophists, the Institute nonetheless offered space in "its own headquarters" for the magazine's operations in Oakley house, Bloomsbury (97). As Garner observes, "this was a very central and fitting address even though *The New Freewoman* had to share the building with solicitors, Swedenborgians, a teacher of memory, and by no means least, a firm of reinforced concrete engineers" (97). Helen Carr further adds that *The Egoist*'s sales significantly benefited from this arrangement: the Blavatsky Institute's bookshop did not charge a commission, and "theosophist shoppers appeared very happy to mix a little avant-garde writing, calls for free love and a philosophy of individualism with their own occult interests" (618). Moreover, there was a Theosophical holdover from the readership of *The Freewoman* and *The New Freewoman.* Carol Barash notices that the

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modernisms" (120). While there is merit to this claim, the strong occult presence in *The Egoist*, and its endorsement from both male and female modernists, troubles this distinction between a 'hard' and 'soft' modernism defined by rigid boundaries separating science and mysticism.

[48] Andrew Thacker defines Marsden's egoism as a "radical subjectivism" rooted in the thinking of Max Stirner and Friedrich Nietzsche (182). Citing Michael Levenson, Thacker asserts that "the appeal of Stirner's work stems from the collapse of liberal ideology in the years up to the war… 'liberalism decomposed into egoism.'" To Thacker, "such skeptical beliefs were most attractive to intellectuals and artists, among whom Levenson counts Pound and the other Imagists."

"diverse set of political and literary goals" made for lively publications, and "it is not surprising that the *Freewoman* attracted a coalition of feminists, theosophists, socialists, and anarchists—poets, critics, and theorists who rarely agreed on editorial policy" (35). Even from its foundations, before it had printed a single page, *The Egoist* had material and administrative connections to people and institutions in the occult sphere, and the magazine seemed equally as enjoyable to spiritual and literary seekers alike. And, like *The Little Review*, it distanced itself from an editorial 'party line,' though the subtext of the magazine is individualistic or anarchistic, and occult.

While Garner and most others writing about Marsden do not go into much detail about her spiritual beliefs at this time, we can at least surmise that she was familiar enough with Theosophy to debate members of the Theosophical Society at the Blavatsky Institute summer school, and through her association with Leisenring. Jane Lidderdale and Mary Nicholson dig deeper into Marsden's spiritual life in their biography of Harriet Shaw Weaver. They note that "Dora, like many of the suffragettes, was interested in esoteric cults, particularly in the Theosophists; she had already agreed to speak at their Summer School. The Bloomsbury office, therefore, gave her journal an appropriate home, among friends" (58). While Lidderdale and Nicholson point out that Marsden was "interested" in these things, she may not have been fully *invested* in them—at least, not at first.

Weaver really took notice of Marsden's growing interest in mysticism in 1919, when the magazine was on its last legs and Marsden was no longer the chief editor (Garner 159-160). Instead, Marsden was more concerned with completing her intended masterpieces, *Definition of the Godhead* (1928), and *Mysteries of Christianity* (1930). While it was mostly in her later life when matters of religion and spirituality came to dominate Marsden's consciousness rather than simply intrigue her, the influence of Theosophy on her, and the modernists in general, bears repeating. Could she, or Weaver, have read *Lucifer*, *The Theosophist*, or *The Theosophical Review*? Weaver's archive in the British Library hints that Marsden just may have read some of these occult publications in her youth, as she

was certainly aware of the most well-known of these as late as 1928. In the Egoist Press collection, held by the British Library, there are several lists of periodicals to which Marsden had intended to send copies of *Definition of the Godhead* for review. These documents give some indication of the sorts of periodicals that Marsden read or, at least, respected enough to recognize as suitable outlets for her metaphysical text. A handwritten list shows that copies of her book were intended to be sent for review by the usual literary channels like the *Literary Times Supplement*, the *Observer*, the *Spectator*, *The New Age*, *London Mercury*, *Criterion*, *Bookman*, *The Nation*, *Saturday Review*, and *The English Review*. The explicitly Christian *Anglican Theological Journal* stands out from these others, as does *Christian Commonwealth*, which has been crossed off on the list, along with the *Green Journal*. Another list reveals Marsden's eclectic spiritual interests, as more requests for reviews were sent to occult periodicals including *The Occult Review* and *Theosophical News and Notes* ("List of Periodicals").[49] Whatever Marsden's actual religious beliefs during her *Egoist* days, it is clear that the people and publications of the occult sphere remained as important to her a decade later as they did at the magazine's debut.

As for Harriet Shaw Weaver, Marsden's co-editor, business partner, friend, confidante, and, essentially, patron, Garner notes that she was "an atheist" who "objected to Marsden's developing interest in religion" (164). Weaver could not accept Marsden's belief that God was a woman and that the natures of Time and Space were masculine and feminine (164).[50] While neither woman seemed particularly *invested* in spirituality or religion during the lifespan of *The Egoist*, these eclectic editors and their inner circle were at least *interested* in these topics and did not hesitate to publish esoteric

[49] She also may have sent review copies to individuals with an interest in mysticism and the occult. In the Egoist Press Cuttings, held by the British Library, there is another list containing the names of Oliver Lodge, George Bernard Shaw, James Barrie, May Sinclair, John Middleton Murry, G. R. S. Mead, and the *Methodist Times/Reader/Magazine/Recorder*—but these are all crossed out ("List of Intended Recipients").

[50] Yeats's "primary" and "antithetical" tinctures also make this same distinction in *A Vision*. These "tinctures" are, of course, inspired by the solar and lunar archetypes of alchemy. If Weaver found Marsden's gendering of space and time puzzling, she may not have been as well read as Marsden when it came to metaphysical, mystical, and occult literature.

material in the pages of their periodical. And, although they had to fend off attempted coups by Ezra Pound over the magazine's editorship, these women remained the masterminds of the publication up until its demise; they knew what they were publishing and deliberately harnessed the mystique of the occult, even if they, like the Narrator in Shakespear's translation, were "no believer[s] in the Secret Sciences" ("Memoirs" 208).

Marsden, more than Weaver ever did, defined herself by her egoism before she had ever considered defining a godhead. Her egoistic essays made for difficult reading and alienated even the most staunch Stirnerians and anarchists to the point where some scholars suggest that it is quite possible that nobody really read them (Garner 151). Marsden may have been a stubborn and uncompromising writer and a heavy-handed editor at times—but she was flexible and eclectic in terms of which materials she selected for publication, including occult subject matter like "Memoirs of a Charming Person." Marsden's passion for classical philosophy easily coexists with the aesthetics of the Imagist group closely associated with *The Egoist*, and "Memoirs" is one site for examining exactly how and why this is so. Marsden was *always* inclined to esotericism, whether that be of the modernist, egoist, or occult variety, and that inclination persists from her glory days in *The Egoist* through her tragic mental decline and her descent into obscurity after the commercial failure of *Definition of the Godhead.* [51]

While Weaver and Marsden were the driving forces of *The Egoist*, the assistant editors obviously played a role in selecting materials for publication and contributing articles and reviews of their own. They similarly had conflicted attitudes towards mysticism and occultism. Richard

[51] Marsden's biographer, Les Garner summarizes Marsden's late life as such: "For most of the fifteen years from 1920 to 1935, Seldom Seen, near Glenridding in the Lake District, was Dora and Hannah Marsden's home. Though plagued with ill health, Dora persevered with her research and finally published, through The Egoist Press, two volumes—*The Definition of the Godhead* (1928) and *Mysteries of Christianity* (1930). But these achievements came at the cost of a severe strain in her relationship with Harriet Shaw Weaver and ultimately at the price too of her physical and mental health. In 1930, Dora suffered a nervous breakdown followed, five years later, by another, from which she never fully recovered. She became further isolated, a lonely and pathetic figure, doomed to spend the last twenty-five years of her life in hospital" (155).

Aldington was very much a classicist and published translations of Greek poems in *The Little Review* and *The Egoist*. In the second issue, Aldington defends Hellenism in poetry, evoking the aid of Pan (the satyr symbolizing nature and Paganism), and Hermes (the patron of thieves, poets, and alchemists) ("Anti-Hellenism" 35-36). He even compares poetic movements to cults (and would be indirectly accused of being a poetic cultist in Huntly Carter's article, "Poetry Versus Imagism," published in *The Little Review* in the following year). Despite his evocation of pagan deities, he would go on to disavow practical occultism five issues later.

Aldington's conflicted attitude towards the occult can be further observed in the correspondence section in his response to a letter called "Divine Inspiration." Amelia Defries points out that Aldington had earlier written that "poems, belonging to religious service" were, in reality, "works of art, not works of 'divine' origin'" (138). She then asks Aldington, in a manner reminiscent of that of Huntly Carter as seen in the last chapter, "why separate 'art' and 'divine'?" She then argues that "every founder of every religion has of necessity been a very great artist, and always a poet of the first order" and gives an impressive account of various philosophers who have all argued for art as a form of divine manifestation (138). Aldington dismisses her citations of biologist Sir Patrick Geddes, the reverend Hugh Reginal Haweis, and writer Thomas Carlyle as "Victorian slush" that "does not concern us" (138). He counters that "a work of art is so precisely because it is not divine or inspired or supernatural in any way. In the case of literature, a work of art is the record of an experience, an emotion, an observation; its value as art depends upon the method of presentation" (139). Reading between the lines of Defries's letter with her mixing of science and literature, and examples of Jesus, Buddha, and Krishna as great poets, Aldington dismissively concludes, "Personally I would rather make five new 'images' than found a new religion of Abstractions with capital letters. That, however, is merely personal taste; I take no pleasure in theosophy and the words of Mrs. Besant leave me cold" (139). This letter reveals that, while Aldington is clearly aware of the

magical or religious power of poetry in terms of its ability to shape the imagination and influence action, he is nonetheless unwilling to admit in print that the source of such power is anything other than human.

While Aldington is "left cold" by Theosophy, his colleague, fellow assistant editor Leonard A. Compton-Rickett, finds warmth in it. Compton-Rickett is something of an enigma; he is only mentioned in passing in Garner's biography on Marsden, is seldom mentioned in articles about *The Egoist*, and does not appear at all in the index of Brooker and Thacker's *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*. While little is known about Compton-Rickett, his Theosophist leanings are revealed in his own writings in *The Egoist* as well as in his later works. Issue four sees publication of "Agni Konda," or "Sacred Fire," a rather misty article full of those same "Abstractions with capital letters" that Aldington mocks just three issues later. It begins like so:

> THERE is a Flame whose light is Wisdom, whose warmth is Bliss, whose expansion is Power, whose form and colour are Beauty. If we enter the limbs of power we experience the ever-expanding life, the fiat that forges the instruments of action, the phallic will, the forthgoing surge, the glory of conquest. (72)

The essay is full of other such abstractions. Readers who had not already lost their patience with Compton-Rickett upon reading that introduction would also find the article full of Theosophical references and allusions. He writes, "… it is written on the walls of the Mystic Hall of Learning, 'Kill out desire for life,'* for in normal human consciousness the life and the form are indissolubly associated" (73). The asterisk here leads to a footnote, citing "Light on the Path," by "M. C.," or Mabel Collins, Theosophist and co-editor of Blavatsky's Theosophical periodical, *Lucifer*. Later in the second part of the essay, he cites "The Human Chord" by Algernon Blackwood, a Theosophist and adept of the Golden Dawn (91). After that, he refers to *Esoteric Christianity* by Annie Besant, successor to Blavatsky as leader of the Theosophical Society after her death in 1891. Compton-

Rickett would go on to publish *The Divine Drama and Poems* in 1916. Unsurprisingly, his Theosophical inclinations remain evident in this book since two poems are dedicated to Besant: "To Mrs. Annie Besant" and "Lines to Mrs. Annie Besant on Her Return from India."

While the reason for Compton-Rickett's sudden and quiet disappearance from the editorship of *The Egoist* is unclear, a passage from Lidderdale and Nicholson's book suggests that Compton-Rickett was mostly brought into the fold of *The Egoist*'s editorial board to serve as a buffer between Marsden and Weaver on the one side and Pound and Aldington on the other:

> It was on New Year's Day too that the first number of *The Egoist* came out—with an unexpected addition to the staff. The name of Leonard Compton-Rickett appeared on the front page as assistant editor, jointly with Richard Aldington. Harriet had heard of Mr. Compton-Rickett, because Dora had been trying to persuade him to put up some money; but his appointment was news. Dora wrote a few days later to say that she hoped, by doing him this favour, to bring him up to scratch. She did not want to be "at the mercy of Mr. Pound and Mr. Aldington," who were still talking about raising some money themselves. (80)

While Compton-Rickett could have left *The Egoist* for any number of reasons, I venture that one of them could be the fact that his writing style is just too 'mushy' for Marsden's and Aldington's tastes; Marsden herself once criticized his writing as "unformed" (qtd. in Lidderdale and Nicholson 88). It is too earnest in its belief in a mystical life. It does not masquerade in modernist irony or a coy insouciance. Instead, it is joyful, innocent, ardent, and unbearably sincere—in the style of Huntly Carter. [52] Another clue that Compton-Rickett's Theosophical writing style did not fit in with *The*

[52] "Towards a Human Aesthetic" by Huntly Carter precedes "Poetry Versus Imagism," his contribution to *The Little Review* that similarly tells the tale of his "initiation" into the arts. Like Compton-Rickett's prose, Carter's prose is also full of abstraction and mushiness—Marsden's biographer Les Garner describes his writing as "execrable" and determines that Marsden must have been "desperate" to publish his "drivel" (75). Bruce Clarke likewise points out that Weaver also had "no patience with Carter or his consistently diffuse articles" ("Dora Marsden" 143).

Egoist's style lies in Marsden's ambivalence toward Yeats. In a letter to Weaver, dated May 6, 1917, Marsden cuttingly remarks, "apparently, [Pound] is going to use the *Egoist* as a sounding board for the assertion of his merit and that of his followers and I suppose now of his 'Master' W. B. Yeats. We must mind we don't become too ridiculous in connection with this sort of thing" ("Letter"). Even with her open-minded attitude towards mysticism, Marsden has her limits. As she mentions in another letter to Weaver, dated April 29, 1917, she will not tolerate the "invasion" of "mystical mush," coming from Yeats, and she sarcastically refers to his theories as the "effusions of a 'Master'" ("Letter"). With Marsden's distaste for excessive mystical abstraction laid bare, it is unsurprising that she would find fault with Compton-Rickett's effusions if she could not tolerate those coming from a legitimate master of both modernism and occultism in Yeats.

Among the inner circle of this cabal of egoists, Compton-Rickett seems very much like an outsider, and his banishment from the editorial circle illustrates the differences between an intuitive, emotional, and mystical approach to spirituality versus a rational, intellectual, and occult approach, at least as far as his writing style is concerned; Compton-Rickett seems to be more of a practical mystic, rather than a coy modernist experimenting with the forms of esoteric practice while keeping his personal investments beyond readerly scrutiny in the magazine. Though Compton-Rickett seems to have been a sincere adept of the occult, he appears to have 'failed' as an adept of modernism and was then banished from the company of the Elect. If, as Longenbach has argued, Ezra Pound wanted to draw the modernist circle closer and banish the pretenders, his purpose appears to have been shared or endorsed, both explicitly and implicitly, by the other editor-adepts of *The Egoist*. Beyond the editors' disdain for Carter's and Compton-Rickett's writing or Aldington's hostile responses to a letter peddling mysticism, abstractions, and Victorianism, the work of esoteric literature, "Memoirs of a Charming Person," is another way in which the *Egoist* circle signaled their devotion to a more exclusive, elitist, and esoteric modernism.

Memoirs of a Charming Person: Transmuting Renaissance Alchemy into Modernism

In March of 1914, Ezra Pound emerged from his first winter of poetic and magical apprenticeship under Yeats at Stone Cottage. Although Pound was not an editor for *The Egoist*, he was an important and consistent contributor.[53] He would later lobby for a position on the editorial board, causing much frustration for Marsden and Weaver, before famously joining *The Little Review* instead as foreign editor in 1917. Nonetheless, Pound was instrumental in bringing a very striking occult text into print. Despite his ambivalence towards the occult, Pound introduced to *The Egoist* "Memoirs of a Charming Person," published under the name "M. de V.-M." This strange work of what appears to be fiction debuts in volume 1, number 6 (March 16, 1914), runs through to number 11, and serves as a central node in a conflux of occult discourse in *The Egoist*. Its dramatic performance of an esoteric exclusivity foreshadows the ambitions of the editors of *The Egoist* to continue the magazine's transformation from a popular, feminist, and suffrage-focused paper in *The New Freewoman* to an individualistic literary and philosophical paper that no longer concerned itself with the public taste. Within the recombinant flux of *The Egoist* as a whole, "Memoirs of a Charming Person" reveals the complexity of the editorial attitude towards the occult—and to politics. "Memoirs" undoubtedly contains views and opinions objectionable to the magazine's feminist contingent; its occult content was likewise controversial. Even so, "Memoirs" had something for everyone—an elitist, exclusive attitude to appeal to the modernists, a Hellenic/Hermetic intellectual lineage and occult symbolism to appeal to the classicist poets of the imagist group, and a dash of

[53] One of Pound's roles was to review books and periodicals for *The Egoist*. In one such entry, "A Curious History," he pokes fun at the latest offerings of *The English Review*. He writes, "'The English Review' for the month contains the outpourings of Messrs. Crowley, Edmund Gosse, and George Moore. Mr. Moore has succeeded in falling below even his usual level of mendacious pusillanimity" (27). While Pound did not take too kindly to Crowley's "outpourings," his comment shows that Crowley's work reached a modernist audience and was being discussed in their circles. See Chapter 4 for more on Crowley's connection to *The English Review*.

misogynistic prejudice to appeal to those philosophical egoists who sought to move 'beyond' feminism.

In a paper known for its eclectic and eccentric material, "Memoirs of a Charming Person" still stands out for its strangeness. Upon an initial encounter, a reader might wonder why this text is in the magazine to begin with. While most periodical studies of *The Egoist* pay little mind to this story and the role it played in this influential little magazine, "Memoirs" has been noticed by modernist scholars in general. In *Ezra Pound as Literary Critic* (1990), K. K. Ruthven remarks that this serial "took up precious space in five issues of the *Egoist* not because it had anything to do with the modernist movement in literature but because it happened to suit Pound for a couple of reasons" (56).[54]

Unlike Ruthven, James Longenbach sees a special significance to "Memoirs" and provides some key insights into how the publication of this text served Pound and, by extension, the other modernists connected to *The Egoist*. In *Stone Cottage* (1988), Longenbach chronicles Pound's apprenticeship under—and break from—William Butler Yeats over a period of three winters (1913-1916). As Longenbach tells it, "Memoirs" was originally written in 1670 by Abbé Nicolas-Pierre-Henri de Montfaucon de Villars and published as *Le Comte de Gabalis*, *ou entretiens sur les sciences secretes.* Yeats had assigned this book to Pound as part of his program of literary and occult initiation. Seeing its lessons in symbolism as instructive and useful to writers, and not just to occultists, Pound persuaded Olivia Shakespear to translate this little book for inclusion in *The Egoist*. Olivia Shakespear was the mother of Pound's future wife, Dorothy; she was also Yeats's old friend and former lover and shared with him a common investment in Theosophy and the occult. Appreciating Shakespear's

[54] According to Ruthven, Pound wanted to increase his own literary prestige by having Yeats publicly support his poetry. Further, he wanted to boost his standing as a serious "man of letters" in the eyes of Dorothy Shakespear, whom he could not yet marry because her parents, Olivia and Henry Hope Shakespear, had determined that he would be unable to provide their daughter with the lifestyle to which she was accustomed, being a "lady of leisure" (57).

great esoteric learning and her proficiency with the French language, Pound encouraged her to translate *Le Comte* as part of his bid to win her favour in the pursuit of her daughter (Longenbach 82). Shakespear accepted the task. However, she published the translation as "M. de V-M.," the original author's initials. This must have been a conscious effort to mask her own involvement in the process; she would later publish an article on "The Poetry of D. H. Lawrence" for the Special Imagist Issue as "O. Shakespear." While her gender is masked by the initial, she does not go to any length to conceal her identity.

In present scholarship, Shakespear is best remembered as Ezra Pound's mother-in-law, or W. B. Yeats's former lover and rejected muse—Yeats "too readily won her, and thus lost her as Muse" (Hassett 3)—but she did make some notable contributions to both the modernist and occult spheres. Through Yeats, Shakespear met Florence Farr in 1894, as Farr was Yeats's 'go-between' while Yeats and Shakespear negotiated how to proceed with their brief love affair in the mid-1890s (Hassett 48). Both women were learned in the ways of Theosophy and occultism; Farr was even the former Chief Adept in Charge in Anglia of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. These two New Women magi joined forces in the Winter of 1901 to co-author two Egyptian-themed plays intended to transmit esoteric wisdom: *The Beloved of Hathor* and *The Shrine of the Golden Hawk* (Pécastaing-Boissière 5). In 1905, Shakespear and Farr lived in the same neighborhood, as did G. R. S. Mead (a leader of the Theosophical Society, a joint editor of *Lucifer* with Annie Besant, and the sole editor of *The Theosophical Review* and *The Quest*). When Mead later founded the Quest Society in 1909, Shakespear and Farr both attended the Society's meetings in the years leading up to the Great War (Harwood). Additionally, Shakespear also published in proto-modernist and modernist literary magazines *The Savoy*, and *Blast* (Brooker and Thacker). In translating *Le Comte* for *The Egoist*, Shakespear brought forth a work that commanded the attention of this influential magazine's readership, and thus deserves more credit for fueling a fiery discussion in the early issues. Indeed,

both Ruthven and Longenbach focus almost exclusively on what "Memoirs" did for Pound, and they give little consideration to Shakespear's own agency or to what the editors may have seen in the story. While it is true that Shakespear never did rise to the heights of the Pounds, the Eliots, or the Joyces of the modernist movement, she nonetheless deserves a more charitable epithet than "marginal hange[r]-on" of modernism, as she, along with Florence Farr, was so dubbed by Demetres Tryphonopoulos (76). Shakespear is undoubtedly an influential adept, even though her New Woman 'marriage problem' novels did not earn her enduring fame as an author.[55]

One of Shakespear's acts of Will in her translation of Montfaucon's text is her changing of its name from *Le Comte de Gabalis*, *ou entretiens sur les sciences secretes* to "Memoirs of a Charming Person." Ruthven notes that this title "sounds like a private joke" (56), and it might very well be—Pound had referred to Olivia Shakespear as "that *charming* memorial of the XVIIIth Century" in a letter to her daughter, Dorothy (Ruthven 56, emphasis mine). Longenbach, however, finds a more critically useful explanation for the change in title: "While Pound suggested in a private letter that one should begin an investigation of symbolism with *Le Comte*, the title chosen for his public appearance seems to be designed to disguise its occult trappings and emphasize its 'charming and spritely' character" (87). Longenbach goes so far as to say that Pound's formulation and propagation of imagism "depended" upon his reading of this translated text in its original French (82). While this may be so, the implications of "Memoirs" reaches well beyond Pound and his interests; it joins an elder *fin-de-siècle* occultist in Shakespear with *les jeunes* of modernism, and its esoteric sensibilities resonate with those of *The Little Review* and *The New Age*, with its adept attitude, its attention to Hermetic and alchemical symbolism, and its instruction through allusion and citation. So, the change

[55] Shakespear had serialized *Beauty's Hour* (1896) in *The Savoy*, and it has recently been reprinted in novel form by Valancourt Books. Her other titles include *The Journey of High Honour* (1895), *The False Laurel* (1896), and *Love on a Mortal Lease* (1894).

in title, which disguises its occult trappings, participates in the esoteric tradition of secrecy and positions Shakespear as one of the 'keepers of the keys' of alchemy.

The change of title is also notable in that it adds a layer of ambiguity to the text, thereby troubling the distinction between fiction and non-fiction. What was once apparently a sincere occult tract became a "charming and spritely" story. And, especially thanks to Shakespear's clever liberties with the translation of the story's ending (discussed further below), "Memoirs" assumes a vexed relationship with reality; its previous air of sincere belief is thrown into question, thus shrouding it in a modernist irony. In its original form, *Le Comte* was apparently intended to serve as a compendium for some of the different elemental beings existing in other planes of reality, and past writers, including Alexander Pope, had turned to it for inspiration. According to Longenbach, Pope found the text intriguing and drew from its descriptions of gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, and undines while composing *The Rape of the Lock* (1717). Pope himself had once remarked that this discourse on elemental beings could easily be "mistaken" for a novel (qtd. in Longenbach 87), and Shakespear capitalizes on this ambiguity with her conscious decision to change the title, thus encouraging readers of *The Egoist* to likewise "mistake" this initiatory occult text for something else—even as it doles out genuine esoteric wisdom.

According to Longenbach, *Le Comte*, along with Joseph Ennemoser's *History of Magic* (1854), was one of the first esoteric texts that Yeats had assigned to Pound for his course of reading at Stone Cottage. Unlike the *History of Magic*, though, *Le Comte,* "is not the work of serious scholarship" (86-87). However, Yeats thought Pound would appreciate it due to its "pleasant and diverting approach to the doctrine of symbolism in its profounder sense." Hence, it could easily be "mistaken" for a novel, even as it instructs readers in Platonic symbolism, teaches them the heretical history of sexual relations between elemental creatures and humans, and provides them with a list of authorities for further study. In the case of *Le Comte*, these occult truths are conveyed in the form of

a dialogue between the Count and the Narrator. Each character draws from many authorities to make their arguments. These sources include Hellenic and Hermetic philosophers as well as the early Church doctors. As the main characters cite their sources, they transmit to the reader a program of study that they could take up, if they should so desire. Thus, the guise of fiction offers the advantage of rendering harmless (or "pleasant and diverting") a sincere, esoteric text conveying real occult truths to its readership through historical sources.

This is the power of esoteric literature in general, and Shakespear's change of title refines this power: whether mystical experience and esoteric tradition appears in the form of a diary or memoir describing 'real' happenings (as with Huntly Carter and Algernon Blackwood in the previous chapter), or whether it appears in the guise of fiction as it does here, it is always capable of conveying occult truths to a reader. Since, in this story, these truths are literary and philosophical as well as occult, no faith or belief is demanded from the reader. Whatever misgivings Marsden and Weaver would express about Pound, or about the occult, they too must have seen the utility of "Memoirs" for themselves—otherwise, they would not have given it five issues' worth of space.

This idea of esoteric literature as instructive, even if it is ostensibly fictional, anticipates my argument in Chapter 4 that Aleister Crowley similarly uses fiction to teach and initiate in his periodical, *The Equinox*. Esoteric literature can be a valuable teaching tool for the discipline of the adept mind. This being a literary magazine, and not an occult magazine *per se*, it is useful as a means of both *literary* and *occult* training; it is not meant to be taken at face value as a true story of an aspiring adept discoursing with a mad master bent on convincing the narrator—and readers—of the existence of elemental beings and the philosophical, theological, and sexual implications of their existence. Rather, the system of correspondences in which these elemental archetypes are enmeshed is what actually matters to a more literary-minded reader, as does the transmission of the historical authorities in occultism and philosophy.

While the Count, as a character, preaches literal copulation with the elemental creatures (gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, and undines), Montfaucon, as the author, preaches a more metaphorical mastery of the inner and outer worlds. Part of the divine quest of the adept is to master the elements of earth, air, fire, and water—which themselves symbolically represent worldly goods, the intellect, passion, and emotion in the tradition of Western magic. These elements also correspond to the tarot suits of pentacle, sword, wand, and cup. They further correspond to the four directions of north, east, south, and west, the four seasons of fall, spring, summer, and winter, and to the four humors (black bile, blood, yellow bile, and phlegm) and their temperaments (melancholic, sanguine, choleric, and phlegmatic) (McCann 25-26). Thus, to master these "living creatures" is to master one's own body, mind, and soul in the inner world, and space and time in the outer world. Eliphas Lévi, the French magus to whom much of modern occultism is indebted, declares in *Transcendental Magic*,

> The world is a field of battle, where liberty struggles with inertia by the opposition of active force. Physical laws are millstones; if you cannot be the miller you must be the grain. You are called to be king of air, water, earth and fire; but to reign over these four living creatures of symbolism, it is necessary to conquer and enchain them. (31)

While Lévi prefers a metaphor of war to the Count's metaphor of sex, the message of mastery is the same: adepts must conquer the elements to master the universe—and themselves. Extending this symbolic mastery to the poet, the Count gives seekers the key to the "symbolism in its profounder sense" so sought by Pound; this system of what Michael McCann calls "occult correspondences" (26) can be traced back to ancient times, and according to Renaissance magus Cornelius Agrippa, all significant symbols in Western magic can be traced to these Platonic elements (qtd. in 23). Thus, learning about these elements and their occult correspondences makes intelligible much poetic imagery used in Western literature throughout history. Upon mastering these correspondences, a

poet can speak in the images and symbols of color, direction, humor and temperament, tarot suit, and even plant, animal, and mineral. This evocative mode of occult speech carries intuitive meaning to those other adept readers who also know the same system of occult correspondences. This is the gift of "Memoirs" to the *Egoist* readers interested in poetry, even if they care not a whit for occultism.

The other important gift of "Memoirs" to the secret society of modernism is its occult reading program. In the story, the Count and the narrator alike draw from authorities within the Hellenic-Hermetic wisdom tradition to support their theological and philosophical arguments. Taken as a whole, these authorities become a lengthy list of names that any aspiring esotericist, whether of the imagistic, egoistic, or occultist variety, ought to investigate. The narrator has his own authorities, such as Pythagoras, Aristotle, Cicero, and Plutarch, to counter the heresies and blasphemies of the Count, along with more predictable Christian sources such as St. John, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and the *Book of Genesis*. The Count, however, does most of the talking, and he has authorities of his own. He supports his esoteric discourse on the existence of elemental beings, and their (sometimes sexual) interactions with humans with a wide variety of sources. Like the narrator, he too draws on the thinking of Pythagoras and Plutarch, but also offers up as evidence ideas gathered from Averroës, Cardan, Plato, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Josephus, Philo, St. Augustine, Celsus, Porphyry, Paracelsus, Celius Rhodiginus, Lucretius, Lucian, Pomponatius, Lucillus, Ferna, Tacitus, Saint Athanasius, St. Jerome, St. Anthony, Lactansius, St. Thomas Aquinas, Zoroaster (189), Guillaume Postel (189), Cassiodorus Remus (190) and, of course, none other than Hermes Trismegistus himself (154).[56]

[56] Many of these same names appear in Pound's *Guide to Kulchur* (1938). As Tryphonopoulos explains in *The Celestial Tradition*, this list of "philosophical heroes" reveals Pound's "commitment to this gnostic or hermetic tradition" (13). Pound considers these "heroes" so important to his literary and cultural education (and initiation) that he transmits this list at least twice over the course of his career.

Not only is the esoteric provenance of "Memoirs" evident through citation, but the Count, through dialogue, directly situates his line of thinking through the occult lineage reaching back to antiquity. "The Philosophers," argues the Count, have established

> the fact of the existence of an order of beings between God and man, to whom everything can be attributed which is super-human but less than divine. An ancient philosophy held this view: the Platonists, the Pythagoreans, who had it from the Egyptians, who again had it from Joseph the Saviour, and the Hebrews, before their passage through the Red Sea. The Hebrews called these Substances *Sadaim*, and the Greeks, transposing the syllables and adding one letter, called them *Daimonas*. These demons, or daimons, were a people of the air, unknown to, or misunderstood by those who are ignorant of the Cabala and its teaching. (172).

This myth of an unbroken wisdom tradition, accompanied by a reading list of classical philosophy, sits right at home with the Hellenistic, imagist poetry of H. D. and Aldington, and the translations of Greek poems and dialogues penned by those same poets and published in *The Little Review* or *The Egoist*. Most significantly, many of these exact names are given in Dora Marsden's *Definition of the Godhead* in her philosophical exploration of being, non-being, and becoming, and the nature of space and time. Hence, any 'over the top' occult mushiness or zaniness in "Memoirs" can be forgiven since much 'genuine' classical philosophy is transmitted to the reader through citation via Shakespear and Montfaucon as the authors of the text, and by the Count and Narrator as characters in it. [57]

[57] There is a significant overlap of the cited authorities I have compiled from "Memoirs of a Charming Person" with Marsden's authorities in *Definition of the Godhead*. Among the names repeated in Marsden's own philosophical treatise are: Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Cicero, St. John, St. Augustine, Clement of Alexandria, Philo, Porphyry, Lucretius, St. Athanasius, St. Anthony, Lactansius, and St. Thomas Aquinas. Many of these names appear in a single large paragraph of citations on page 110; Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers join these classical thinkers. Marsden's engagement with these same authorities reveals her lifelong commitment to philosophical occultism, even if theurgy had little appeal for her.

As for the actual plot of "Memoirs of a Charming Person," the tale begins with a blessing for the Count de Gabalis, a learned, though eccentric, old man who claimed to be a sage. The Count has recently died. And the Narrator, a young man and dilettante in the occult, comments that "the curious will not fail to say that such a death is usual for one who has failed to keep the secrets of the Sages" (112). More pointedly, he muses that "an avenging angel has never failed promptly to wring the neck of any who have indiscreetly revealed the mysteries of philosophy." To refer back to Michael Taussig's conceit of unmasking, the Narrator implies that the Count was guilty of exposing the secrets of the occult, rather than revealing them in a matter that does them justice. The irony here is that the Narrator is about to do the very same thing, though much worse—for he is no true believer. Besides, the Count disclosed his secrets to his apprentice, face-to-face, in the traditional manner, but that apprentice went on to publish them. Further, Shakespear, Pound, and the editors of *The Egoist* continue this exposure through the translation and publication of this wisdom as a "charming and spritely" story in a literary magazine. They are no true believers either—at least, when it comes to the Count's discourses on sex with spirit entities.

Our Narrator, the professed unbeliever, passes on the doctrines of the hidden philosophy, while making copious references to sages, the Kabballah, secret sciences, and various "Supreme Intelligences," all within the space of the first half-page of the text (112). With these key words appearing at the outset, there is little doubt that we are dealing with an esoteric text. As such, the Narrator makes an important rhetorical gesture of disavowal:

> …as commonsense has always led me to suspect that there is much emptiness in what are called Secret Sciences, I have never been tempted to look through the books which treat of them… I have taken upon myself (to avoid being unjust, and not to bore myself with dull reading) to pretend that I am interested in all these sciences, when with anyone whom I have reason to suppose has enquired into them." (112)

This act of apophasis is much like Yeats's own esoteric strategy of initiation in *A Vision* when he raises the issue that critics will undoubtedly ask whether or not he *actually believes* in his "circuits of sun and moon" (25). His response is similarly coy and ambiguous: "Sometimes, overwhelmed by miracle as all men must be when in the midst of it, I have taken such periods literally," Yeats confesses before adding the caveat, "my reason has soon recovered" (25). His reason may have recovered enough to maintain an air of plausible deniability after the fact, but it did not recover soon enough to prevent the writing of the book—and the transmission of mystical experience and esoteric doctrine. Like Yeats, the Narrator of "Memoirs" tries to have it both ways: he tells us he has not read occult treatises, even as he later cites them. He claims to only "pretend" interest, while meeting the Count on many occasions to document and eventually publish his ideas. Whether in Yeats, Montfaucon/Shakespear, or much other esoteric literature, coy disavowal deliberately obfuscates one's true beliefs and, thus, protects oneself from ridicule. This strategy serves the Narrator, as it disposes a reader to listen to him before he nonetheless delivers occult doctrine. More importantly, this act of disavowal also serves the editors of the *Egoist* in adding an ironic twist to the story—these coy, elitist modernists are no credulous saps, even though they see value in this occult text.

Another valuable facet of this text is its "aristocratic," adept attitude, which became associated with the anti-democratic and elitist posture of high modernism. The Narrator, an upper-class intellectual, owns a library and a host of rare documents that attract seekers of all stripes from all over Europe; princes, lords, lawyers, ladies, doctors, prelates, monks, and nuns have all travelled from far and wide to visit this library. Many of these researchers seek the Philosopher's Stone of alchemy (112). The Narrator knows that most adepts agree that "few" can actually discover the secrets of alchemy, but these arrogant questers "all had privately a sufficiently good opinion of themselves, to believe they were among the Elect" (112). Just as these fictional seekers of occult

wisdom believe themselves to be "among the Elect," so too does the Narrator, who positions himself as more knowledgeable and less credulous than they are. The unbelievers in the *Egoist* circle, like the Narrator, can still familiarize themselves with occult knowledge and its intrigue, while looking down on those who don't get it—and on those who get it a little too well. They have the luxury of appreciating the philosophy being handed down by the Count, while sneering behind the façade of the Narrator's unbelief in and indifference toward the 'secret sciences.' In short, the editor-adepts of the *Egoist* can stay 'cool' while flaunting their occult *bona fides*.

The narrator, despite having his own considerable knowledge of occult philosophy (even as he protests that he has not read much of it), thus presents himself as a Practical Person—he has his "common sense" suspicion against the secret sciences, which helps to disarm a suspicious reader who may be less inclined to read the story if the narrator was credulous; the reader is thus put in the position of using their own discernment, their mental independence, to accept or reject what they read. We have already seen the Practical Person or the "incompetent reader" attacked in the pages of *The Little Review* as Anderson and Heap followed in the tradition of Yeats, Underhill, Crowley, Blavatsky, Gurdjieff, and other mystical writers.

In a particularly illustrative moment, the Count upbraids our practical Narrator for taking him too literally. The Count explains to the Narrator the esoteric value of the tale of original sin in the book of *Genesis;* Adam's true sin was in peopling the world with children given by Eve, rather than copulating with the elemental creatures. Caught by surprise, the Narrator asks, "you think Adam's sin didn't lie in eating the apple?" (189). To this question, the Count retorts, "are you among those who take the story of the apple literally?... Do you not know that Holy Writ uses metaphorical language to express what could not otherwise be decently said?" (189).

Longenbach does not perform a close reading of "Memoirs of a Charming Person," but he recognizes the importance of this passage in that it is a "brief lesson in the interpretation of

symbols" that contains the "central tenet of Pound's understanding of esoteric symbolism: knowledge worth having can be expressed only in symbols that are unfamiliar and obscure" (91). Not only would Pound understand the importance of this passage as a means of separating the imaginative, poetic people from the literal-minded, practical people, but so would the other experimentally-inclined editors and contributors of *The Egoist*: Marsden, Weaver, Aldington, and H. D. This "lesson" in symbolism is important, and makes clear that an air of esotericism and secrecy is a marker of cultural capital (thus placing them among the Elect). Further, the narrative itself performs an attack on the incompetent reader, who is also the Narrator—the literal reader, the Practical Person, unable to read the occult cipher. The attack on the Practical Person by Montfaucon is echoed and repeated, centuries later by Shakespear, Pound, and the editors of *The Egoist* responsible for publishing *Le Comte*. This time, the attack is on those readers of *The Egoist* who, like the Narrator misreading the tale of the Apple, are guilty of taking too literally the occult doctrine presented here.

In the last episode of "Memoirs," the Count, knowing that his time instructing the Narrator (or perhaps, his time remaining in this plane on Earth) is coming to an end, asks his latest pupil to summarize what he has been taught, and to "enlighten" the Count as to the "state of [his] conscience" (207). Our practical Narrator is also an honest one. He tells it straight:

> with all due respect to you, you are a little mad, or else your vision is an enchantment; your mistress and your children are goblins; your Sages are certainly mad, and your conscience is in a parlous state. (207)

The pupil, having failed the master, gets a stern rebuke. The Count accuses him of being "as deluded as all the doctors of the Church," especially those that confused these elemental beings for "devils and demons." Yet, despite his thinking the Count mad, the narrator presumably found something useful in all this, something worthy of writing down and sharing. So too do Shakespear, Marsden,

Weaver, Pound, and all the rest: it is a "charming and diverting" tale, a means of positioning these editor-adepts as the arbiters of taste in the emerging secret society of modernism. Part of that positioning includes Shakespear's most significant intervention as translator of *Le Comte*. In Shakespear's version, the narrator concludes,

> Thus [the Count] ended our conversation. I had many others with him, and would give their substance were I sure that my readers would recognize the fact that I am no believer in the Secret Sciences, whilst pretending to laugh at them. If I were certain of not being misunderstood on this point, I would go on amusing myself with the Count, and would soon give another volume to the world. (208)

In *Stone Cottage*, Longenbach provides another translation, published in 1914 by "an actual occult society" called "The Brothers." Their version ends like so:

> Thus ends the Discourse of the Comte de Gabalis. He returned the next day and brought the speech that he had delivered to the Subterranean Peoples. It was marvelous! I would publish it with the series of Discourses which a certain Vicomtesse and I have had with this Illustrious Man, were I certain that all my readers would have the proper spirit, and not take it amiss that I amuse myself at the expense of fools. If I see that people are willing to let my book accomplish the good that it is capable of doing, and are not unjustly suspecting me of seeking to give credit to the Occult Sciences under the pretence of ridiculing them, I shall continue to delight in Monsieur le Comte, and shall soon be able to publish another volume. (259)

Longenbach rightly points out that the narrator's tone throughout *Le Comte* is "always ambiguous and often ironic" and that this ambiguity is "swept away" in the version published by "The Brothers" (259). However, in line with his focus on Yeats and Pound in the book, he does not explore the implications of this gesture for Shakespear: not only does it add an 'insouciance' or a

modernist irony to *Le Comte*, but it also potentially offers a subtle critique of the Count's wisdom, which is often tainted by prejudice.

The story has its fair share of moments that would make some readers rather uncomfortable, and while the Count's sexist and xenophobic assertions may have landed with people such as Pound (whose anti-semitism and dismissive attitude towards women is well-documented),[58] others like Shakespear, or the feminist contingent of readers following the magazine from its *Freewoman* and *New Freewoman* days, might take issue with them. For example, the Count takes it as a given that "all Jews are ignorant" (154), and he reminds the narrator of the "horrible colour of the Ethipians," whose dark skin is "black posterity," an accursed reminder of the sexual misdeeds of Cham, the son of Noah. Cham, the Count recalls, "fell a victim to the charms of his earthly wife, as Adam had to those of Eve"—that is, his progeny came from his mortal wife, rather than the elemental creatures (189).

On this note of Eve, a generalized misogyny complements these xenophobic moments in the story; Eve is to blame for mothering children from Adam, when he should have procreated with the elemental creatures instead. To be sure, one of the Count's greatest secrets (that he whispers in the Narrator's ear) is that "carnal intercourse with women" is "one thing incompatible with wisdom," for "Divine Wisdom would not enter into a sinful body, or a prejudiced mind" (153). This statement is delivered sincerely, even as it seems ironic, given the Count's prejudice towards women, Jews, and Africans. Recall that women are associated with the lunar archetype, that of intuition, imagination,

[58] If Pound saw in this text a method for distinguishing himself and a small, inner circle, he may also have accepted the Count's xenophobic and sexist sentiments; Pound would go on to helm a regular radio broadcast in Mussolini's fascist Italy from 1940 until 1943 where he would attack "Jewry, all Jewry, and nothing but Jewry" and refer to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as "Franklin D. Frankfurter Jewsfeld" (Wilson 425). Further, Jayne Marek sees in Pound's meddling in the affairs of women's magazines a general contempt for his female peers. She concludes, "it is clear that Pound thought of women as subordinates who could offer money, hard work, and approbation in support of literary men. Pound wanted to enjoy the benefits and prestige of editorial control without having to deal with the numerous less glamorous duties that necessarily accompany it" (189).

and irrationality—hence, incompatible with wisdom in a patriarchal wisdom tradition. While the audience of *The Egoist* was undoubtedly White and European, many of those readers, some being members of the "Thousand Club," were women who had supported the magazine since its days as *The New Freewoman*, or *The Freewoman* before that. Shakespear may have altered the ending to confront this prejudice; her intervention adds a layer of irony to the story that calls into question the Count's traditional, patriarchal occult wisdom. After all, the elder women adepts of modernism, Farr and Shakespear, not to mention Blavatsky, Collins, and Besant, would find ridiculous the notion that women were forbidden from becoming adepts. Like Farr, Shakespear was a feminist and a New Woman, and, living in a New Age, saw fit to usher in a new occultism. Her treatment of the ending of Montfaucon's text is one way of achieving that aim.

While Shakespear makes this significant intervention, she still conceals her own presence in the text in attributing it to "M. de V.-M." In remaining in the shadows, Shakespear becomes part of the subconscious of the text, and in turn, part of the subconscious of modernism. While there are far fewer records of historical female alchemists than those of their male counterparts, with Maria Prophetissa and Perenelle Flamel being rare exceptions, there is a tradition of women serving as an alchemist's assistant. According to Marie-Louise von Franz, alchemical manuscripts from Renaissance Europe sometimes depict an alchemist at work with a *soror mystica*—literally, a "mystical sister." This *soror* could be a literal "female assistant," or, on a symbolic level, she could represent the inner collaboration of the male alchemist with "his own feminine side" (20). This image of Shakespear seems apt for someone who preferred to conceal her involvement in producing the translation of this alchemical text; it suits a woman who did valuable work behind the scenes of *The Egoist*, in collaboration with Montfaucon from beyond the grave.[59]

[59] The next chapter on *The New Age* argues for Farr's acknowledgment as a full-fledged alchemist. Though she works with Orage, the mastermind of the paper, she is no mere *soror mystica*.

While Montfaucon never did deliver a sequel to this tale, wherein the narrator would "go on amusing" himself with more of the Count's arguments, it is clear that the adepts of *The Egoist* not only amused themselves with this story, but appreciated it for its adept attitude, its lessons in symbolism, and its strategic identification with the occult wisdom tradition through citation. "Memoirs" is an ordeal to determine who deserves to be an adept of modernism: those who do not see, or do not care, fail. Those who see, but misinterpret, fail. Those who see and understand the text's lessons on the value of obscurity (or, modernist "difficulty") and subscribe to the Hellenic/Hermetic wisdom tradition are initiated. As Longenbach, succinctly puts it, "Memoirs" serves to "introduce the secret society of readers to the doctrines of "'symbolism' in its profounder sense" while requiring them to believe only in the sanctity of modernism" (259). Clearly, the editor-adepts of *The Egoist* believed in "Memoirs," even if they did not believe in practical occultism.

Conclusion: The Excesses of Esoteric Egoism

A tale as strange as "Memoirs" would certainly have raised a few eyebrows among the readership of *The Egoist,* and we need only look to the correspondence section to find an example of a Practical Person ripe for the attacking. One such reader, Henry Bryan Binns, wrote in to express his distaste for the Count and his communion with elemental creatures. His letter, published in the tenth issue and entitled "The Dangers of Occultism" opens, "I hope I am not taking too seriously the Cabalistic extravaganza now appearing in your pages if I refer to the ugliness of the matter suggested" (200). He fears that reading about, or writing about, "demons" or the elemental spirits "push[es] the door open for the admission of very undesirable visitors" (200).

Binns refers to the actual presence of demons, or at least a state of "possession" that afflicts those who have "abandon[ed] personal integrity for the sake of emotional excitement or intellectual satisfaction" (200). He maintains that "real inspiration or divine possession may be regarded as an

actual entrance upon a degree of godhood, or if you will, a higher power of personality" (200). Another interpretation could mean that the publication of this story "pushes the door open" for *actual occultist readers* to enjoy and contribute to *The Egoist*. Perhaps Binns did not know that he was already in good company with figures such as H. D., Leisenring, Compton-Rickett, Carter, Yeats, Shakespear, and many others.

Alas, it seems that Binns *has* taken the story too seriously, and has exposed himself as a dreaded Practical Person; Ezra Pound himself defends "Memoirs" and chastises Binns in the following issue: "I trust no one will take Mr. Binns too seriously. Mr. Binns evidently believes in a general djinn like Jehovah having droits du Seigneur over all his female connections…. Mr. Binns objects to M. De Gabalis, permit me to object to Mr. Binns" (220). "Memoirs of a Charming Person" is an initiation for new seekers undertaking to learn about the solar and lunar archetypes, the occult elemental correspondences, and prominent classical thinkers of the perennial philosophy or the wisdom tradition rooted in Hellenic and Hermetic thinking; it is also a sort of secret handshake among the adepts of modernism who already understand these concepts. It seems that poor Mr. Binns has failed the ordeal. He does not understand the practical application of esoteric thinking as applied to literature and a culture of egoistic individualism. He does not understand the symbolic value of aligning oneself with the ancient Kabbalists, alchemists, and philosophers—instead he speaks of literal demons and possessions. Binns is just the sort of person the Count himself would scoff at had he brewed the Elixir and lived long enough to have read *The Egoist*.

The most famous legacy of *The Egoist* is probably the serialization of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and sections of *Ulysses*, along with the publication of the Special Imagist Number of May 1, 1915. This special issue defined a poetic movement and unveiled one of the most well-known cliques (or cabals) of modernism. Under the editorship of Weaver, with Marsden and Aldington as assistants, the importance of the Hellenic and Hermetic wisdom tradition is

immediately apparent. In "The Poetry of H. D.," an article published in the special Imagist number, F. S. Flint argues in magical terminology that, when it comes to the work of Hilda Doolittle, "you cannot argue it out by syllogisms. It might have come out of some Greek anthology; but that does not bring you any nearer to it. In fact, the more you attempt to reason about it the less will you get out of it. It must work on you as an evocation" (72). This is another way of saying that the mysticism of H. D. must be absorbed in the lunar manner, read through the intuition, rather than from the intellect. Samples from "Sitalkas," "Pines" (which would later become "Oread"), and—most important for an esoteric reading—"Hermes of the Ways" are all provided. This poem about the lonely and difficult toil for inspiration exemplifies the quest of adeptship: to seek inspiration and eat of its fruits, even though the

> Apples on the small trees
> Are hard,
> Too small,
> Too late ripened
> By a desperate sun
> That struggles through sea-mist. (119)

The powerful influence of Hellenic and Hermetic thought as applied to the mysticism and poetry of H. D. is well documented. Eileen Gregory notes in *H.D. and Hellenism* (1997), "No other modern writer is more persistently engaged in classical literary exchange" than H. D. (1), who "imagines herself in a classical line descending from Alexandria" (3-4). H. D.'s deep esoteric roots are studied in depth by Susan Stanford Friedman, Timothy Materer, and more recently, Matte Robinson, and I need not retrace their steps here—but, it should be clear that the Count's positioning of himself in the same lineage that would be adopted by H. D., Yeats, Pound, Marsden, Aldington, and others, is significant for its establishment of a common ground among adepts, even as it excludes outsiders. While H. D. may have been the most *sincere* adept of the *Egoist* circle, maintaining a genuine belief in her mystical experiences throughout her life, one can see the practical

utility of mythologizing one's connection to classical times—as evidenced in the poetry, essays, and short stories printed in this magazine.

As for the objectionable xenophobic and misogynistic content of "Memoirs of a Charming Person," it could have been as useful to Marsden as it was to Pound in terms of its strategic exclusion of a certain set of readers for the purposes of forming a more committed inner circle. From the start, Pound wanted to shift *The Egoist* away from its origins in *The New Freewoman*, and Marsden, too, shared this desire, and strove to move beyond suffragism—and even feminism. Modernist periodical scholar Andrew Thacker contends that, while Ezra Pound, Richard Aldington, and the other big modernist "men of letters" have been critiqued for muscling the feminism out of the paper,[60] the change from *The New Freewoman* to *The Egoist* was "not simply an androcentric coup" ("Dora Marsden" 180). Rather, "Marsden's encouragement of Pound and company" paralleled "her own self-distancing from contemporary feminism." As an example, Thacker cites Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the "ur-text of male self-creation," as sitting "comfortably alongside" (182) Marsden's own position on feminism going back to the final issues of *The New Freewoman*:

> *The New Freewoman* is not for the advancement of woman, but for the empowering of individuals—men and women; it is not to set woman free but to demonstrate the fact that the 'freeing' is the individual's affair and must be done first hand, and that individual power is the first step thereto (qtd. in 182).

Marsden's attitude on this front carried over from *The New Freewoman* and into *The Egoist*, and by January 1915, "Marsden's references to the suffragettes or to feminist questions all but disappeared" (187).

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[60] Carol Barash chronicles this "androcentric takeover" in a 1987 article: "According to a well-known story, Ezra Pound was responsible for transforming the *New Freewoman*'s concerns 'from feminism to literature' when he placed Richard Aldington as the journal's literary editor in the fall of 1913" (31). She further points to archival evidence in suggesting that "Marsden… resisted at first, but due to ideological shifts, financial mishaps, illness and exhaustion, eventually participated in granting the Egoist (and the *Egoist*) a male Ego after all" (Barash 56).

If "Memoirs of a Charming Person" did upset any feminist readers for its dismissive approach towards women, Marsden would have been quite fine with it. From the inception of *The Egoist*, Marsden was more interested in "ignoring in its discussions all existing tabus in the realms of morality and religion…." (qtd. in Lidderdale and Nicholson 58) than in towing a party line—even a feminist one. Thacker points to a leaflet for *The New Freewoman* outlining the magazine's editorial policy: it will "endeavor to lay bare the individualist basis of all that is most significant in modern movements including feminism" (qtd. in Thacker 184). This attitude persisted through the debut of *The Egoist*. Thus, feminism takes a back seat to egoism and individualism. To Marsden, the suffragettes, many of whom had supported her previous papers, did not see the big picture in terms of human liberation.

To a readership of older suffragettes, reading a tale of wisdom that excludes women would come as something of a rude shock given what they had been struggling for in the years prior. Marsden, who would rather seek a new readership more in line with the egoistic agenda of this new paper, could very well have found a use in "Memoirs" when it came to alienating the older suffragette readers who had carried over from the *New Freewoman* days. There would be no more debates about the merits of The Vote, or feminism, in general. As Garner observes, this elitist mask of an individualistic modernist who had set aside her commitments to feminism simultaneously conceals and reveals her deficiencies as an editor, and as a person:

> …if the creation and life of *The Freewoman* showed Dora's positive qualities, her own writings reflected her faults and weaknesses too. The clearest of these were elitism, arrogance and, at times, bullying over-confidence in the validity of her own views. These became less and less defensible as the acute critique of women's powerlessness in [her essay] Bondwomen for example developed into a general analysis of power within society as a whole. (85)

Garner posits that others have tried to connect egoists and imagists with little success, though there are "some parallels in their fascination with words and their individualism." Further, their "arrogant elitism" and "a belief in their own genius which placed them far above the common throng" were also factors (150).

While unflattering to the more selfless, communal-minded 'white magi' in the occult sphere, the connection between the egoists and imagists through their elitism makes sense, especially in light of the elitist esotericism common to occultists and modernists alike. *The Egoist* as a whole, as well as "Memoirs" within it, provides adept readers with the nuts and bolts of esoteric thinking and provides an index of classical philosophy for initiates to pursue, thus targeting an elect audience of adept readers, an esoteric counter-public—whether modernist or occultist. But, to the true occultist, too much Ego (too much self-centered concern for one's individual plight, for personal gain, for worldly ends) results in arrogance, delusion, and damnation.[61] As Materer points out in *Modernist Alchemy*, Ezra Pound would "often adopt the pose of the magus without the humility or reverence of Yeats and H. D…" (70). Perhaps Marsden, too, fell into the flames.

Garner notes how Marsden's tastes were eclectic, but trended toward becoming "more esoteric" (75). Noting Dora's proclivity for Stirnerian anarchism, and the publication of a review of Stirner's *The Ego and His Own*, he calls her "The Max Stirner of Feminism," with the caveat that she had "taken individualism to a point that seemed to subsume feminism itself" (108). In a telling moment, one of the shareholders of The New Freewoman Company, Bessie Heyes, wrote to Weaver to criticize the magazine when it changed its name to *The Egoist*. She argued that this change "seems to be foolish. Such a name would convey nothing to the ordinary *practical person*. No doubt

[61] A. R. Orage, literary and occult mentor to Pound, Anderson, Heap, and many other younger modernists, wrote that when "the walls of egoism close around us, the ecstasy is past, and we are once more human" (qtd. in Jackson 23). To be an egoist is to be human; to be an egoless mystic is divine. However, from what can be gathered from Aldington's argument against Defries that art is not divine but human, such a human fate would suit this circle just fine.

you will say *The Freewoman* is not meant for the ordinary practical person. But what is the good of a 'gospel' (which Miss Marsden spoke of) if it is only for 20 or 50 people" (qtd. in Garner 117, emphasis mine). If Leonard A. Compton-Rickett, Huntly Carter, and Henry Binns were too sincere in their spirituality, Bessie Heyes is too sincere in her feminism.

And yet, *The Egoist* was the paper of *les jeunes* of modernism. They worked to bring in a new age of identity, poetry, and spirituality. Whatever politically incorrect deficiencies "Memoirs" possesses, it nonetheless found a home in the magazine and appealed to everyone involved, on some level. From the perspective of the adept, and of the editors of *The Egoist*, it is best left to individuals to decide for themselves what to make of the wisdom received from the masters. While this privileged stance does add extra intellectual and emotional labor to marginalized readers, the editor-adepts of *The Egoist* nonetheless show their egoistic and individualistic commitment to the mental independence of their readers; they alone must decide for themselves how to adapt and integrate received wisdom into their own inner universe. Through her own translational in(ter)vention, Olivia Shakespear, the *soror mystica* working as Montfaucon's lunar shadow, all but ensures that "Memoirs of a Charming Person" did not run in *The Egoist* just to be passively absorbed as an outmoded, politically incorrect relic of Renaissance occultism.

Looking at the Count's misogynistic advice in this light, we could instead read "carnal intercourse with women [is] one thing incompatible with wisdom" as "an excess of passion for bodies and other illusions of the material world distracts the adept from the Great Work." Indeed, Eliphas Lévi offers similar advice in *Transcendental Magic*. Although he uses the gendered "he" pronoun, his version is much more palatable: "the man who is enslaved by his passions or worldly prejudices can be initiated in no wise; he must reform or he will never attain; meanwhile he cannot be an adept, for this word signifies a person who has achieved by will and by work" (31). If the conscious, critical reader can likewise set aside the biases of the Count, of Pound and Aldington, of

Montfaucon himself, "Memoirs" gives poets and thinkers the tools to refashion the story—and their own lives—for themselves. As H. D., foremost among the modernist alchemists, decrees in her "Tribute to the Angels," it is the task of the alchemist to

> Collect the fragments of the splintered glass
>
> and of your fire and breath,
> melt down and integrate,
>
> re-invoke, re-create
> opal, onyx, obsidian,
>
> now scattered in the shards
> men tread upon. (*Trilogy* 1)

Should the readers of *The Egoist* pass through the fires of their trials, they too can participate in the making of modernism; they can also participate in the making of a new occultism. H. D., Shakespear, Farr, Blavatsky, Collins, Besant, Underhill, Anderson, Heap, and any number of female (or feminist) magi did not let such prejudices stop them from founding their own secret societies, initiating themselves into the ancient wisdom, and reading and writing esoteric philosophy. They burned these prejudices from "the fragments of the splintered glass" of their own readings, broadened the scope of their received wisdom, and transmuted it into a philosophy for the imminent New Age. While a "male Ego" eventually came to dominate *The Egoist* (Barash 56), its feminine shadow persists: as the great gyres of history and criticism turn and turn, more and more of these adept women will take their place in the sun.

Chapter 3

"Towards [a Mystical, Feminist] Socialism": The Sun and Moon of *The New Age*, 1907-1922

NIX NIHIL
"Alfred Richard Orage,
Herald of the New Age,
Emissary of Gurdjieff,
Mentor of Modernists,
impart me with your wisdom!"

ORAGE
"As your journey draws to a close,
you discover what you came to find,
though you did not first know it.
No resistance here!
Much wisdom and power in these boxes.
Avail yourself! Your time is limited,
but the trip is a reward.
Into your possession comes personal insights
few have seen.
Congratulations!"

When A. R. Orage and Holbrook Jackson took over *The New Age* in 1907, they relaunched a magazine that would change the landscape of modern periodical culture: it was the paper read by "everybody who was anybody" if they were interested in politics or literature (Margaret Cole qtd. in Martin *New Age* 5). *The New Age*, formerly a "moribund sectarian paper" (Welch 16), was relaunched as "an independent socialist review of politics, literature and art," as proclaimed on its masthead. This endeavor was made possible with the financial assistance of George Bernard Shaw and Dr. Lewis Alexander Wallace, each of whom contributed £500 for the takeover and relaunch of this now-classic modernist magazine (Welch 16). Shaw needs no introduction here, but it is worth noting that Wallace was a Theosophist who contributed articles critiquing the esotericism of academia

under the pseudonym "M. B. Oxon" (Wood 2).[62] So, we see here, like with *The Egoist*, that Theosophical money facilitated the birth of yet another modernist magazine.

But, it was not only Theosophical money that helped relaunch the journal—a plenitude of Theosophical and occult ideas permeates *The New Age* and provides much of the substance of volume 1. This paper was, coincidentally or otherwise, relaunched the same year in which Orage officially broke his ties with the Theosophical Society.[63] But, just because the man broke his ties to the Society and founded a political journal does not mean that he broke his ties to theosophical ideas, or separated these ideas from his politics; much of the philosophy published in Orage's journal would not be unfamiliar to Theosophists or other students of the traditional wisdom. Orage's working definition of socialism is simple enough: it is "nothing less than a new theory of society, a theory which finds place and scope not just for manual labour but for all the crafts, arts and professions…[,] a theory… in which specific provision is made for every type of mind and every shade of temperament" (qtd. in Wood 12). Yet, when Orage explains his aims for such a theory, he channels the French magus, Eliphas Lévi: his socialism is no less than "the conquest of the irrational forces of nature, the subjection and transformation of all the devils and titans of earth and water, air and sky, the re-creation of Eden, and the return of man to the primeval garden" ("Towards

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[62] Wallace's most intriguing contribution to *The New Age* is his series, "The Magic of Oxford," wherein he argues that Academia is a cult of its own through its elitist hoarding of knowledge and its ability to use that knowledge to manipulate the public. Writing as "M. B. Oxon," Wallace claims that Oxford, and upper-class universities like it, is a "special factory of a special sort of magic, none the less magic because few know it by that name, intended and most cunningly designed, to enshroud with awe, certain forms of incompetence and stupidity, and to ensure public respect for the same" (260). Wallace concludes that socialists would find little use in attempting to seize Oxford and reform it for socialist ends; its "continuous collective magic" (or ideology) that leaves students "Oxonised and dehumanised" is impervious to reform since its roots in the English financial and cultural elite lie too deep (261).

[63] Orage became a member of the Theosophical Society in 1905 (Welch 18). Adam Trexler notes that Orage became "a prominent speaker" at Theosophical Lodges in Manchester and Leeds, and wrote several articles for the *Theosophical Review*; he also met his longtime lover and fellow contributor to *The New Age*, Beatrice Hastings, through his involvement with the Society (166). Being such an astute critic and skeptic, Orage inevitably got himself into trouble for criticizing Theosophy in a series of essays published in the *Theosophical Review.* As Wallace Martin recalls, Orage's "rationalistic criticism" of Theosophy "evoked two editorially-sponsored articles of rebuttal early in 1907, and his association with the Society ended that year" (*Orage as Critic* 7).

Socialism [I]" 361). Thus, the politics of Orage's respected political paper bears the distinct stamp of his occult study.

This chapter centers around the first volume of *The New Age*, though connections to later volumes are made where appropriate. Given co-editor Holbrook Jackson's early departure, I focus on Orage, who was very much the mastermind of the operation. This is not to say that Holbrook Jackson is not important; he takes credit for introducing Orage to Nietzsche,[64] and according to Alex Owen, he too recognized that "the literary 'decadence' of the 1890s was intimately related to 'spiritual desire' and the rise of 'mysticism,' as well as to notions of an aestheticized self constituted through direct sensorial apprehension of the world" (139). Further, Jackson likely had an occult background of his own,[65] and he was acquainted with Aleister Crowley—though Jackson would later denounce The Great Beast as a "common twister" ("Letter to Gerald Yorke").

Although Orage eclipsed Jackson as the leading voice of *The New Age*, an additional voice shines through in the first volume: it belongs to Florence Farr, yet another former Theosophist, and the erstwhile Chief Adept in Charge in Anglia of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Farr addresses the key questions of her day: the rights of women, the direction in which socialism is heading, and how changing trends in drama and literature reflect these. Writing in an unapologetically occult style, Farr articulates a daring vision for social reform, a mystical feminism anchored in the realities of labor and economics in the material world, but transcendent in its spiritual perspective rooted in the perennial philosophy and the wisdom tradition of the great sages

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[64] In Holbrook Jackson's tribute to Orage upon his death, published in *The New English Weekly* on November 15, 1934, Jackson comments on Orage's erudition and likeability: "Groups formed around him automatically. At one time for the reading and exposition of Plato. At another of Blavatsky. His interpretation of the *Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled* fluttered the dovecotes of Theosophy. There were excursions also into the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*…. Then came Nietzsche. That was my fault" (qtd. in Selver 87).

[65] In *The Anatomy of Bibliomania* (1930), Jackson considers the numerous roles that books play in Western culture. In Part VIII, in a section called "Of the Uses of Books," Jackson gives some attention to books as "Charms, Amulets and Fortune-Tellers" (168). The book further compares the fascination with books and libraries to necromancy, and discusses bibliomancy—divining omens from randomly-selected passages in randomly-selected books. Yet, in spite of his interest in magic and his knowledge of Theosophy, Jackson was no Theosophist; he denounced the Theosophists who attended the Leeds Arts Club as "yoga-stricken mugwumps" (qtd. in Dixon 148).

of history. These two writers dramatize an occult synthesis: Orage's solar, masculine style emphasizes "brilliant common sense" (Wood 25), logic, and practicality, while Farr's lunar, feminine style emphasizes humor and playfulness, intuition, and imagination.[66] Together, Orage and Farr theorize a (feminist) mystical socialism that undergirds its distinct style of "presentative journalism" that made *The New Age* such a success among readers of many different political *and spiritual* stripes.

This chapter demonstrates that, contrary to the dominant currents of scholarly and critical opinion, the occultism of *The New Age* is not some awkward anomaly that creeps in from time to time to taint the respectability of this fine socialist paper. Rather, the politics of the paper is *derived from* Orage's occultism, and Farr's feminist supplement to Orage's mystical socialism likewise grows organically from her occult beliefs and finds precedent in the ancient wisdom. This chapter emphasizes that, for Orage, Farr, and other Fabian occultists, spirituality is absolutely political; these adepts of modernism strive to recast traditional occult truths, to 'make them new' as socialist truths. While it may be more critically fashionable to neglect the esotericism of *The New Age* in favor of its socialism, the fact is that any attempt to separate the spiritual content from the political content of the magazine occludes Orage's and Farr's socialist vision of *spiritual and worldly* transformation, thus rendering it incomprehensible or incomplete. Neglecting the spiritual content in the paper also

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[66] To recapitulate, Farr explains the solar and lunar archetypes in her notes on alchemy, published in 1894 through the Theosophical Society. These terms signify "active and passive; male and female; sudden rapid vibration, and solid resisting substance; gold, and silver... [;] wise is he whose solar power has the penetrating force to discern the truth in the lunar shades with which he is surrounded" ("S. S. D. D." "Notes" 46). Every adept contains both aspects within—no one is purely solar or lunar. Accordingly, Orage's and Farr's embrace of these roles are dramatic, rather than essentializing: Orage was known as a caring and sensitive man to his friends, praised for his humility and modesty when not wearing the mask of the editor-adept; likewise, Farr's militant feminism could be interpreted as 'masculine,' but she still harnesses the signature lunar traits in her magical writing style. From an occult perspective, when these archetypes of Sun and Moon (along with Mars and Venus) crystalize into rigid gender roles, they lose their magic as they become too literal—Farr herself even criticizes the rigid, essentialist, maternal feminism of Marie Corelli in her article "Marie Corelli and the Modern Girl," wherein she argues, "if a princess desires to be treated as a comrade and not as part of the spoils of war, she must become a republican and abandon her royal behaviour; so women must abandon reserved gentility and cultivate a decent respect for manhood as well as womanhood if they want to become companions of men in any real sense" (214). Therefore, the solar and lunar archetypes, when used consciously for dramatic purposes, are suggestive and symbolic, rather than prescriptive and literal.

warps the socio-political context in which it was founded, as the adept attitude of modernism finds kinship in both the occultist and Fabian contingents of *The New Age*'s readership. Orage's magazine makes for a fascinating case study on how spirituality cannot easily be separated from politics in modernist literary history, or any history, as the attitudes and aesthetics of the occult indelibly marked the socialist politics of one of modernism's most famous and longest-lasting magazines.

In focusing primarily on the first volume, I emphasize that Orage's occult interests are present from the outset in 1907, either through Orage's own contributions to the magazine, through his promotion of Theosophical and occult literature in book reviews and advertisements, and through his promotion of Farr's esoteric writing. Orage's editorial style is thus consistent with his spiritual vision of social transformation. Just because Orage had left the Theosophical Society and rekindled his interest in politics does not mean that Orage had turned his back on his occult roots; indeed, these roots were themselves spreading wider and deeper in this ostensibly 'socialist' journal.

Orage and Farr pair well in terms of formulating a strategy for reading the *The New Age* as a vehicle for initiation. Not only were they both occultists and former Theosophists, but they were also schoolteachers. Orage took a position at the Leeds Board School in 1893 before resigning his post in 1905 and striking out to London to found his new magazine with Jackson (Ardis "Democracy" 211; Mairet 10; 29), while Farr spent her last years in Ceylon, where she taught from 1912 until her death from cancer in 1917 (Litz 90). Given that both of these powerful minds sought to teach and instruct for most of their lives, it makes sense to turn to *The New Age* to see how seekers of wisdom could receive initiation and instruction from these two occult masters.

In 1934, near the end of his life, Orage wrote an article for *The Schoolmaster and Woman Teacher's Chronicle* called "This Profession of Ours," wherein he argued that "The Editor is akin to the teacher" (697). Since much of this study is concerned with occult wisdom and its transmission through the periodical form, it seems significant that the most prominent occult voices in *The New*

Age were teachers by profession and that the most famous editor of them all saw his role as that of an instructor to his readers. Being senior clergy of the so-called secret society of modernism, Orage and Farr were mentors to the younger modernists who would eventually surpass them in literary fame and notoriety: but, when the journal debuted in 1907, these adept teachers were well traveled as "students of traditional wisdom" and had much to share in this exciting new periodical.

Despite (or perhaps, in part, *because of*) its occult undertones, *The New Age* was one of the widest read of the modernist little magazines. Modernist periodical scholar Ann Ardis notes that, at its peak in 1908, the journal had around 22,000 subscribers ("Dialogics" 417).[67] Not only was this magazine widely read, but it was one of the longest-lasting periodicals of modernism; Orage held his post for fifteen years. While Holbrook Jackson would leave the New Age in 1908, after less than a year's service,[68] Orage would write the leader and edit the journal up until 1922, when he gave up his editorial duties to work with Gurdjieff at his Institute at Fontainebleau, France (Martin *Orage as Critic* 7). *The New Age* is certainly the longest-lived periodical considered in this study; it is an exception to Hoffman et al.'s criteria that little magazines are necessarily short-lived. It is also an influential forerunner to the modernist little magazines that appeared later on the scene, such as *The Little Review* and, especially, *The Egoist*.

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[67] Ann Ardis gives some more detailed numbers on *The New Age*'s circulation in a 2007 article: "In August of 1913, the New Age's weekly circulation was around 4,500: that is, down from its all-time high water mark at 22,000 in 1908, but nonetheless substantially larger than the circulation of the little magazines with whom the history of modernism has been closely associated… initially priced at one penny an issue…. Its cost per issue was raised to 3p in 1909, where it would stay until November 1913, when it was raised again, to 6p, at which point circulation dropped again, to 3,500" ("Dialogics" 417). These numbers demonstrate that the magazine spiked to popularity soon after its birth, even with the density of occult content present at the outset.

[68] Jackson's departure from the magazine is strange and complicated. John Carswell's book on the *New Age* circle records that Orage's wife, Jean, left him for Jackson (31). This likely caused some tension in their working agreement. On another less dramatic note, Mairet attributes Jackson's departure to a simple difference in philosophy over advertising; Jackson wanted to take advantage of it, while Orage preferred to instead rely on his patrons (such as Shaw, Wallace, and others) and keep the magazine's interests independent. In spite of their differences, the two men remained "on good terms…. It had been a good partnership" (48-49).

Although Orage expressed his doubts about modernism and the aesthetic cults within it, and publicly criticized Pound and his circle on numerous occasions,[69] the socialistic *New Age* was, nonetheless, a nexus of figures from both the modernist and occult spheres, if the distinction must be made. As we have seen from the magazines featured in previous chapters, *The New Age* performs an elitist, adept attitude and considers itself to be the organ of a guild of adepts; it situates itself within the occult wisdom tradition through citations, book reviews, and advertisements; and, it employs recognizable occult initiation tactics such as mocking the Practical Person, harnessing alchemical symbolism, evoking Lucifer as an icon of socialist rebellion, and encouraging an 'adept' mode of reading that respects the mental independence of its readers. *The New Age* is Janus-faced, simultaneously speaking to two audiences within a single readership; Orage and Farr do not hesitate to address and engage with an inner circle of occult adepts among what is already an elect *intelligentsia* of European socialist thinkers. Their adept attitude is encapsulated perfectly in the editors' remarks in, "To Our Readers," a retrospective summing-up of the journal's first volume:

> From the great dim multitudes engaged in the laborious pursuit of banal information through the pages of the popular weeklies we can expect nothing. THE NEW AGE, we are aware, is not, and cannot become for a long while, the paper of the "people." But with the co-operation of our readers it may, and we hope it will, become the established organ of high practical intelligence and the representative of the best imagination of English social reformers. (408)

How can such an elitist statement be reconciled with the ostensibly socialist politics of this journal? How can a journal that claims to work for the collective improvement of English society

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[69] Orage once quipped that the short-lived Vorticist movement was a "big name for a little thing" (qtd. in Wallace *The New Age* 192). He also attacked the first issue of *Blast* magazine as being all show and no substance, a spectacle of "excessive and barbaric ornamentation, violent obscurity, degraded imagery: but unmixed with any ideas" (qtd. in Wood 26). However, Orage praises "the good side in Mr. Pound's doctrine," which is that poetry should be "the practice of 'a learned, self-conscious craft' to be carried on by a 'guild of adepts'" (*Orage as Critic* 144).

accomplish that aim while disavowing great swathes of potential readers? It is only within this proposed framework, one that allows for occultism to *co-exist* with a socialist politics—no matter how contradictory that might sound—can this editorial position be made intelligible. The first volume of *The New Age* could not *yet* become a paper of "the people," but the future possibility could become the reality if only a new baseline of mass consciousness were attainable. That shift entails a spiritual (r)evolution to accompany the economic concerns of this socialistic *and occult* magazine.

Initiation

With eager hands, I hold the original 1907 debut issue of *The New Age*, edited by Alfred Richard Orage and Holbrook Jackson. Of course, I have already read the digital version of this journal and know what to expect. Now, sitting in the reading room at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, I get to hold the real thing. I am especially eager to read Farr in the original. This is a very delicate collection of issues, a bound collection with the first few sections falling apart. It definitely smells like its 109 years of age! But, it is a sweeter smell than some of the other older books I have handled. The paper is of medium stock, darkening around the edges and flaking apart. The magazine is larger than I expected, as my printouts are formatted for 8.5" by 11" paper sheets. The original sheets are actually 21 cm by 33 cm.

As I grasp the cover, I close my eyes. The symbol of Orage intuitively emerges in my imagination. I have copied this symbol into my *Book of Travels* whilst studying Orage's papers at the Brotherton Library in Leeds. Two symbols connect as one, with one larger than the other, distorted reflections in a pool—as above, so below. I anticipate seeing the macrocosm of modernism through this window into the microcosm, this tattered shell of a once illustrious magazine.

Somewhere in the back of my skull, I hear the strumming of a psaltery, and know that Florence Farr, one of the greatest adepts of them all, stands in the shadows, indifferent to her obscurity, for "wisdom is a gift given to the wise." And the wise must cross the shadows and leap the Abyss before they can fathom the light.

* * *

THE NEW AGE

AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST REVIEW OF POLITICS, LITERATURE, AND ART

EDITED BY

A. R. ORAGE and HOLBROOK JACKSON

Nº. 660 [New Series. Vol. I. No. 1.] THURSDAY, MAY 2, 1907. [Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper.] ONE PENNY

THE OUTLOOK.

Planning an Empire.

Now that the incidental festivities, dinings, speeches, and entertainments by rival political organisations, which the newspapers appear to regard as the most striking features of the Colonial Conference, are drawing to a close, it may be well to consider how far that Conference has gone towards doing what it was intended to do. The task before the Conference, the task implicitly before us all, is nothing less than the creation of a British Empire. At present, of course, no such Empire exists. All that exists, either legally or actually, is "the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and its Colonies and Dependencies." Of these Colonies and Dependencies some are ruled bureaucratically from Downing Street, others are self-governing, and are bound together only by a common allegiance to the Crown, by a faint and ill-defined suzerainty exercised over them by the Parliament in which they are not represented, and by a certain sentiment of unity, which a common tradition and (in most cases) a common language bring to them. We do not wish to underrate the importance of this sentiment, without which indeed permanent union would be impossible. But a sentiment too weak to find expression in concrete organisation is not likely to be strong enough to outlast the wear and tear of centuries. It seems clear that, if the Empire is not to go to pieces in the course of the next hundred years or so, means must be found to bring its parts into closer relation with one another. This is a problem worthy of far closer attention from Socialists than it has yet received. For us the barren negation of the old Radical Little-Englandism is impossible. If we accept it we are false to all our traditions. If Imperial Federation is impracticable, the Federation of the World of which Marx and Lassalle dreamed must be even more impracticable. If we cannot have a Parliament of the Empire, how can we hope for a Parliament of Man? If a man love not his brother whom he has seen, how shall he love Humanity which he has not seen? Moreover the predatory Internationalism of Capital will force us into Imperialism, as it forced the elder Socialists into Internationalism. How helpless would a host of small and romantic Nationalities prove when confronted with all the powers and principalities of cosmopolitan finance! Only a Socialist Federation—a Socialist Empire—could face them without flinching.

A Brixton Budget.

Seldom has there been a measure so characteristic of its author as Mr. Asquith's Budget. It is an undeniably clever performance, as safe, astute, and diplomatic as utter lack of sympathy and imagination can make it. It is carefully designed to please as many sections of the community as possible without exciting the apprehensions of any. For "the City" there is the reduction of the National Debt, with its promise of an improvement in the price of Consols. For the middle-classes, whose "bitter cry" the Opposition was bent on exploiting, there is the discrimination of the Income Tax, with its relief for the smaller earned incomes. Yet this discrimination has been so contrived as not to scare wealthy Liberals, whose secession would deplete the war-chest of the party: for the discrimination is effected by taking off and not by putting on, so that the immense tribute of rent and interest will continue to be appropriated without diminution for the private use of a class. At the same time the conditions of payment are to be made more stringent and harder of evasion, so that the Chancellor may hope to gain by stricter enforcement almost as much as he will lose by his small but well-advertised mercies. Meanwhile the working class, unrelieved of the "taxes on the people's food," at which the Liberals wax so indignant when other people propose them, are to be placated by a promise of Old Age Pensions—in the distant future. And Mr. Asquith sets aside £1,500,000 to provide a "nucleus" for the purpose and to prove the sincerity of Liberal intentions. We are disposed to regard this "nucleus" as the cleverest thing in the Budget. That the Liberals have the remotest intention of granting pensions to the veterans of industry we do not for a moment believe. The dodge is both cleverer and more economical than that. We take it that Mr. Asquith will continue to dole out additions to the "nucleus" at the rate of a million a year until such time as the party is prepared to face a General Election, and that the Government will then go to the country with the cry that, if the people want pensions, they must not interrupt the good work and must send Codlin, not Short, back to power to complete it.

Broadening the Basis.

But what will the Tories be doing the while? They will hardly, we imagine, tamely suffer the issue to be shifted from a number of questions on which they are quite likely to win, to a single question on which they would be almost certain to lose. They will doubtless pledge themselves, not only to continue Mr. Asquith's policy in this matter, but to give it a new impetus by "broadening the basis of taxation" and so accelerating the day when the "nucleus" shall grow to practicable proportions. And, in doing this, they will be laying a finger on the weak point in Mr. Asquith's policy. For the Liberals have no new sources of taxation to fall back upon. They dare not attack property; they cannot, in common decency, impose fresh import duties. Even in a fat year like the present they can put their hands upon no new source of revenue. What are they to do when the lean years come? They will then be faced with a revived agitation in favour of Tariff Reform as a means of raising revenue, strengthened by their failure to take off the existing food taxes. How many years' purchase would they give to Free Trade under those conditions? All this only emphasises the importance of keeping the Socialist fiscal

Fig. 5. Cover of *The New Age*, volume 1, issue 1. Modernist Journals Project. https://repository.library.brown.edu/viewers/image/thumbnail/bdr:433585/

The Mystical Socialism of A. R. Orage: Towards Socialism—and Beyond

Among the three recognizably modernist little magazines considered in this study, *The New Age* stands out as the most 'serious' and 'respectable,' mostly for its dedication to the political issues of the day. In the first few issues, the leader articles report on the goings-on in Parliament and the House of Lords in England, discuss suffrage and women's issues, and speculate on the potential consequences of the mounting tensions that would lead up to the Great War seven years later. Generally speaking, *The New Age* is socially progressive, save for some retrograde moments that would make readers of today uneasy—especially when it comes to the politics of eugenics, which fascinated numerous contributors.[70]

Ann Ardis asserts that the uniqueness of this forerunner of modernist magazines lies in its coverage of both literature and the arts as well as politics. She points out that *The New Age* set itself apart from "both mainstream literary reviews and non-commercial little magazines such as *Blast* and the *Egoist*, with whom it shared many contributors, by devoting roughly half of any given issue (and the first half, at that) to political commentary" ("Dialogics" 408). The political commentary gives the magazine its *serious* and dignified flavor, putting it on quite a different level than the *insouciant* posture of *The Little Review* or *The Egoist*.

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[70] For example, one new *New Age* book reviewer throws his lot in with the eugenicists in an anonymous article called "Breeding a Race." Signalling the magazine's Fabian contingent, the reviewer ties socialism to eugenics, arguing, "social reform in the long run will be useless unless it is accompanied by rational and selective breeding, positively as well as negatively" (245). In the next issue, an anonymous reviewer of *Awakening of a Race* by George E. Boxall explains that the object of the book is to find "a racial basis for all the modern movements, social, oral and religious, of Europe" ("Awakening of a Race" 267). Unsurprisingly, the grandest modern achievements in the arts and sciences can be attributed to "the Xanthochroi or fair-haired race" (267). With the awakening of the Xanthochroi race comes the birth of a new religion; that aspect of Boxall's book drew interest from the reviewer, who enthusiastically claims for *The New Age* the vanguardist label of "Xanthochroic" (268). This is not to say, however, that these ideas went uncontested: in this same issue, reader A. H. Lee responds to "Breeding a Race" to quip that a world full of "eugenic philanthropists" would be a bore indeed (270). Three issues later, reader R. B. Kerr bites back against eugenics, calling it "an utter disaster" (318). Kerr attacks prominent eugenicists and Fabians Shaw and Wells, calling them "dodderers" who will be remembered as "the most stupid pedants in history" if they do not respect a woman's right to choose her partners (318).

While contemporary scholars in the New Modernist Studies tend to forget, ignore, or dismiss the occult elements of *The New Age* as they valorize its political importance, Wallace Martin, writing in the 1960s and 1970s, acknowledges that Orage's brand of criticism "has religious overtones,"[71] but remarks that "After 1900, [Orage] was to take a renewed interest in the political and cultural activities that had been overshadowed by his interest in occult philosophy during the preceding four years" (*The New Age* 17; 18). Martin attributes Orage's "search for spiritual certainty" to the "disillusionment" of the Great War (286). In so doing, he downplays the consistent influence of spirituality in Orage's life—though, to his credit, he does remind us of Orage's earlier Theosophical leanings (286). Yet, Martin denigrates Orage's *spiritual* philosophy and posits that Orage's *political* interests "may have helped keep him in touch with the realities on which philosophy purports to be based," and he blames Theosophy for having the "opposite effect" of "etherializing his Plato with admixtures of the *Bhagavad Gita* and Blavatsky" (*Orage* 9). Martin's study is notable for its embarrassment in Orage's spiritual beliefs, to the point where Martin laments that Orage did not keep his personal spiritual questing to himself and separate from his editorial work (*The New Age* 291). The fact remains, however, that this uncomfortable subject matter is part and parcel of the magazine from its inception and gives *The New Age* its unique character. Perhaps William Butler Yeats's words on his own spiritual path could apply here, as it should for most people who identify as 'spiritual': "The mystical life is the centre of all that I do and all that I think and all that I write" (qtd. in Howe 70).

Like Martin, contemporary scholars in the New Modernist Studies tend to view *The New Age* as a chiefly socialist paper, and discussions of the paper tend to focus on its preoccupation with guild socialism and, later, with social credit. Rarely do they engage with the occult presence in the

[71] While these older studies seem to more readily identify the presence of Theosophy and the occult in *The New Age*, they still rarely comment on its presence in the magazine. New Critics, tend to dismiss it, or mention it and move on. Bucking this trend, John Wood's in-depth 2007 conference paper persuasively shows how Orage's socialism is "derived from his activities in the Theosophical Society, eastern philosophy and, not least, Nietzsche" (Wood 12).

journal. In Sean Latham's case study of this publication in "The Mess and Muddle of Modernism," he takes note of its "mixed politics, philosophy, and aesthetics with a socialist agenda inspired by the writings of Nietzsche" (408). Despite his tip of the cap to Nietzsche, Latham makes no mention of Orage's occult beliefs, nor does he draw attention to their manifestation in the form of the occult advertisements and reviews scattered among the pages of *The New Age*, even as he rightly argues that advertisements must be given due consideration in periodical studies rather than being dismissed as mere paratexts (412). He goes as far as to credit *The New Age* with playing a "key role in launching modernism in Britain and the larger English-speaking world" (410)—no small claim—but, as we see all too often, this "key role" is largely attributed to the political (and seldom to the spiritual) radicalism of this highly influential periodical.

Being the most political journal in this study in terms of its content and outlook, *The New Age* is unique for its holistic approach to socialism, which entails ushering in a new age of a politics undergirded with spirituality (though not conventional religion).[72] Ardis similarly eschews the occult mists enshrouding much of the journal's first volume, but she does note that "Orage's disappointment with political trends post-World War I led him from National Guild Socialism to C. H. Douglas's theory of social credit, psychoanalysis, and Gurdjieffian mysticism" (Ardis "Dialogics" 419). However, like most scholars, Ardis notes only in passing Orage's interest in Gurdjieff's ideas without discussing what they actually mean for the journal.

I wish to emphasize that no individual critic is to blame for neglecting the esoteric elements in *The New Age*; unfortunately, this neglect is simply a recurring problem in modernist scholarship—even in the New Modernist studies. This general unwillingness to see the occultism of *The New Age*

[72] In *Great War Modernisms*, Paul Jackson makes clear that Orage's spiritual beliefs are inseparable from his political interests. As Jackson relates, "Orage described his entire outlook on life as spiritual rather than religious in nature. For him, spirituality promised growth and vitality, a connection with 'the new,' whereas religion represented a more formalized, and therefore pedestrian, attitude towards the world…. Such spiritualism regularly combined with his left-leaning politics" (Jackson *Great War* 22). Orage's preference for an active, self-fashioned spirituality over a passive, received religion epitomizes the adept attitude towards the personal exploration of spiritual truths.

for what it is reflects the shifting interests of academics and larger critical trends, rather than the actual nature and historical context of the magazine itself; it is akin to anamorphosis, defined by the *OED* as "a distorted projection or drawing of anything, so made that when viewed from a particular point, or by reflection from a suitable mirror, it appears regular and properly proportioned." When viewed from a critical perspective apathetic towards or dismissive of occultism, such secularist sketches of *The New Age* appear normal. But, when one steps back and reads it from an occult perspective, the adept reader will see that these sketches are distorted after all. Hopefully, this chapter can serve as a clear, fresh lens to bring the occult content of Orage's journal back into focus.

Orage's later interest in Gurdjieffian mysticism surely had its bedrock from Theosophy prior to the journal's 1907 debut, and persists not only in his early writings in *The New Age*, but also in his promotion of occult books and periodicals in the magazine's first volume and beyond. Louise Welch, a fellow disciple of Gurdjieff, would write in 1982 that

> Many of those working with [Orage] were reading books written by [him] long before his meeting with Gurdjieff and were astonished to find much material in them that anticipated what was now given as part of the Gurdjieff ideas. Naturally, they asked Orage about it. "True," he said, "I had found some of the ideas earlier. They were beads, and some of them pearls. But before I met Gurdjieff I had no string to hang them on. Gurdjieff gave me the string." (42-43)

These "pearls" could be found not only in Orage's books; they were also given in the magazine that made him famous. With Orage's own metaphor in mind, I here draw attention to some of these "beads" and "pearls" before the "string" came along to tie them together. First, I consider the important role that occult advertisements played in the magazine's early issues. Then, I read Orage's "Towards Socialism" series of articles through an occult lens to examine some of these "beads" and "pearls" before they were put neatly on his Gurdjieffian "string."

At his best, Orage was a generous mentor and editor, a clever critic, and a tolerant, affable man. At his worst, Orage could be sarcastic and snide, and this shadow side occasionally comes out in his editorials. While Orage's adept attitude undoubtedly comes across as elitist and condescending at times, this editor-adept is still a pedagogue at heart; he writes to teach, to instruct, to initiate. And, through advertisement, he presents to those readers who *may not know* the means by which they may *come to know* the wisdom at the heart of the occult tradition.

The first issue lists numerous spiritual and religious texts in the "books received" column; many of them come from the Christian tradition, but there are some that are more recognizably New Age, such as *The New Spirit: A Selection from the Writings and Speeches of Bipinchandra Pal.* Also in the very first issue, advertisements can be found for *Evolution of the Soul* by Harold Munro, *The Religion of To-Morrow* by "an Ex-Agnostic" and Orage's own book on Nietzschean thought, the *Dionysian Spirit of the Age*, which naturally appears for many consecutive issues.

Most saliently, there is also an offer of "EIGHTEEN BOOKLETS containing the QUINTESSENCE OF THE WORLD'S WISDOM for ONE SHILLING down and no further dues or payments," featuring *The Koran*, *The Simple Life* by Thoreau, *Some Reflections* by St. Augustine, *On Marriage* by Swedenborg, *Belief and Unbelief* by Bacon, and *On Divine and Human Law* by Spinoza. Other titles listed in "Books Received" and notable for their non-Christian proclivities include *Hindu Superiority* by Har Bilas Sarda, B. A., *The Dimensional Idea, an Aid to Religion* by W. F. Tyler, and *The Samhaim*, a magazine dedicated to Irish drama, folklore, and culture, published in Dublin and edited by Yeats. *The New Age*, like *The Little Review, The Egoist*, *Lucifer*, and *The Equinox*, is invested in transmitting occult wisdom synthesized from many mystical traditions, as seen with the sheer variety of material offered in the advertisements ranging from the Christian, the Hellenic, the Hindu, the Buddhist, and the Theosophical.

By the time *The New Age* reached its twenty-second issue, there was no more holding back. At this point, Orage puts his tarot cards on the table and commences his occult-inspired "Towards Socialism" series; simultaneously, Orage begins to openly advertise "Occult, Agnostic, Socialistic, Masonic, Theosophical" books (fig. 6). These ads, beginning in issue 22, drew extra attention to themselves, appearing in larger font and accompanied by illustrations. Even though this is supposedly a socialistic journal, the word "socialistic" actually seems out of place in this list. It appears to be thrown in there, as an editorial sleight of hand. Two apparent motives for this trickery come to find: perhaps "socialistic" appears on the list so that the more Practical readers of the magazine would accept this ad and others like it; or, it could be a sly wink to the adept readers of the magazine, who would have noticed its esoteric bent at the outset. In either case, this advertisement marries the vanguardist tendencies of socialism and modern occultism to appeal to the superior taste of this elect circle of forward thinkers. This particular advertisement is a striking statement: the term "occult" is used openly in the heading, whereas the other modernist little magazines considered in this study (*The Little Review* and *The Egoist*) rarely use that loaded word.

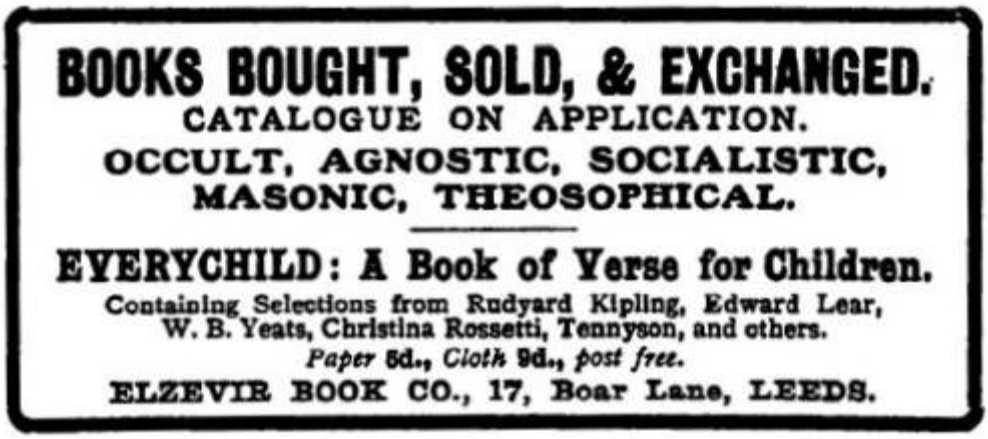

Fig. 6. A rare case of the word "occult" openly used in an advertisement in a modernist journal. This ad appears in volume 1, issue 23, p. 350.

This same ad returns in the next issue, this time with the addition of an oddly-placed endorsement of *Everychild: A Book of Verse for Children* by co-editor Holbrook Jackson. So, while Orage's attitude in "Towards Socialism" and other articles can come across as impatient or even condescending, Orage at least does readers the courtesy of making available the means by which they can follow the discussion—while conveniently availing himself of advertising revenue. Readers who do not wish to be Practical forever thus have the chance to initiate themselves into the occult counter-public of the *New Age* circle; Orage's prescription of an esoteric course of reading through book reviews and advertisements participates in a distinctly modern approach to marketing the occult, just like we will see with Aleister Crowley in the next chapter.[73] However, Crowley, the unabashed occult master that he is, goes a step further and directly assigns his audience an esoteric course of reading and provides a template for self-initiation pilfered from the vaults of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The Wickedest Man in the World thus goes beyond the modernists' paratextual games, which merely *imply* what such a course of reading should entail while leaving to readers' imaginations what initiation could look like. In contrast, Orage values a certain air of public respectability and does not go quite so far as Crowley in flaunting his occult proclivities. Yet, he is more than willing to provide the "keys" to esoteric wisdom for readers willing to accept them—as would any good magus, in accordance with the principle of mental independence.

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[73] The Great Beast makes an appearance in the first volume of *The New Age*; in the eighteenth issue, an anonymous reviewer writes a detailed and thorough critique of *The Star in the West: A Critical Essay upon the works of Aleister Crowley* by Capt. J. F. C. Fuller, a member of Crowley's magical order, the A∴A∴ (Argenteum Astrum), and a co-editor of *The Equinox* (282). The review of Fuller's book on Crowley's poetry and philosophy may be anonymous, but it has all the hallmarks of Orage's style: an impressive depth of occult knowledge, an incisive wit, and a dry sense of humor. Even if it is not written by Orage himself, Orage, as the chief editor, has allowed this review to be published as is—and it really stands out for its length of a full 1.5 pages, as opposed to the few short paragraphs that almost every other previous review has received. Whatever issues the reviewer has with Fuller's or Crowley's style, they find merit in this provocative exploration of human nature. The occultism of Crowley is not subject to ridicule, and the Magus is here acknowledged as one of the vanguard leading the charge against commonplace ideas and mass stupidity; Crowley has been accepted into the intelligentsia of the adepts of the *New Age*, just as he would be accepted by the editors of *The Little Review*, despite the stigma that 'The Wickedest Man in the World' carries in the small minds of hopelessly Practical People, those Hydra Heads of Public Opinion.

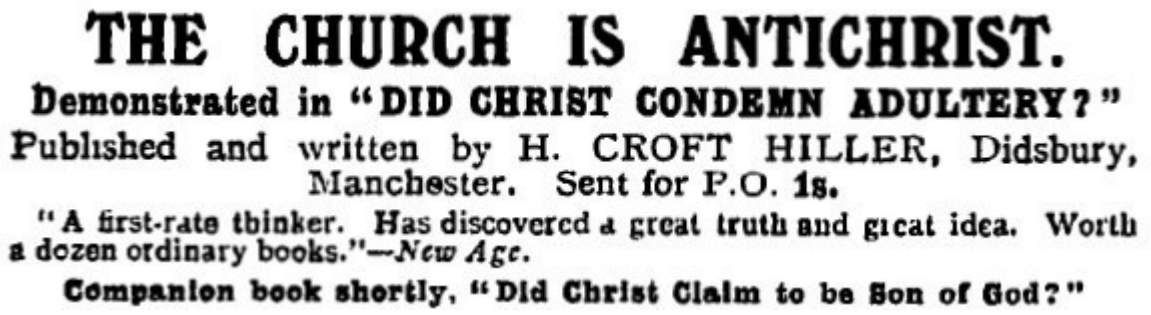

Fig. 7. An inflammatory advertisement for *Did Christ Condemn Adultery?* by agnostic and metaphysical writer H. Croft Hiller, appearing in *The New Age*, volume 1, issue 22, p. 344. This ad underscores the "Luciferian" politics of the paper as articulated by both Orage and Farr.

These advertisements illustrate *The New Age*'s investment in exploring occult ideas alongside socialist topics for the collective betterment of English society. Ardis, citing Orage's article, "Journals Insurgent," astutely notes that *The New Age* was "so impatient during pre-war years with socialists who focus exclusively on the 'economic emancipation of the workers' and fail to address 'the canons that govern the writing of books, the painting of pictures, the preaching of sermons, and even the fabric of religion'" ("Dialogics" 413). Orage's attempts to establish a new esoteric canon, while bringing glory to the classics, was one way to remedy what he considered a deficiency in conventional socialist thinking in his day. Further, Orage accordingly sought to develop a style to integrate this esoteric canon into discussions of socialist topics. As Orage saw it, a new form of journalism must emerge with the unfolding of the New Age; this meant moving away from "representative" journalism and towards "presentative" journalism.[74] According to modernist periodical scholar Paul Jackson,

[74] Writing as "R. H. C." twelve years after the magazine's debut, Orage differentiates "presentative" journalism from conventional, "representative" journalism ("Readers and Writers" 236). The former has more "value" in that it is "dynamic." The latter is more "secure," in that it is easier to appease the reading masses. To Orage, a representative paper is quite "useless, but it can last" (236). Orage's use of the term "presentative" brings to mind Ezra Pound's usage of the term in his article for *Poetry* magazine, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," wherein Pound initiates "neophyte" (203) poets into the "dogma" (200) of imagism. He decries mere description in poetry and argues for "presentation." Holding up William Shakespeare's line, "Dawn in russet mantle clad," as an example, Pound notes that the line has "nothing that one can call description; [Shakespeare] *presents*" (203, emphasis mine). For Pound, there is no need to repeat in poetry what has already been said in prose if one's poem does not add anything new and distinct to the

> the former merely 'represented' common attitudes already in wide circulation, whereas the latter sought to 'present' fundamentally new points of view. Focusing on this more creative, presentative journalism, Orage's *The New Age* consciously marketed itself at the newly emerging British 'intelligentsia,' indeed it even coined the term. (*Great War* 24)

This broad characterization of a "presentative" style does not include the occult *per se*, but the "fundamentally new points of view" appear inseparable from the occult content of the paper.

Going beyond initiation through advertisement, Orage outlines some of his program for the elevation of human consciousness in "Towards Socialism," a series of nine articles spanning volume 1, issue 23 through volume 2, issue 9. Even though this is an impressive political screed, the numerous esoteric references give it that distinctly Oragean flavor and "presentative" character; Orage performs the adept attitude and espouses Theosophical ideas in a socialistic context. Most strikingly, he refers to Lucifer, the Angel of Light, on three occasions; the fallen angel serves as an icon of rebellion, a symbol of spiritual (and socialist) revolution. Lucifer as esoteric righteous rebel (and *not* the exoteric Great Enemy of humanity) is an icon that Farr also evokes in her own series of articles in *The New Age*, which will be discussed in the next section; moreover, H. P. Blavatsky herself likewise explored this same concept of Lucifer as esoteric hero twenty years earlier, in her 'militant' Theosophical journal, *Lucifer*.[75]

Continuing the tradition of esoteric secrecy from his Theosophical days, Orage brings his adept attitude to bear in this political paper. Not *all* readers of this periodical were aspiring adepts, or current or former members of secret societies—but enough of them must have been for Orage to presume that they were an integral part of his readership. In a striking passage from "Towards

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conversation. The same goes for Orage and the style of socio-political commentary that he encouraged in his magazine.

[75] The Luciferian doctrine is further explored in the fifth and final chapter of this study. Like Orage and Farr, Blavatsky differentiates the exoteric Satan from the esoteric Lucifer in her articles "What's in a Name?" and "History of a Planet," both of which appear in the first issue of *Lucifer* magazine. Like Farr, Blavatsky also attributes a feminine aspect to Lucifer, thus mounting a challenge to the patriarchal, mainstream Christianity.

Socialism II," Orage addresses his readers in a way that sharply departs from the conventional tone that dominates much of the political content appearing at the forefront of each issue of the paper. In volume 1, issue 24, Orage nonchalantly states:

> Every student of traditional wisdom knows that the core and heart of esotericism is this very nature of man about which the half educated dogmatise so freely. Whoever has not realized the mystery of man is fit only for journeyman's work in the art of human reform. (375)

The "mystery of man" to which Orage refers is the unchanging nature of the human animal, and the mystery of its unfolding; human nature is essentially unknowable (375). He acknowledges, "even, in the exotericism of ordinary observation, it is not impossible to realise that human nature needs no change to become actively beneficent and manifestly beautiful" (375). Orage thus draws a distinction between "exoteric" and "ordinary" socio-political commentary, and an "esoteric" or adept mode of analysis. And, even though humanity is unknowable, its worst impulses are encouraged through unconscious habit and programming, which is itself facilitated by the mechanistic logic of capitalism. Through this "programming," or "sleep" as Gurdjieff would call it, the human soul is robbed of its beauty; its creative and spiritual potential is squandered. Orage's belief in these core esoteric truths would be further reinforced upon later encounters with Gurdjieff. Margaret Anderson, Orage's apprentice, friend, and fellow editor of a modernist periodical, held a similar view. She too would join Orage at Fontainebleau. And, when she would go on to write her biography of Gurdjieff, published in 1962, she fittingly called it *The Unknowable Gurdjieff*.

Orage's statements are an early and explicit indication of his belief that materialist (and exoteric) discourses of socialism leave much to be desired. An Oragean mystical socialism departs from a Marxist historical materialism in that history unfolds through the growth and evolution of the unseen inner beauty of humanity and is not determined strictly through a society's material conditions. Granting the unknowability of human nature (or, implicitly, the human spirit) allows for

an uncontainable individual agency and creativity at odds with the defiant materialism of a 'vulgar' reading of Marx. Consider Marx's argument about social reform in his Preface to *A Critique of Political Economy*: "neither legal relations nor political forms could be comprehended whether by themselves or on the basis of a so-called general development of the human mind, but that on the contrary they originate in the material conditions of life" (7). Since these legal, social, and political forms spring from the base of "the material conditions of life," Marx contends that "the changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure" (8). With this line of thinking, Orage may agree; legislative solutions to social and economic inequality could only ever be a stop-gap measure; unless the fundamental labor relations of a society are changed, the capitalist system of exploitation and alienation continues unabated. But, Orage's avowed belief in the "unknowability" of human nature places him at odds with Marx's thinking that "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (7).

Rather than understanding human consciousness as a product of material conditions, Orage argues that the base of material conditions has a hidden, spiritual substrate of its own.[76] This "unknowability" or incommensurability of the human spirit, entailing a privileged space for the creativity and uniqueness of the individual, seems more in line with social anarchism than with

[76] Wood cites Orage's writings from *The Commonweal* to clarify Orage's approach to socialism. Orage describes his influences as "a good practical knowledge of the working classes, a professional interest in economics which led me to master Marx's *Das Capital*, and an idealism fed at the source—namely Plato" (qtd. in Wood 13). Given Orage's proclivities for the philosophy of Plato and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, his socialism appears to align more with Hegel's idealism than Marx's historical materialism, which is its opposite. Orage also counted as an influence Edward Carpenter, a British socialist who likewise believed that raising a society's baseline of consciousness would produce an environment in which "mere diversities of temperament which ordinarily distinguish and divide people [drop] away and became indifferent, and a field [would open] in which all might meet, in which all were truly equal" (qtd. in Wood 22, brackets his). Orage explores these ideas in a series of lectures, published in book form by the Theosophical Society in Leeds as *Consciousness—Animal, Human, and Superman*. Showing his Nietzschean roots, Orage suggests if the human consciousness could arise from the animal consciousness, then there must be another leap to be made from where we are now to some lofty, higher plateau—that of the Super[hu]man. Once humanity has reached this superhuman level of consciousness, *then* it will finally be capable of building a more just, equitable society.

socialism as we know it now. Since anarchists and socialists alike gravitated toward Theosophy and the occult during the *Fin de Siècle* and early 1900s, and much of *The New Age*'s readership was at least familiar with Theosophy, this stance would not have irked Orage's socialist audience too grievously. Especially so for those socialists of the Fabian variety, who had something of the adept attitude themselves—they too considered themselves an intellectual, technocratic elite with the ability to gradually transform society in raising its consciousness.[77]

To return to Orage's statement that *The New Age* cannot *yet* become "the paper of the 'people'" ("To Our Readers" 408), this contradiction between the unique, individual human spirit and the collective good can be reconciled through an occult philosophy that overlaps with the Fabian vision of gradual social transformation held by some of the more prominent contributors and readers of the journal, such as Shaw and Wells. In this sense, the individual Will of the adept remains intact, though it is not divorced from wider social concerns and should not be read as 'bourgeois individualism'; in a mystical socialism, the growth of the individual is inextricable from the wellbeing of society on both a material *and spiritual* level, and each enhances the other in a sort of feedback loop. As Orage puts it, "true individuality is not a claim to possess so much as a claim to give" ("Towards" 393). Liberating the individual leads to a more conscious, compassionate society. That society, in turn, affords subjects greater equality, and the leisure required for each individual to progress further down their personal quest for the Great Work, which in turn creates a more just and equal society—and so on, and so forth.

The political implications of this unknowability of the human spirit aside, the presumed commonality of an initiated readership ("every student of traditional wisdom") is telling. On the one

[77] While the *New Age* initially offered a cozy home for Fabian socialists, Orage increasingly alienated this group over time as he moved the magazine's general trajectory from one of Fabianism to guild socialism, and finally to social credit. As Wood points out, Orage's move to guild socialism "was the final straw for the frustrated Fabians who abandoned *The New Age* in April 1913 to set up the *New Statesman*, with Clifford Sharp from the *New Age* as its first editor" (16). While the socialisms in the magazine mutated, its underlying spiritual approach to the world's problems remained constant.

hand, Orage is speaking to a small community of adepts (his readership) and rejecting the "dim multitudes engaged in the laborious pursuit of banal information through the pages of the popular weeklies" (inept, incompetent readers of mainstream magazines and newspapers) ("To Our Readers" 408). As we have seen with other adept writers and editors, an examination of Orage's writings, and *The New Age* in general, reveals the tension that comes with gathering a counter-public of politically and spiritually enlightened minds and growing that community so that it may eventually transform society on a grander scale. Another passage from "Towards Socialism [I]" echoes the common occult belief that adepts or masters necessarily live a life apart from the masses. Orage observes, "Every great man has secretly wished himself dead more than once in his lifetime when faced by the impenetrable solidity of his contemporaries. Most great men have had to build for themselves an imaginary heaven in the skies as a retreat from the condition of men on earth" (361). This very unsocialistic idea seems more at home in Theosophical literature than it does in a socialist review. An example from the Theosophical magazine, *Lucifer*, comes readily to mind.

In an article called "The Seclusion of the Adept," co-editor and mystic Mabel Collins explains that living adepts on Earth are so hard to find because they are in hiding, doing their spiritual duty, unmolested by the dangerous ignorance of the general public. Here, Collins explicitly refers to the "Great Brotherhood, which was once the secret splendour of Egypt" (380), as an illustration at the group level about a conclave of adepts who deign not to involve themselves in mundane, materialistic affairs. One can imagine the appeal in applying this dignified, tactical withdrawal to anyone belonging to a secret or semi-secret society—whether such a society is occult, socialist, or both. While the adepts of history and myth literally shun society, Orage speaks metaphorically of a stoic, sanctified state of mind, both at the individual and group level. This position flatters the magazine's readers as individuals (who are all surely "students of traditional wisdom"), but also aligns the readers, as a counter-public, against Capital and its unconscious agents

who replicate it and police its norms. In a Theosophical, Gnostic, or even Christian sense, such a preoccupation with the "accumulation of Capital" is essentially a demonic endeavor. The adept is a Promethean figure who seeks power not for oneself, but for one's community; repressive bonds must be broken for the liberation of individuals and the societies in which they live.

Again, this dignified seclusion is not to be taken for a staunch individualism. In "Towards Socialism III" Orage rhetorically asks, "Unless, in some way the souls of all men are knit in a single unity with my soul, why should I be moved by things that do not concern me?" before immediately answering,

> … the underlying conviction of Socialists of my sort—and there are many—is that the souls of all men are so knit, that, in truth, whatever happens to others happens also to oneself, and whatever happens to oneself happens to others. (393)

Hence, Orage recasts the Hermetic truths, "as above, so below; as within, so without," as socialist truths. While this wisdom is neutral, it finds a more militant parallel in the slogan of the Industrial Workers of the World, coined by labor leader David C. Coates: "An injury to one is an injury to all!" (Haywood 186). Hence, this perennial wisdom can be interpreted as both "treat others how you wish to be treated" and "all for one, and one for all"—as a gentle, spiritual exhortation to peace and harmony, or as a political clarion call to do battle on behalf of one's exploited fellows.

Further rejecting individualism, Orage aligns socialist and spiritual co-operation in a "doctrine of the solidarity of souls" and explicitly condemns bourgeois individualism as a "heresy of separateness" (393). To Orage, this "heresy"

> permits us to believe that one individual is really insulated from all others, that, as it were, each soul exists by itself in a tower of solitude, surrounded by a moat which he may bridge or unbridge at will…. And as artists of all kinds understand, and prophets in all ages have announced, the truth is the very reverse, namely, that the individual in himself is nothing,

> means nothing; in short, is as inconceivable apart from Mankind as an apple is nonexistent but for a tree. (393)

In this paragraph, Orage states a truth of the perennial philosophy beloved by the modernists—or, for that matter, *all* artists across space and time—that they are "prophets," that they hold a vast social *and spiritual* power. Certainly, the other editors and contributors considered in this study are similarly invested in this truth, and Orage is no exception. Here, he adds socialism into the mix, thus appealing to the vanguardist tendencies of modernists, occultists, and socialists. While materialistic socialists would be suspicious of the more ethereal claims in the passage, they could relate to the idea that brotherhood and social solidarity are *natural*, and that the vicious competition of Social Darwinism is a capitalist myth to perpetuate individualism and an 'every man for himself' mentality. Orage believes that the capitalist's tired refrain that "the individual belongs to himself alone" is "damnable" (394). While not every socialist reader of *The New Age* would accept Orage's assertion that each person is literally enmeshed in a network of souls, the magazine's Theosophical readers would be inclined to agree with this premise. After all, they would have, in their own sphere, encountered other arguments that social and spiritual solidarity is natural to *Theosophy*. Interestingly enough, Orage's assertions have a dual meaning: what works as a *metaphor* for the materialist socialist works as a *literal* statement for the questing adept. Orage can speak to both camps at the same time; thus, his argument that co-operation and brotherhood are natural to both socialism and to Theosophy would sit well with any reader inclined towards either movement.

On the Theosophical front, for example, Matthew Beaumont, a scholar of Western esotericism, reminds us that H. P. Blavatsky herself was "sympathetic to a number of socialists, and in *The Key to Theosophy* (1889), she praised both Christ and Buddha for '*preaching most unmistakably Socialism*'" (Beaumont 220, emphasis his). Though Blavatsky may have been skeptical about political reform, even to the point of considering it "pointless" until "spiritual reform had taken place" (220),

the Arch Matriarch of Theosophy clearly finds some kinship with socialism, for it too seeks (in theory) a "Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, colour, or creed" or, later, sex (Blavatsky *The Key* 39). Therefore, socialism can be compatible with Theosophical ideas, and debate over just how much overlap there is between socialism and Theosophy graced the pages of Theosophical magazines such as *Theosophical Siftings* and even *Lucifer.*[78]

Orage returns to examine this tension between the adept individual, who lives in a physical or psychic seclusion, and the Masses in "Towards Socialism VIII," where he weighs in on the philosophical problems of aristocracy and democracy in his theory of social reconstruction. In a rhetorical gesture that Orage employs on several occasions, he mocks the public and accuses them of failing to understand whatever topic he is currently discoursing on—whether it be esotericism or, in this case, democracy. This is the snide, pedantic side of Orage talking. He opines, "Of all the subtle ideas brooding on the face of the Socialist Waters, none is more subtle than the idea of Democracy. Only a few people grasp it at all, many violently espouse its cause through sheer misunderstanding, and nine-tenths of so-called democratic practice is either self-conscious condescension or secret despotism" (70). Here, Orage struggles to reconcile his desire for an elect intelligentsia to reshape society for the greater good of a blindly ignorant public with the despotism and incompetence of the aristocracy. In spite of his opening attack on the public, however, he nonetheless criticizes not only the hereditary power of the aristocracy, but also Plato's "blessed

[78] Theosophist R. B. Holt, for one, claims that socialism, especially as a political entity, is not in alignment with the spirit of Theosophy. In a short essay from *Theosophical Siftings*, he warns that a socialist party or nation-state would "make Socialism compulsory[.] Theosophists hold that it must be voluntary, the natural outcome of individual altruism…" (8). Like Orage, Holt believes that spiritual reform must precede any political reform or revolution. If individuals do not choose to evolve, any political tinkering would be for naught. For Holt, that reform must be "practical Theosophy," which is "the only basis on which you can establish true Socialism. While our speculative politicians dream of improving the individual by amending legislation, Theosophists recognise that all laws are but formulated public convictions, and that these public convictions are the sum of individual convictions. They therefore seek to enlighten the individual, and through his regeneration to amend all social conditions" (Holt 12). J. Brailsford-Bright, a "Socialist Student of Theosophy" writing for *Lucifer* disagrees. He accuses the 'ivory tower' variety of Theosophists of not doing their fair share of the labor required to make a more just society. Such Theosophists should "at least recognise that the [socialists] are preparing their way for them, doing the dirty (?) and laborious work, without which Theosophy can never descend" (Brailsford-Bright 284-285).

aristocracy of the wisest," those meritocratic guardians of society (70). Orage argues that hereditary aristocracy is "ridiculous, inhuman, and in the long run impossible," but so too is "an aristocracy of intellect, character, or what not, as well" (70). He concludes, "The right of the stupid to be stupid is, at bottom, as undeniable as the right of the wise to be wise" (70). As snide as Orage sounds in this passage, he ultimately believes that any intelligentsia, even his own, should work from the 'bottom up,' so to speak, and ought never to impose itself from the 'top down.'

Orage finds that a 'top-down' approach could never work in a practical sense since the human need to rebel is simply the nature of the unknowable beast. He explicitly links this natural, anarchic resistance to authority with Lucifer's rebellion against Yahweh. "Thanks to the nature of life," Orage muses,

> there is an insubordinate imp in each of us that prefers in the long run all the horrors of freedom to all the amenities of benevolent slavery. And it is just that imp (apostrophised by despots of all ages as the Devil) that saves man from eternal servitude to superiors who are quite willing to do his work for him. (70)

This sentiment builds on Orage's statements from "Towards Socialism III" that "The Kingdom of Heaven is taken and held by violence only" (394). Taken together, these statements plainly align the wise, rebellious readers of the *New Age* with the esoteric Lucifer—the inquisitive angel of righteous rebellion, rather than the exoteric Satan, the Great Enemy. This gesture places Orage in the Luciferian tradition, right along with Florence Farr, and aligns both of these *New Age* writers with H. P. Blavatsky and Mabel Collins, who make a similar gesture two decades earlier in *Lucifer*.

In sum, Orage is something of an elitist and believes in a spiritual and socialistic intelligentsia, but he does not believe that this elite group should become a permanent guardianship or aristocracy to rule the masses. For Orage, such a clique should merely 'prepare the way' for universal brotherhood, whether that be of a socialistic adeptship or an adept socialism. Again, such

beliefs are not uncommon among Theosophists, as evidenced from this passage from *Lucifer*, written by J. Brailsford-Bright, a self-proclaimed "Socialist Student of Theosophy":

> Socialists may prepare the way for a revelation of the noble truths of Theosophy to the multitude; they may help to raise the intellectual and instinctive moral standard of the whole community to such an extent that all will, in the next generation following after the Social Revolution… be amenable to these truths. In this way, Socialism would not, indeed interfere with the results of the law of Karma, but would, as the precursor of Theosophy, be the indirect means of enabling multitudes to rise and free themselves from its bonds. (283-284)

This is, perhaps, a much kinder way of saying, "The right of the stupid to be stupid is, at bottom, as undeniable as the right of the wise to be wise." A core of adepts stands apart from the masses; that core, and the individuals within it, are all irrevocably connected to those masses on an economic and spiritual level. But, how will sweeping social change be effected? On the one hand, this elite core can slowly transmute society through education and lead through example—an evolutionary process of gradual change. On the other hand, "the kingdom" must be taken "by force" in a moment of violent rupture—abrupt, revolutionary change. How can these contradictory positions be reconciled, not only in Orage's thinking, but in esoteric thinking in general? One answer lies not only in the occult strands interwoven with Orage's socialism, but also in the socialist strands themselves interwoven with the occult revival of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Julian Strube argues in a pair of recent articles that the history of socialism is intimately bound with that of modern occultism. Of central importance to Strube's case is that "the 'founder' or supposed *rénovateur* of occultism, the socialist author Alphonse-Louis Constant (1810-1875), who adopted the pen-name of Eliphas Lévi, developed his ideas not in an esoteric, but rather in a *socialist*

context" ("Socialist Religion" 362).[79] Significantly, Lévi "served as the authority for Blavatsky's definition of 'occultism'" (Strube "Occult" 572). Taken together with Blavatsky's pro-socialist statements above, we can see how a socialistic strand passes from Lévi, is partially adopted, or at least recognized, in the writings of Blavatsky, and was then transmitted to Orage and his audience. Thus, socialism and modern occultism, though they seem so often at odds, are analogous to a Möbius strip, and *The New Age* is one such uneasy site of suture where these two unexpectedly interrelated ideologies converge. The elitist socialism of Orage is a product of his occult interests, which, as surprising as it may seem, loops back into socialism through Lévi's socialistic and Catholic-flavored occultism of nineteenth century France formulated in the historical context of the July Monarchy (Strube "Occult" 582).[80] In terms of *The New Age* magazine, then, the understudied occult elements within this socialistic paper are themselves informed by the understudied socialistic elements in modern occultism, which then find their way back to Orage and Farr through the traditions and philosophies of the occult revival in Europe.

This all becomes clearer considering that the early volumes of *The New Age*, before it opted for a social credit model, was geared toward a Fabian audience who "imagined an almost

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[79] In "Socialist Religion and the Emergence of Occultism," Strube describes the 'Abbé Constant,' the former deacon who would go on to become a great magus, as "one of the most radical French socialists of the 1840s" (372). He argues, "Constant not only developed his 'occultist' ideas in a socialist context, but… his 'occultism' was directly derived from his socialist and Neo-Catholic ideas" (373). Using his civil name (rather than his magical name), Constant penned a series of 1855 articles for the radical socialist journal, *Revue*. In "the Kabbalistic Origins of Christianity" and the "Source of all Dogmas," Constant "expounded his 'Kabbalistic' theories to a wider readership: a socialist readership" (372). In "Occult Identity Formations Between Theosophy and Socialism in *fin-de-siècle* France," Strube clarifies that, for Constant, "'Kabbalah' meant nothing else but tradition, and for him, the one and only true tradition had always been Catholicism. Consequently, he frequently expressed the conviction that occultism was nothing else but Catholicism." Strube observes that Constant's careless terminology, or his subsumption of Kabbalah and occultism into Catholicism, "caused bewilderment or even hostility among later observers [including H. P. Blavatsky and A. E. Waite] and it was only recently noted, although not historically explained, that the Catholicism of Eliphas Lévi was essential for his identity as a magician and cabbalist…" (376).

[80] The July Monarchy of France, also known as the "bourgeois monarchy," refers to the reign of Louis-Philippe (1830-1848) following the July Revolution. According to the *Enclopedia Britannica Online*, this new regime "rested on a broad social base centred on the wealthy bourgeoisie. Two factions emerged in the Chamber of Deputies: the centre-right faction, led by Francois Guizot, shared the king's political doctrines; and the centre-left faction, led by Adolphe Thiers, favoured restricting the king's role. The 1830s were politically unstable, marked by challenges to the regime by the legitimists and republicans, as well as attempts to assassinate the king" ("July Monarchy").

infinitesimally gradual process of social transformation" (Beaumont 222). As Beaumont points out, the "spiritual aristocracy" of Theosophy in the *fin de siècle* meshed easily with the ideology of the Fabians, who "effectively constituted themselves as a technocratic elect, were likewise essentially elitist" (Beaumont 229). These Fabian leanings are epitomized in G. B. Shaw, the famed dramatist who funded the paper, and H. G. Wells, the science fiction author and political commentator, both of whom contributed numerous letters to the editor and had their works frequently discussed by other contributors.

Further, the contradictions between Orage's impulse toward an evolutionary socialism guided by reform and education (through advertisement and citation), and his impulse toward revolutionary socialism (through positioning his readers as Luciferian rebels) can also be reconciled through the tangled history of socialism and occultism; as Beaumont points out, "both reformist socialists and theosophists interpreted history as an evolutionary process. This evolutionism, paradoxically, was often articulated in an apocalyptic rhetoric (typical of the Fabians, for all their gradualism, as of Blavatsky's acolytes)" (Beaumont 229). Beaumont further explains that, in this historical moment, occultists, Theosophists, and socialists alike were all "vanguardists who imagined themselves at the forefront of fundamental historical change" (Beaumont 223). Interestingly enough, this description also applies to *modernists*, of whom many were also a combination of occultist/Theosophist/socialist. Thus, the adept attitude and vanguardist tendencies of modernist aesthetics and politics reconciles some contradictions between socialism on the one hand and occultism on the other.

Furthermore, the contradictions between the idea of individual adepts living in a state of 'seclusion,' the formation of an intelligentsia, and the interactions between these and society as a whole can also be understood through Beaumont's comment that, for Fabians in particular, "the messianic role" of socialistic change, "was played less by a single prophetic figure than by the

proletariat or those intellectuals that appointed themselves to represent it" (Beaumont 220). The key here lies in the phrase "those intellectuals that appointed themselves" to *represent* a messianic proletariat if that class is unwilling or unable to represent itself, and the readers of *The New Age*, held themselves to be appointed as such—whether as Fabians or as occultists, and in many cases, both.

Beaumont further explains this ideological parallel between Fabianism and Theosophy through his commentary on *The Key to Theosophy*, where he reminds us that Blavatsky "conveniently insists that theosophists need not be involved in politics themselves, for she was convinced that if spiritual self-education remained the primary concern of reformists, corrupt laws would simply collapse" (227). This attitude, he reiterates, is "consistent with the emphasis on intellectual and moral transformation that shaped almost every variant of socialism, particularly Fabianism, at this time" (227). Unsurprisingly, this same strategy of seclusion, enlightenment, education, and, finally, transmutation or revolution is also found in the socialistic writings of Lévi. As Strube recalls, Lévi saw his age as one of "intellectual and social chaos," and that an "initiated" elite "must lead the people to its final emancipation" (378). This same thinking can be found later in Fabian circles but was also consistent with other socialist theories in the French context (for example, those of the saint-Simonian priests). Thus, Lévi's occult system had taken a turn from "spontaneous collectivism to an elitist individualism *leading* to collectivism" (378). As Orage's writings show, this idea of an "initiated" elite found an appeal with the Theosophists and the Fabians of the *Fin de Siècle*, persisting into the modernism of the Great War.

And, just like the occult systems of the Fourth Way, Theosophy, Thelema, the Golden Dawn, and virtually any other Western esoteric tradition, Lévi believed that the most important means to achieve personal and social enlightenment was first to "create oneself." The one paves the way for the improvement of the many. As Strube explains, citing Lévi,

> The whole concept of Constant's "occultism" was, as he wrote, to "offer the key to everybody who will take it: and this one will be a doctor of nations and a liberator of the world"….He declared that the people had to "initiate itself" and although "there will always be the people like there will always be children," the path to "personal, successive, progressive emancipation" will be open to everybody. (378)

This now-familiar metaphor of providing a key to a seeker (who must find and open the doors for themselves) persists in the initiatory techniques of nearly all the modernist editor-adepts, and Orage is no exception.

Whether Orage is providing his readers with a set of keys to unlock the doors to knowledge and enlightenment, or himself receiving "a string" from Gurdjieff with which to hang his "beads" and his "pearls" previously gleaned from masters ancient and modern, *The New Age* itself was the best string that Orage had at that time in his life that he could pass on to his readers—and his friends. Orage was a popular man, well known among London artists for his clear, critical eye and his exceeding generosity as a mentor. Hopefully, this examination of the occult side of Orage's socialistic beliefs reveals that enlightening his readers was truly not just a political duty but also a spiritual purpose. In following this path, Orage transmitted the pearls he himself had found, but he also gave a platform to another occult master of the early twentieth century to share some keys of her own. The next section outlines how Florence Farr, like Orage, similarly merged occultism and socialism, while adding feminism to the equation to facilitate a radically new, presentative style that defined the unique character of *The New Age*.

Florence Farr's Mystical Feminism: A Feminist Counterpoint to a Masculinist Magazine

Florence Farr's articles illustrate what happens when a bold New Woman, with the dramatic flair of an actress and the disciplined mind of an adept, merges the issues of modern times with the

ancient wisdom of the occult in an attempt to elevate the consciousness of her readers. Like Orage, she offers a mystical outlook to accompany material solutions to the world's problems. Farr is generally best known as an actress, but she was formerly the Chief Adept in Charge in Anglia for the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a post she relinquished in 1902 as the Order imploded amidst power struggles and internal bickering (Greer 191; 265). Also like Orage, Farr was a former Theosophist and her knowledge on occult matters is formidable. Farr is generally understood to stand at the periphery of modernism—one of the "marginal hangers-on," as Demetres Tryphonopoulos not-so-generously puts it (76). Farr wrote numerous articles not only for *The New Age*, but also for more overtly occult periodicals such as *The Occult Review* and *The Theosophical Review*. She was also a reader of *Lucifer* magazine, and wrote to the editors using her Golden Dawn magical motto, "S. S. D. D."

Evidently, Farr is no stranger to writing esoteric tracts for a specialist audience. By the time of *The New Age*'s debut in 1907, Farr had already written "An Introduction to Alchemy and Notes by S. S. D. D.," which appeared in *A Short Inquiry Concerning the Hermetic Art by a Lover of Philalethes*, part of the larger *Collectanea Hermetica,* which was edited by Wynn Westcott, one of the co-founders of the Golden Dawn. This book was published out of London by the Theosophical Publishing Society in 1894. Farr would also write a socio-political book; *Modern Woman: Her Intentions* (1910) is her personal take on the cultural phenomenon of the New Woman, wherein she further develops ideas touched on in her contributions to *The New Age*. Lastly, Farr had written and staged two Egyptian-inspired plays during the year of 1901-1902, *The Beloved of Hathor* and *The Shrine of the Golden Hawk*, both of which were co-authored by fellow adept (and "marginal hanger-on" of modernism) in Olivia Shakespear, whose "Memoirs of a Charming Person" was a focal point of occult flair in *The Egoist*.

Farr shares a similar fate as that of Shakespear: another powerful female adept has been overshadowed by the men who published her. The conventional narrative of modernist scholarship

is that Farr is, essentially, lucky not to have been forgotten; writing in 1946, Clifford Bax condescendingly regards her provocative and exciting articles in *The New Age* as "another instant of limelight when she championed the cause of prostitutes and other unpopular persons" and patronizes, "she made her little public mark, even if it was not deep enough to outlive her" (vi). However, he happily asserts that "her many private friendships with clever men" such as Shaw and Yeats—rather than the virtues of her art or her contributions to occult philosophy—"will save her from being forgotten" (vi). In a more neutral tone, the Orlando Project likewise concurs, "FF is probably best remembered for her personal and professional relationships with two literary men, Bernard Shaw and W. B. Yeats" ("Florence").

While Farr's magical exploits have fortunately been memorialized in Mary K. Greer's *Women of the Golden Dawn*, Farr's other biographers rarely mention her writings in *The New Age*, and if they do, they seldom do so with any detail.[81] Joseph Hassett does note that she wrote about Ibsen's Hedda Gabler in one of her first articles in *The New Age*, but offers little by way of commentary (57). Similarly, Robert Scholes acknowledges in his mini bio on Farr for the Modernist Journals Project that she "took Theosophy very seriously… and wrote pamphlets that are still in print on topics such as The Magic of a Symbol," and briefly notes that she "produc[ed] some very interesting essays on Ibsen's women and other topics" ("Farr"). Like most other accounts, however, this mini biography does not name any of her articles. Scholes's bio bafflingly concludes, "She died of cancer in 1917 but her memory is alive and well on the World Wide Web, thanks to her contributions to the New Age—not the magazine but the occult world of theosophy and spiritualism that hovered around the

[81] A notable exception is a short chapter on Farr, "A 'Transitional' Woman" by A. Walton Litz in *High and Low Moderns*. Here, Litz gives Farr her dues in the context of modernist history and attempts to free her from the shackles of Bax's judgment that she will be best remembered for her associations with "clever men." Litz provides a short survey of Farr's key works and does not shy from mentioning the importance of mysticism and the occult in her creative process. Her *New Age* contributions are named and summarized over the course of two pages. While there is little by way of analysis on Farr's occult aesthetics, Litz nonetheless does Farr a service by making her *oeuvre* known to an audience of modernist scholars.

journal, especially in its early years" ("Farr"). While it is true that Farr produced some important and enduring commentary on esoteric subjects in her Golden Dawn and Theosophy days, it seems strange that the MJP emphasizes that her contributions were to the New Age *movement*, and *not the magazine*, thus downplaying her contributions to the actual magazine! Yet, in the pages of the magazine, Farr shines and comes into her own; she is a provocateur, a grinning adept wearing the grim visage of the Medusa. She is the occult subconscious of *The New Age* made manifest.

The figure of the Medusa is an apt one indeed for considering the life and works of Florence Farr. She refers to the Medusa directly in her Introduction to Alchemy in the *Collectanea Hermetica*.[82]And, as Hassett recalls, she was also given this label as a pejorative by Shaw in a letter to Elizabeth Robins. In this letter, Shaw griped about Farr's performance in John Todhunter's play, *A Comedy of Sighs*, calling it a horrific "transformation of an amiable, clever sort of woman into a nightmare, a Medusa, a cold, loathly, terrifying, grey, callous, sexless devil" (Shaw qtd. in Hassett 42). Referring back to Farr's notes on alchemy, Hassett asserts that Farr "would not resist characterization as a Medusa," for the mythical gorgon "was a ritual mask concealing Athena, Goddess of Wisdom…[Farr] urged her readers to long for a glance from the Wisdom Goddess, [and] she paired her Wisdom Goddess with the mask of the Medusa" (Hassett 42). In plain words, Farr was not afraid to use some occult trickery to teach her readers lessons about society and politics. Being a powerful adept and a New Woman, Farr strove to contribute to discussions on socialism from a perspective that was both mystical and feminine. Not only did Farr's occult learning bring a distinct flair to the presentative style that Orage sought to develop in *The New Age*,

[82] Farr explains that the path of the Great Work is fraught with joys and sorrows, and the adept must learn to embrace hardship to appreciate reward. Farr writes, "We have all been taught to look with horror upon Medusa's head, with the serpents twisting round its face, the terror of which turned all to stone who gazed upon it. But we must, if we would learn the secret wisdom of the ages, learn to long for a glance from those wonderful eyes, which will bestow upon us the gift of indifference to personal joys and sorrows" (10). Once an adept has received this gift, 'he' becomes a "precious stone," a "a centre of light to all that approach him; giving joy to others, because he contains the image of the highest joy in himself; desiring nothing from the world, drawing his inspiration from the supernal light—that 'Wisdom Goddess' who wears the serpent crowned head upon her shield" (10).

she also developed a performative, lunar, *feminine* style, which eerily anticipates the *Écriture feminine* of Hélène Cixous as laid out in her groundbreaking 1975 essay called, appropriately, "Laugh of the Medusa." Farr relishes in her performance as the feminine and feminist "moon" to Orage's "sun" in the first volume, though, coming from a true magus, her performance of the lunar archetype ought not to be taken for a passive, essentialist femininity; she slyly shows her mastery of esoteric writing and challenges her readers to broaden their horizons in terms of what socialism means, and what role women can play in actualizing it.

In reading Farr, we can see her as an agent in ways that she could not be as an actress executing the visions of men like Shaw and Yeats on the stage; as Cixous would have it, these men (and many male readers of *The New Age*) were undoubtedly "surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives" (876), and this horror is reflected in some of the letters written by men and published in response to her articles. Farr embraced these accusations of "being a monster" and "dare[d] to speak, in short, to bring out something new (876). She "resists death," "makes trouble" (876), and does it all with a smile—and a laugh. As Cixous instructs, in a manner suggestive of Farr's in her notes on alchemy, "You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing" (885). Here is Florence Farr at her very best, in a modernist sphere, rather than a strictly occult sphere. And, with her articles being promoted by Orage on the masthead of *The New Age*, it is hard not to look at her.

While Farr's approach is more bombastic than that of Orage, her columns published through the first volume of the magazine share important key features with Orage's "Towards Socialism" series: her adept attitude, her Luciferian vision of rebellion (both as socialistic versus capitalistic, and as esoteric feminine versus hegemonic masculine) as well as her engagement with alchemical, Hindu, and Theosophical ideas to promote a vision for social transformation that is socialistic *and* mystical *and* feminine. As Cixous would have it, Farr's lunar (feminine) style "forge[s] for herself the

antilogos weapon" (880). Through her forceful writing, masked in an archetypal lunar style, Farr "become[s] *at will* the taker and initiator, for her own right, in every symbolic system, in every political process" (880). In Farr's case, the word "initiator" can be taken on a much more literal level than Cixous likely intended. Drawing upon her great esoteric learnings, Farr conjures the most daring and controversial visions of what a 'mystical socialism' could look like, however paradoxical that term may sound to politically orthodox ears. She writes, unashamedly, as an adept, *for* the adept readers of *The New Age*, while raising the stakes to actively include feminism in the discussion, thus showing the magazine's predominantly male readership how women will help birth the New Age.

Farr's involvement with the magazine tapers off quickly after volume 1, though she makes the odd appearance as late as volumes 4 and 8. However, in this first volume, she contributed 14 articles and reviews spanning a number of topics: the drama of Shaw; the cultural impact of Henrik Ibsen's women heroines; feminism; female sexuality; prostitution; and socialism. Her work stands out as the most colorful and interesting articles appearing in the first volume of *The New Age*, and they perfectly demonstrate the practice of adept writing. Placed amidst the very serious and practical articles about economic reform, the goings-on of Parliament and the House of Lords, and whispers of a looming Great War, Farr's articles scintillate with wit, humor, and *fun*. It is this spirit of fun and playfulness that sets Farr apart from her fellow adept Orage, and her style complements his well. While the fineries of her points may be lost on the uninitiated, her articles are clever and insightful takes on the modern issues of her day.

Farr made her debut in the New Age in volume 1, number 4, with "G. B. S. and New York," where she compares the man, George Bernard Shaw, to the city (57). This entry into the *New Age* fold was quite innocuous, though perhaps fitting, given the dominant narratives of her life in the shadow of Shaw. In the next issue, she writes about a play called *Votes for Women* in an article called "The Art of Womanhood," and comments on the characters Viva and Magda, and how their

situations reflect different responses to "the great tragic crises society has prepared" for women who have "both mated but not married" (69). These articles are notable for drawing attention to women's themes in politics and drama, and holding up these protagonists as examples of the changing role of women after the *Fin de Siècle*. In neither of these short articles, however, do we see Farr wearing the robes of the adept. That comes in issue six, when Farr reviews Orage's book, *Consciousness: Animal, Human, and Superman* (92).

Here, Farr attempts to recuperate for the Divine Feminine the energy of the shifting mass consciousness taking place at this time. She provocatively suggests that "The Superman…[is] to be identified with the transcendental consciousness; the morning star which precedes the dawn of day" (92). "The Superman" is a central symbol in the early issues of *The New Age*, and numerous articles discuss the concept—Shaw's take on this Nietzschean idea in his play *Man and Superman* is likewise a popular subject of discussion among readers in their published letters in the first volume.[83] In her review, Farr describes how this condition, this intuitive state of consciousness (in opposition to a more intellectual, solar state) exists in "many systems of mysticism" and is actually "mystically feminine." Farr further argues that a more appropriate symbol for this state is actually Isis, the Egyptian goddess who "will bring forth Horus the Saviour!" (92). Thus, Farr draws on her esoteric learning in Theosophy and the Golden Dawn to "unmask" and recuperate a feminine agency that has been appropriated by men making a "superman" in their own image. In doing this work, she takes Nietzsche, Shaw, and even Orage down a peg, and reminds readers of *The New Age* that some of these 'new ideas' are not so new at all; maybe credit to the Divine Feminine should be given

[83] For example, there is a full-page review of *Man and Superman* in the Drama column of the June 13, 1907 issue by L. Haden Guest (108). Most reviews only garner a paragraph or two, so this review of Shaw, along with the lengthy anonymous review of Fuller's work on Crowley, reveals the editors' investments (in Shaw, Fabianism, Nietzsche, occultism, and, Shaw's funding). On a humorous note, reader Ernest Newland criticizes Guest's favorable take on *Man and Superman*, which he renames "Bore and Superbore" to reflect his disinterest in the play (127).

where it is due, considering that much of the audience for *The New Age* is, apparently, familiar with the esoteric wisdom.

Moreover, Farr's argument that this transcendental consciousness is the "morning star," places her firmly within the occult tradition in terms of the Luciferian Doctrine, which celebrates the power of free will, ingenuity, and inquisitiveness. Here, as in Orage's "Towards Socialism" series or Blavatsky's magazine, the esoteric Lucifer is different from the exoteric Satan, the Great Enemy of humanity. In an esoteric reading, Lucifer's crime against Yahweh was the exercise of free thought and free will; here, Farr likens the free thinkers of this avant-garde magazine to that curious, intelligent, and rebellious angel. Given Lucifer's association with "the morning star," the planet Venus, this fallen angel takes on a feminine energy—a position entirely in line with Theosophy and other mystical traditions. I discuss this doctrine further in the final chapter on *Lucifer* magazine, and show how editors H. P. Blavatsky and Mabel Collins similarly reclaim Lucifer as an androgynous symbol of freewill and rebellion against a patriarchal, orthodox Christianity. The alchemical poet H. D. would later do the same in her "Tribute to the Angels." This partially coded assertion of the feminine nature of intuition may not have been understood by all *New Age* readers, but adept readers would see the connection. Moreover, Farr is, in a sense, playing her own version of Lucifer in rebelling against the mass male ego of this very serious, masculine, and solar magazine.

In addition to positioning herself as a Luciferian antagonist both to capitalism and to patriarchy, Farr addresses other social issues through an occult perspective. Other articles that stand out for their occult perspective are "Shrine of the Jester Critic" (volume 1, issue 10), "The Sword of Laughter" (volume 1, issue 12), "Man" (volume 1, issue 21), and "The Medea of Euripedes" (volume 1, issue 26). These articles touch on a number of social issues; but, most importantly, they feature a woman's writing that adds another dimension not only to the socialistic, but also the occult content of *The New Age*. What these articles have in common is an occult perspective on laughter

brought to bear on the phallogocentrism of the dominant capitalist regime (and, semi-secretly, of her own socialist, male 'allies' in the *New Age* magazine itself). Again, Farr seems tapped into an esoteric feminine tradition within the broader occult wisdom tradition since she anticipates Cixous's similar theorizing that the power of laughter has the power to "smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the 'truth'" (888).

Farr is ahead of her time when it comes to articulating feminist tools to "smash" and "shatter" patriarchy, capitalism, and egoism. "Shrine of the Jester-Critic" and "The Sword of Laughter" cover similar terrain in the sense that they both acknowledge the role that humor can play in the life of the adept (or, the socialist; or, the woman). Farr asserts that an inner archetype that she calls the Jester-Critic "destroys ego and illusions with the sword of laughter," and acts as a "great Messenger of the Apocalypse" (182). This Apocalypse can be both social and personal, and it precedes the concept of The Abyss, found in the writings of Aleister Crowley, Mabel Collins, and other occult thinkers. It is the cataclysm before the silence, within which every adept must fall before emerging humbled—and enlightened.

Farr, too, has been "riveted… between two horrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss" (Cixous 885). Just as Farr welcomes the pejorative label of the Medusa and transmutes it into a mask concealing the wisdom of Athena and of Isis, so would she welcome the Apocalypse and attendant Abyss. As a woman, she has everything to gain, and nothing to lose in a social Apocalypse; she reaffirms this idea in *Modern Woman* in her chapter on women's labor and how economic inequality between the sexes perpetuates women's dependence on men, and props up the whole system of marriage, which, to her, is little better than some sordid puppet show where "the husband prefers to keep his wife dancing to the tune he pays for, so he makes her allowance dependent on his own mood of the moment" (27). She also critiques the hoarding of private property and resources by the nobility, and recognizes opponents to the socialist cause, even among women,

divided by class: "Many great heiresses and little heiresses are to be found among the conservative forces of the land, for these women have nothing to gain and everything to lose by changing the present state of things. They and the insurance office alike prosper on the present foundations of English family life" (26). These are the people who fear the Apocalypse and the Abyss—because they are too invested in the social and economic structures of capitalism, or, from an occult perspective, the illusory material world in general.[84]

Just as the 'wider gyres' of societies and cultures must undergo an Apocalypse, every individual adept must face their own personal Abyss and learn "to dwell" in it and find its "peace" before becoming "incapable of tears," as Collins instructs in *Lucifer*; this is a necessary precursor to enlightenment ("Comments" 13). Laughter can keep one humble, but it is also an act of defiance, a remedy for the absurdities of life and culture. According to Farr,

> Prayer, repentance, rites, ceremonies may all fail; endless good resolutions may be made and broken. Some powerful obsession of the heart remains invulnerable in spite of them. Touch it with the sword of laughter, and in a moment in vanishes. So perhaps it will come about that the glory of this world will perish and another world not so tragically farcical will rise in some not distant age. ("Sword" 183)

This passage echoes Farr's call in "Shrine of the Jester-Critic" for more inward development to complement the outward force of revolutionary action. This 'turn inward' is similarly valued by Orage, Theosophists, and other seekers. She writes, "We still pretend we are preparing for another

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[84] While occultists see the material world as an illusion or a "veil" concealing an ultimate spiritual reality, Marx likewise sees the world as an illusion in a different sense. The illusion, for Marx, is that the material world and its laws and social structures as we perceive them are somehow natural or transhistorical, rather than constructed under specific historical conditions. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx castigates the bourgeoisie for failing to understand this: "Your very ideas are but the outgrowth of the conditions of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property, just as your jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all, a will, whose essential character and direction are determined by the economical conditions of existence of your class. The selfish misconception that induces you to transform into eternal laws of nature and of reason, the social forms springing from your present mode of production and form of property—historical relations that rise and disappear in the progress of production—this misconception you share with every ruling class that has preceded you" (19).

life by avoiding the three great teachers, Experience, Solitude, and Meditation" (151). Accompanying this inner work, the alchemical power of laughter can be harnessed as a "sword" that destroys the illusions of ego and the self-seriousness of the adept—and perhaps too, those *very* self-serious, masculine voices of the intelligentsia filling the pages of *The New Age* itself.

By issue 21, Farr's name appears regularly on the masthead, revealing the editors' increased confidence that Farr's articles will draw attention from readers. Further, her name also appears typographically larger above her articles within the magazine's pages, instead of being placed in small font at the end of her articles—another visual sign of the currency her ideas are gaining among *The New Age*'s readership. In her article, "Man," a woman writes about men for a change, as this journal, along with most other modernist periodicals, have seen plenty of men weigh in on "the woman question." Continuing with the theme of humor as form of social leveling, even of power reversal, Farr accuses most men of being too serious and soulless (or, stereotypically solar); such men think "laughter is not respectable," but Man will have to "laugh at his own solemn attitude" and, when he does, "he will have learnt the real purpose of laughter" (326). As an adept initiator, Farr provides to her male allies an important tool for self-examination and humility. Sounding much like Orage in "Towards Socialism," Farr concludes,

> That is why I believe there is a great future for the race that will realise how much control can be exercised through the power of imagination intelligently used by the will. Such studies are properly the function of a great religious organisation, and if religion and philosophy united with the definite purpose of giving power of this kind to its votaries, I believe the race would become healthier and saner" (326)

Her conclusion complements her thesis (that men are too stereotypically solar, or serious) with the notion that this masculine "intelligence" should be complemented by "imagination." Thus, the solar and the lunar alchemically synthesize to produce a more perfect unity—the "middle path" of

alchemy. While the male archetype is more solar and the female archetype is more lunar, each has in itself aspects of its opposite; the middle path of complete balance is available to everyone, whatever their gender identity. This balance is the key to true mastery, and Farr finds it by embracing her feminine energy, rather than attempting to nullify it, as Dora Marsden sought to do.

Lastly, Farr's initiation strategy relies on drawing upon history (solar) *and* myth (lunar) to bring women heroes to the forefront of her readers' minds; as Cixous theorizes, in such a gesture, "personal history blends together with the history of all women, as well as national and world history" (882). She refers to female goddesses from polytheistic religions, such as the Egyptian Isis and the Hindu Kali ("Man" 326); she attempts to recoup the sorceress Medea as a strong woman who can resist the domestication of Jason ("The Medea" 409) and compares her to other fierce women of myth, such as Hecate ("goddess of the Tree and the Serpent"), Lilith, and Eve (409). In this last example, Farr valorizes not only defiant, or even outright threatening female figures, but she again situates these figures within the Luciferian tradition that inverts the dominant values of Christianity (and, by extension, capitalism).

This strategy of alluding to the feminine heroines of myth to draw attention to the heroic New Women of modernism (such as the protagonists of plays by Shaw and Ibsen), is Farr's way of dispensing her own "pearls" of occult wisdom. Farr's strategy, however, is distinct for its emphasis on feminine icons of wisdom and authority, whether real or imagined, and again anticipates the scholarly, feminist work of Cixous in "Laugh of the Medusa," and the occult feminist work that H. D. would pursue in "Tribute to the Angels," where, like Farr, she would invert the 'demons' of Christianity into angels and goddesses of a new, feminine pantheon. *New Age*, take note; the New Women have arrived!

Conclusion: Mystical Socialisms, Solar and Lunar

As I have argued, scholarship on *The New Age* tends to downplay the occult elements of the magazine and, even when these elements are acknowledged, they are often associated with the magazine's decline. But, even before Orage's interest in mysticism was invigorated after the Great War, the magazine's circulation had already tumbled to 4,500 readers in August 1913 before falling again to 2,500 in November of that same year when its price was raised from 3p (its debut price) up to 6p (Ardis "Dialogics" 417). These numbers illustrate that the magazine was in decline for some time anyway leading up to the Great War in 1914 after having made its remarkable splash in 1907.

These trends in circulation suggest that the buildup to the magazine's glory days of 22,000 readers came *with* its strong occult presence. Arguably, the magazine's initial success lies, in no small part, to its Fabian readership's burgeoning interest in the occult that carried over from the *Fin de Siècle*, especially in light of the revelation that modern occultism is itself entangled with socialist ideology through the famous French magus, Eliphas Lévi. While most scholars seem uncomfortable mixing occultism with socialism, it is precisely the occult threads in this magazine that can help scholars of *The New Age* reconcile the contradictory nature of the socialist politics espoused in this magazine. As Beaumont sums up, the occult and theosophical elements converge neatly with socialism due to the emphasis of "Universal Brotherhood," the formation of which is "a utopian concept at once both gradualistic and messianic, democratic and elitist" (225). For these reasons, Theosophy "made a powerful appeal to disillusioned social reformists" (225), and *The New Age* in turn became an outlet for disillusioned Theosophists. *The New Age*, then, was a home for socialists seeking to heal the world on a spiritual level, and for occultists weary of 'ivory tower' esoteric circles too withdrawn from politics.

So, while Orage presumes that his readers would have common knowledge of what "every student of traditional wisdom" would know about "the core and heart of esotericism," and assumes that none of his readers at the time could possibly have missed the "mystical note" in *The New Age*, these things seems to be only a matter of peripheral interest to periodical scholars in the New Modernist Studies. These strange subtleties of *The New Age* are worth examining, especially considering that Orage was a mentor to other key figures from the previous two chapters: Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson of *The Little Review* considered Orage a literary and spiritual mentor, and it was through him that they would later meet Gurdjieff, spiritual mentor to them all. In the *Egoist* circle, Richard Aldington was a longtime reader and supporter of *The New Age*, and he and H. D. made the odd appearance at Orage's private audiences and poetry meetings (Selver 34-40). Further, Dora Marsden and Harriet Shaw Weaver looked to *The New Age* as a model for *The Egoist* (Clark "Dora Marsden" 95n6). Thus, Orage is a central figure in the network of adeptship—he bridges the gap between the older Theosophists and Fabians of the *Fin de Siècle*, and the younger modernists of the emerging avant-garde.

Like *The Little Review* and *The Egoist*, *The New Age* slyly sprinkles its occult influence into the book reviews, editorials, advertisements, and feature columns. The magazine's occultism both disturbs and complements its politics, and the writings of Orage and Farr show that, despite possessing an elitist, esoteric attitude, *The New Age* disseminates its esoteric knowledge (whether occult, socialist, or feminist) to a wider readership, dispensing the "beads" and "pearls" of wisdom, slyly winking to fellow travelers who are 'in on it,' and assisting those who are not—provided that they have the Will to endure some mockery, laugh at their own shortcomings, find their own strings, gather their own keys, and do their own Great Work.

In the previous chapter on *The Egoist*, we saw how Farr's close friend and collaborator, Olivia Shakespear, published "Memoirs of a Charming Person," putting her own spin on the ending

of Monfaucon's "charming and spritely" tale of occult initiation. Like Farr and Orage, she similarly grants her readers the occult keys of the esoteric tradition through this work of 'fiction,' all the while concealing her own presence in this process of occult initiation through the modernist periodical form. Content in the shadows, Shakespear worked as a *soror mystica*, collaborating with Montfaucon to disseminate occult wisdom, even as she intervened to undermine the text's sincerity, thus giving readers cause to question the wisdom of some of the Count's doctrines—especially its xenophobic and misogynistic aspects. Nonetheless, "Memoirs" remains useful as an index of occult readings, an introduction to alchemical principles, and a marker of distinction for the esoteric litterateurs through its adept attitude.

Longenbach and Ruthven give Pound most of the credit for bringing Montfaucon's *Le Comte* into print, while Shakespear's involvement in modernism was relegated to the margins of history. In *The New Age* circle, Florence Farr seems to have suffered a similar fate. While Farr's longer works may have fallen to the wayside of modernism, as Bax and Tryphonopoulos note, *The New Age* shows her at her best and most relevant, as she contributed significantly to the most influential literary and political journal of the emerging modernist periodical culture and added her distinct feminist corrective to Orage's theory of a mystical socialism. With the emphasis on "expansion" in the New Modernist Studies, I see here an opportunity to recuperate the literary reputation of one of the twentieth century's most accomplished adepts. Wood argues that *The New Age* can, "with justification in certain respects, be characterised as anti-feminist" (29). He blames a significant extent of the magazine's anti-feminism on "the influence of Nietzsche, whose philosophy suggested that the female intellect was inferior," but he does not hesitate to critique Orage directly for his "recriminatory attacks belittling female intellect." Wood points to a passage where Orage comments, "intellect in its early phases is necessarily egoistic; and since women […] are just beginning [to become intellectual] it follows that their egoism is very pronounced" (qtd. in Wood 29,

brackets his). In light of comments like this one, Farr's contributions to *The New Age* take on an additional importance for its balancing effect on the magazine. Selver recalls that Orage knew Farr's columns were popular and drove discussion in the reader-response section. The Orlando Project likewise notes that "her contributions to the *New Age* were well-received" and that Orage informed her that "her articles were more frequently quoted than those of any other writer" ("Florence"). Thus, Farr deserves to be remembered as more than Yeats's fallen 'Muse,' or Shaw's erstwhile lover and protégé. And here, in *The New Age*, she shows us exactly why that should be.

Taken together, Orage and Farr recast occult truths as socialist truths, with Orage taking a serious, practical approach, and Farr taking on a more bombastic, humorous, approach that offers a feminist corrective to a mystical socialism theorized in the pages of an elder modernist magazine dominated by men. Whether considering the writings of Orage or Farr, it is clear that the occult philosophy that undergirds the socialism of the paper cannot be segregated from discussions of politics in *The New Age*. Indeed, the mystical socialism of Orage and Farr are part and parcel of what makes this magazine 'new'—or at least *different* from political commentary found in more popular, mainstream sources. Orage's and Farr's use of Theosophical, Hindu, Buddhist, Hellenic, and Hermetic ideas to remedy what they see as a deficiency in socialist thinking of their times is exactly what makes the journal a "presentative" forerunner to the avant-garde little magazines of modernism, which themselves strove to bring 'new' ideas in politics and literature to the table, rather than remaining merely "representative" of what Practical People are used to reading.

Chapter 4

Magick, in Dreams and Diaries: The Spider's Web of Initiation in *The Equinox,* 1909-1914

NIX NIHIL
"Aleister Crowley,
Editor of *Equinox*,
darkest of the editor-adepts:
I approach your archive with respect,
and not with fear or malice.

Have you a message?"

CROWLEY
"Your methods are most sound.
And, though young,
you are strong in your own right.
Do well by me, and I will not resist.
But, you already know that,
like the others,
I will not feed you.

Damn the ignorant and the lazy.
Stand apart from them!"

* * *

In previous chapters, I have shown how the little magazines of modernism initiate their readers into an explicitly literary and implicitly spiritual counter-public through the appropriation of occult themes and symbols. In the case of *The Little Review* or *The Egoist*, an *insouciant* posture is assumed, where the literary is foregrounded and the spiritual is not directly named, but hidden in plain sight: a public secret. *The New Age* performs an overt—dare I say *serious*—political stance with a literary flair, but it too assumes an adept readership and is, conversely, not quite so coy about it. In

all three publications, the initiatory function of little magazines is instrumental in building and fostering a community that paradoxically uses mass-produced periodicals to reach out to the masses, even while disavowing them, or "making no compromise" with their tastes, as the *Little Review* famously trumpeted on its masthead. Through the textual and paratextual games of these editor-adepts, seekers of art, politics, and wisdom can recognize themselves in these magazines and experience a sense of belonging in an increasingly fragmenting modern world.

This fourth chapter marks a shift in this study. Here, we exit the domain of the recognized modernist little magazines and sojourn into the territory of the properly occult journals of modernity. One would be hard-pressed to find a better "serpent of the threshold" than Aleister Crowley. The ever-controversial Crowley goes by many names and epithets: A. C., Perdurabo, Master Therion, The Beast 666, The Wickedest Man in the World—magus, scientist, explorer, poet, deviant, drug fiend, charlatan. History has been uneven in its judgment of Crowley. Judged though Crowley may be, he has certainly not been forgotten. The man is dead, but the magus and his myths live on in the astral plane; his "Magick" has seen to that.[85]

This chapter analyzes the strategies and tactics of initiation in *The Equinox*. Crowley uses his magazine as a tool for initiation in two primary ways: through explicit magical instruction in the form of editorials and essays, and through a more implicit form of occult pedagogy using esoteric literature. We have already seen how the editor-adepts of *The Egoist* appropriated Olivia Shakespear's translation of the occult story by Montfaucon to perform an elitist, modernist attitude and initiate savvy readers into the secret society of modernism. Here, Crowley does something similar; he knows that esoteric literature has an initiating power capable of animating the more practical, didactic instruction given elsewhere in his periodical, and he uses it to great effect to provide his readers with

[85]As I stated in the Introduction, Crowley prefers the term "Magick" with the *k* to "distinguish his teachings from sleight of hand and charlatanism" (Kaczynski "Continuing Knowledge" 142). I prefer the conventional spelling for its ambiguity since magical writers often exploit the 'grey area' between 'real' magic and trickery.

the keys to initiation. The chief difference, however, is that the editors of *The Egoist* did not necessarily intend for the occult doctrines given in "Memoirs of a Charming Person" to be taken seriously by readers, despite the apparent sincerity of Montfaucon's original text. Despite his sharp sense of humor, Crowley is decidedly serious about his occult mission, and in that respect, he has more in common with Montfaucon than he does with Weaver, Marsden, and Pound. For Crowley, the esoteric literature of *The Equinox* is not present simply to break up the drier, pedagogical material; rather, his memoirs and short stories complement the magic rituals, and come together in a single field of occult instruction.

To make my case about the initiatory value of Crowley's esoteric literature, I first consider Aleister Crowley as editor-adept, situate him within a modernist milieu by highlighting his connection to other literary magazines and their editors, examine his published dream diaries, and then interpret one of his short stories, "The Dream Circean," which was published in the second issue of *The Equinox*. Crowley's short story shares many similar aesthetic and esoteric techniques with his novel, *Moonchild*, arguably allowing for its inclusion in a sub-genre of modernist literature that Mark Morrisson calls "esoteric fiction." Crowley's novel, and other works of *fin-de-siècle* esoteric literature that preceded it, deserve recognition as (early) modernist texts.[86] Although the actual narrative techniques of these works are "fairly traditional aesthetically" when compared to other more recognizably avant-garde modernist novels written up to the Great War, they "offer a glimmer of more formally daring novels to come in the modernist era" ("Apocalypse" 102). Thus, "The

[86] Morrisson's 2017 article, "Apocalypse 1917: Esoteric Modernism and the War in Aleister Crowley's *Moonchild*," makes a case for Crowley as a modernist in terms of the aesthetic of his novels: Morrisson coins the term "esoteric fiction" to describe a "minor but increasingly visible literary genre" that emerged from the fires of the Great War, yet reaches back to the 1890s though Theosophical writers such as Mabel Collins who were producing similar work in *Lucifer* and other occult journals. Esoteric fiction also features "a modernist synthesis of ritual, transpersonal epistemology, and contemplative fiction" (100). This unique genre aimed to re-enchant the modern world with a spiritual perspective on global affairs through the dramatization of initiation, spirit communication, and ritual magic (98). As I argue in the dissertation introduction, Crowley's diaries, memoirs, novel, and short stories all do similar work in transmitting esoteric wisdom and are unified in a single 'occult reality,' which is why I adapt Morrisson's term into a broader "esoteric literature."

Dream Circean" similarly meets the criteria by which Morrisson judges *Moonchild* to argue for its inclusion in the secret society of modernism.

Further, "The Dream Circean" was printed in *The Equinox* in 1909, thus predating *Moonchild* by many years: the latter was written in 1917, but not published until 1923 (Mandrake Press). Even though *The Equinox* is not a 'modernist little magazine' *per se*, the mantra of the Modernist Journals Project seems applicable: "modernism began in the magazines." In the same way in which classic modernist texts first found an outlet in little magazines, esoteric writers refined their own magical practice through the occult periodical culture. Hence, it is only fitting that the initiatory techniques of Crowley's watershed novel were first honed in *The Equinox* in the form of an instructive and engaging short story. *The Equinox* debuted in 1909, five years before the modernist little magazines *The Little Review* and *The Egoist* would appropriate occult strategies of initiation in order to bolster their own literary *bona fides*. *The Equinox* does the reverse: it publishes esoteric literature so as to provide variety to the journal and to show off the literary, rather than the strictly magical, talents of Crowley and his circle. The 'fictional' and 'non-fictional' texts work alongside each other, and their goal is one and the same: to impart readers with the ancient wisdom of the secret sciences, and to demonstrate how adept readers can deepen their understanding of themselves and attain visions of their own through careful reading and contemplation. For an aspiring adept, there is as much to be gained in the literary aspects of *The Equinox* as there is in the more formal, theoretical material that dominates this journal.

Initiation

I sit in the Radcliffe Camera Library at Oxford University. I hold in my hands the first issue of Crowley's infamous journal. Card cover. 18cm x 24cm. Five shillings. Published March 21, 1909: "o.s.. An. V. Sun in Aries." THE EQUINOX: The Method of Science, the Aim of Religion. The Official Organ of the A∴ A∴—The Review of Scientific Illuminism. London. Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co. Ltd.

A ram and Lady Justice lean on a shield emblazoned with a sun and the rosy cross. The ram is a flash of bright marigold. Justice flows in a green robe. Key items are adorned with gold paint—the ram's horns, the cross, the sun, and the scales and sword of Justice. Stunning. This journal is more beautiful than any other I have handled, including the resplendent *Lucifer*, with its regal cover of silver on midnight blue. The modernist little magazines look like mere rubbish in comparison. There is nothing "little" about this. This is a monolith. Like Crowley, whose namesake in the Golden Dawn was Frater Perdurabo, so too will this magazine "endure to the end."

I breathe in this journal's subtle, pungent smell. I see first the Eye of Horus, flickering in my third eye before melting into the famous picture of a young Crowley wearing his pyramidal cap, leaning on his hands, grimoire at his side. For a moment, we stare at one another. *What secrets have you in store, Mr. Crowley?*

* * *

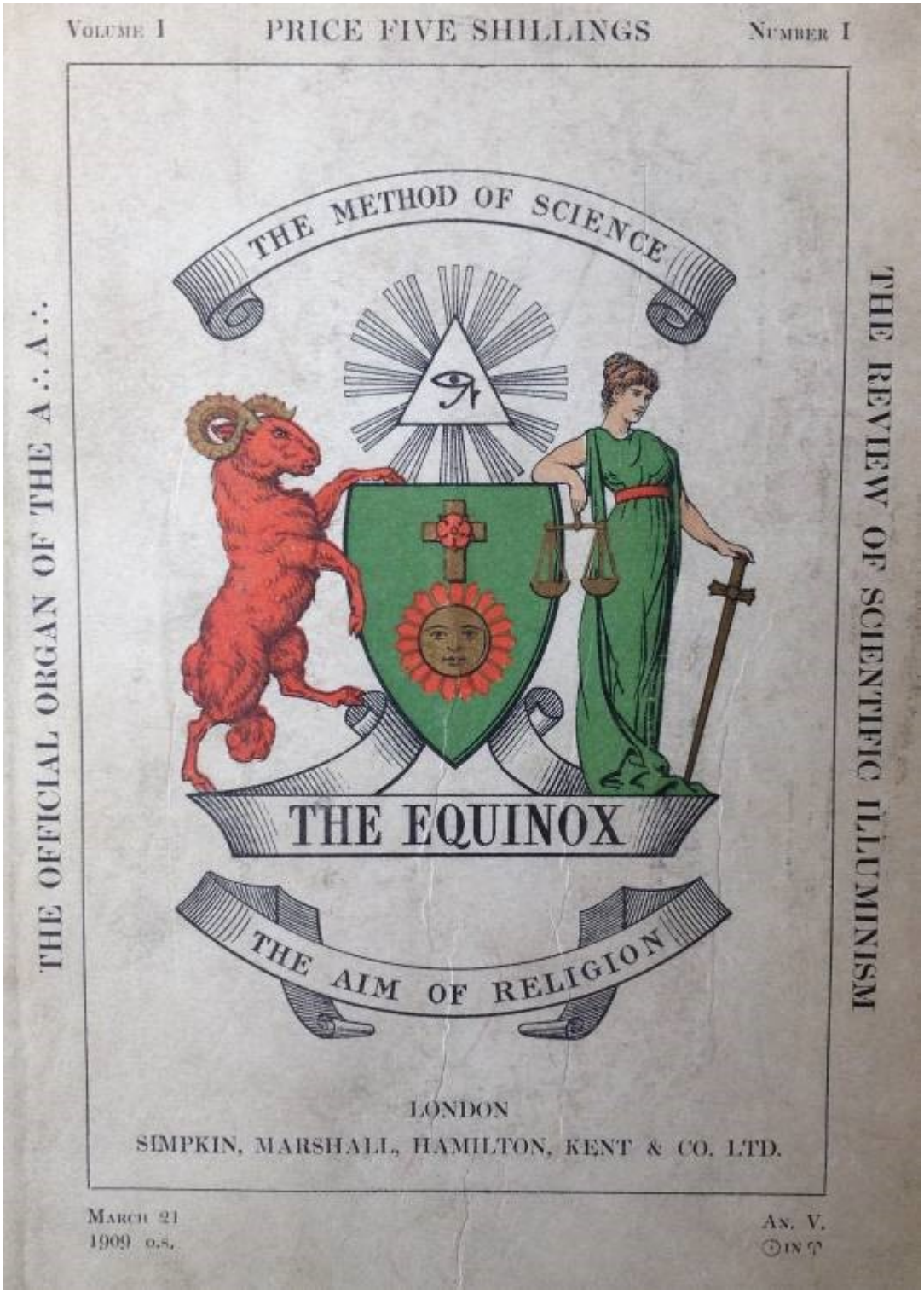

Fig. 8. The illustrious full-color cover of *The Equinox*, volume 1, number 1. My photograph does not do justice to the gold paint, which has a metallic sheen.

Aleister Crowley: Modern Magus… Magical Modernist?

Before fully crossing the threshold and entering the occult world of *The Equinox*, it seems necessary to first consider the Serpent himself. In previous chapters, I have endeavored to illuminate the mysticism of the modernists. Here, I aim to illuminate the modernist tendencies of a mystic. While I stop just short of inducting Crowley into the secret society of modernism (likely, against his will), his contributions to modernist periodical culture and his connection to key modernist figures in my network of adeptship warrant further consideration.[87] Crowley wrote for numerous magazines and journals in his day, and we have seen his specter manifest in the modernist little magazines covered in all three previous chapters. It should come as little surprise, then, that some famous modernists left their trace in Crowley's archives, the Yorke Collection at the Warburg Institute, University of London, UK. While there is little connection to *The Little Review* or *The Egoist* to be found in the Yorke Collection, there are fascinating connections to *The New Age* and *Lucifer*.

As we might expect, Crowley published a number of works in recognizably occult publications. One of the best known of these was Ralph Shirley's *Occult Review*, which published the writings of many familiar esoteric names, including Sir Oliver Lodge, A. E. Waite, Mabel Collins,

[87] Just because Aleister Crowley *could* arguably be inducted into the secret society of modernism, does that mean that he *should* be? In a 2016 article, Amy Clukey answers, *probably not*. While she acknowledges that Crowley "considered the emerging modernist establishment to be his competitors and peers" (87) and that he "engaged with recognizably modernist figures" (103n9), she takes issue with Crowley's biographers, who "often claim that designation of 'modernist' for him" (102n9). She counters that Crowley actually "seemed to enjoy alienating figures in the modernist establishment like Yeats and Pound" (102n9) and echoes Lawrence Sutin's claims that Crowley was "a poetic traditionalist" who "would always express a visceral contempt" for modernism (qtd. in Clukey 102n9). Clukey goes further still in pointing out, much like Morrisson has admitted, that Crowley's "literary writings tend to be stylistically old fashioned" (103n9). To Clukey, "what experimentation does appear is often the result of slapdash composition—he wrote *Drug Fiend* in a month—rather than craft or aesthetic concerns" (103n9). I think it best to leave Crowley as the paradox that he is—a serpent of the threshold, both in and out of modernism, neither fully a part of it, nor fully apart from it. While it seems to be going too far to claim Crowley as a full-fledged modernist, it is all too understandable why past biographers and scholars would be tempted to do so. The goal of this chapter, however, is not to label Crowley and claim him for the New Modernist Studies, but to bring new connections between Crowley and the modernists to light, and to examine that uneasy relationship between Crowley, occultism, and modernism.

and Annie Besant.[88] Crowley was on friendly terms with the editor, Ralph Shirley, for many years, as evidenced by a card dated October 11, 1939, from Shirley to Crowley, sending his greetings and providing personal astrological advice to the magus for his birthday ("Card"). The long timeframe of these periodical contributions and archival materials reveal that Crowley was involved with *The Occult Review* for quite some time and was a subject of enduring fascination by its contributors.[89]

While Crowley's relationship with *The Occult Review* and its editor shows that Crowley was an active contributor to a properly occult periodical culture, Crowley was likewise involved in the modernist periodical culture. Those more unfamiliar with Crowley's work may be surprised to see that he published extensively in *The English Review*, founded by Ford Madox Ford. Crowley published dozens of poems in that journal, though many came long after Ford's departure in 1910. It was under the editorship of Austin Harrison that Crowley published the poem "Chants Before Battle" (August 1914), as well as the essays "The Great Drug Delusion" (June 1922) under the pseudonym "New York Specialist," and "The Jewish Problem Re-stated" (July 1922) as "Gentile." Harrison, for one, admired Crowley, calling him "the greatest metrical poet since Swinburne" (qtd. in Kaczynski 18).

Most relevant to my own network of adeptship, Crowley's works were quoted and reviewed in the hugely influential *New Age* magazine at its peak.[90] Crowley personally knew the founding

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[88] Crowley's poem "The Tent" was published in volume 11, March 1910; his relatively well-known essay, "The Soul of the Desert," appeared in volume 20, July 1914; and, his letter to the editor in volume 11, June 1910 is certain not to pass on an opportunity to undercut his former master from his Golden Dawn days, Macgregor Mathers, as one who is unable to grasp the true efficacy of ceremonial magic.

[89] The Theosophical Society in Australia provides an online Index to the Occult Review ("An Index"). In addition to Crowley's own contributions to the journal, other authors engaged with Crowley's writings. Crowley's book, *Konx Om Pax* was reviewed anonymously in vol. 8, July 1908, as was his poetry collection *Ambergris* reviewed by Percival Roberts in vol. 12, August 1910. There is an essay about Crowley's "Magick" by Paul Brunton in vol. 56, November 1932, and a tribute to the magus by Amphlett Micklewright in vol.72, April 1945.

[90] For example, "The Star in the West: A Critical Essay upon the Works of Aleister Crowley" by Capt. J. F. C. Fuller was reviewed anonymously (perhaps even by Orage) in volume 1, issue 8 (282); Later, Crowley's *Hail Mary* poems were negatively reviewed by Jack Collings Squire in volume 10, issue 8 (184). Squire describes *Hail Mary* as "dull," his description of Crowley's work makes clear that his aesthetic was too old-fashioned for *The New Age*: the book is "marked by that facility and freedom of diction and metrical fluency that are such striking features of the

editor-adepts A. R. Orage and Holbrook Jackson and maintained friendships with them that extend well past the scope of this project.[91] The correspondence between these men is preserved in the Yorke Collection, and they illustrate that Crowley's presence in *The New Age* was no mere flash in the pan, but an ongoing literary, political, and spiritual dialogue. Discovering this correspondence in the archive is the impetus for my selection of "The Dream Circean" as an example of Crowley's adept attitude in *The Equinox*—Crowley not only wrote a prose story that arguably fits in with a proto-modernist aesthetic, but he intended to publish it in one of the most famous of all modernist journals.

In a handwritten card dated June 15, 1908, Crowley invites Jackson for tea to discuss the potential publication of "The Dream Circean" in *The New Age*. In another undated letter written around this time, Crowley follows up to gloat to Jackson that his "Cancer" story will be published soon and warns him, "if it makes any sort of sensation—as is just possible—my prices would fly up like a sky-rocket. But not come down again." In his typical bombastic, yet business-savvy fashion, Crowley builds and leverages anticipation around his work to raise prices, much like how he released deluxe editions of *The Equinox* to explicitly market them as collectors' items. He continues: "In any case, I should ask more for the 'Dream Circean,' than for the Drug as its interest appeals to more people, and it is *a real story as well as a fable*" (emphasis mine). This turn of phrase illustrates the problem with separating esoteric 'fiction' from 'non-fiction': Crowley's occult reality does not differentiate between the subjective, lived reality of his dream and objective reality. Thus, whether it is 'true' or not, it is still capable of transmitting occult wisdom.

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author's profaner books. Some of them are rather like hymns; some are exquisite verses with a Yellow-Booky flavor…" (184).

[91] In spite of the fact that these men seemed to have been on friendly terms for decades, they did have a falling out—Jackson would later denounce Crowley for his financial delinquencies, describing him to Crowley's executor, Gerald Yorke, as "a common twister" in a handwritten letter dated November 23, 1938. The relationship between Crowley and Orage, however, appears to have remained friendly, with no indication of a falling out.

Unfortunately, we cannot see Jackson's replies to Crowley's pitches, but it seems that *The New Age* never did publish the "The Dream Circean," although it did publish "The Pentagram" in 1908 (vol. 2, no. 21) and "The Wonderful Teaching" in 1914 (vol. 15, no. 12). While it is uncertain as to *why* Orage and Jackson declined to publish Crowley's story in their magazine, the magus's threats to raise his prices could certainly have been a factor in their decision. Nonetheless, this setback did little to discourage Crowley; he published the story himself in the second issue of *Equinox* a year later under the pseudonym "Martial Nay."

If we choose to view Crowley's involvement in occult and literary periodicals as separate endeavors, we clearly see that he has one foot firmly in each world. However, this separation does a disservice to Crowley and diminishes his overall importance to his time. Crowley makes no such distinction between the personae of the magus and prophet versus those of the editor, poet, and political commentator. Crowley's philosophy as an editor-adept is borne out in a most fascinating manuscript, entitled "Plans for Making the *English Review* Profitable." In this ten-page document, drafted in 1922 and held by the Warburg Institute, Crowley offers some practical advice to Austin Harrison: "The Eminent Editor should get out of some habits which annoy people" (1); and "For one year to come, every number of the E. R. shall contain at least one article calculated to make talk in the U. S. A." (3). He also proposes some rather unconventional strategies. Always courting controversy, Crowley recommends that the Eminent Editor "Never publish a number without one or more definitely controversial articles. Make more enemies" (7). He further suggests that "a feature should be made of serious articles on 'occult' subjects, from Freemasonry to Spiritualism" (3), and he points to the success of spiritualist and occult magazines *Light* and *The Occult Review* when alleging that the *English Review* "underestimates the general interest" in this topic in the public sphere (4). Crowley's suggestion here is striking in that "occult subjects" are popular not only in the occult sphere, but also in the modernist literary sphere, as each previous chapter has shown.

Most striking about this document, however, is its hand-sketched diagram of an "editorial sanctum" much resembling sketches of proposed temples seen elsewhere in Crowley's archives. In comparing this "editorial sanctum" to the temple layout sketched in one of Crowley's notebooks from 1904-1907, it becomes quite clear that there is no divide between Crowley the Magus and Crowley the Editor, and this document, more than anything, provides the most brilliant example of the unification of the mystical and the artistic self.

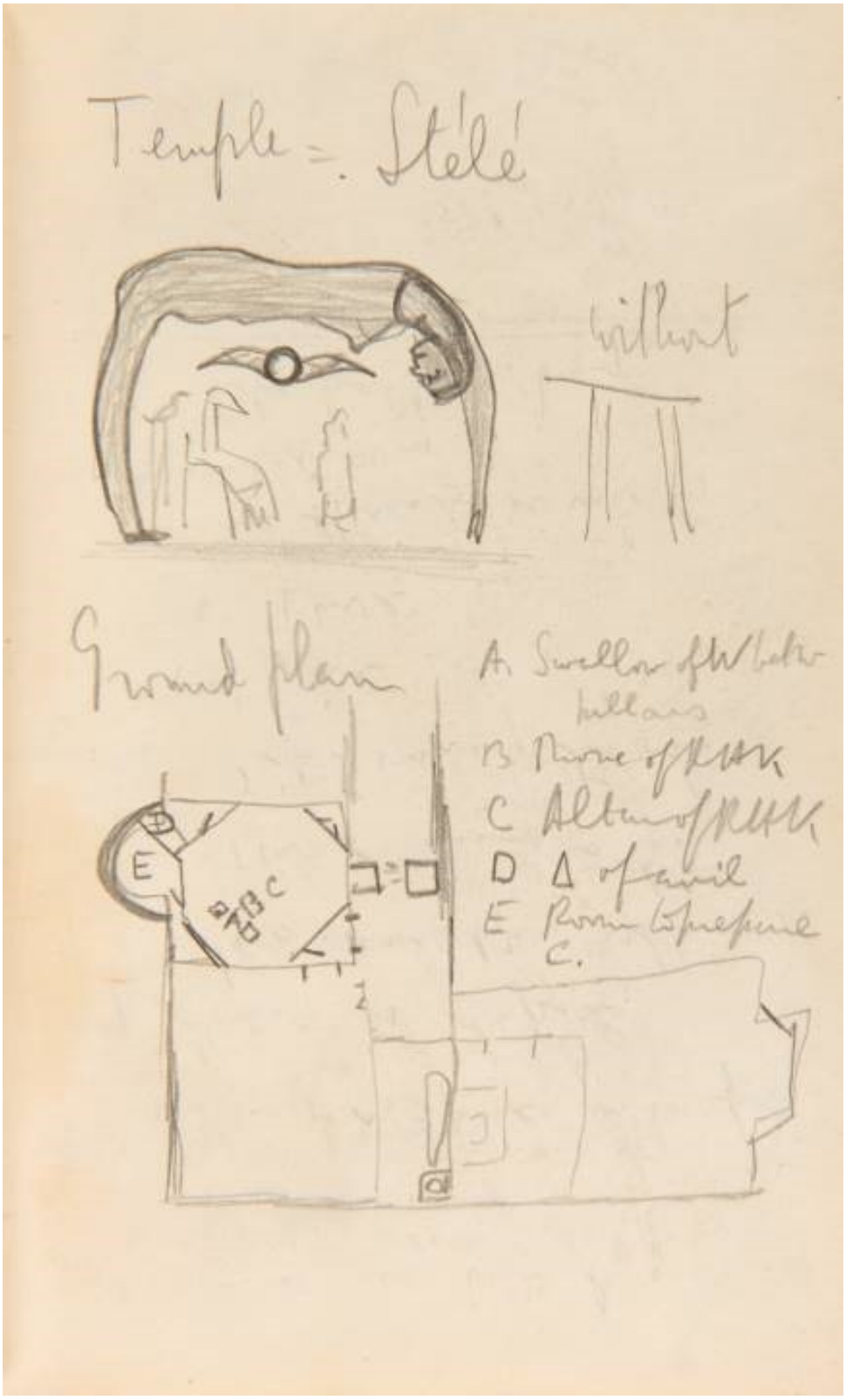

Fig. 9. Sketch of a Temple Stele by Aleister Crowley. Photo by the Warburg Institute.

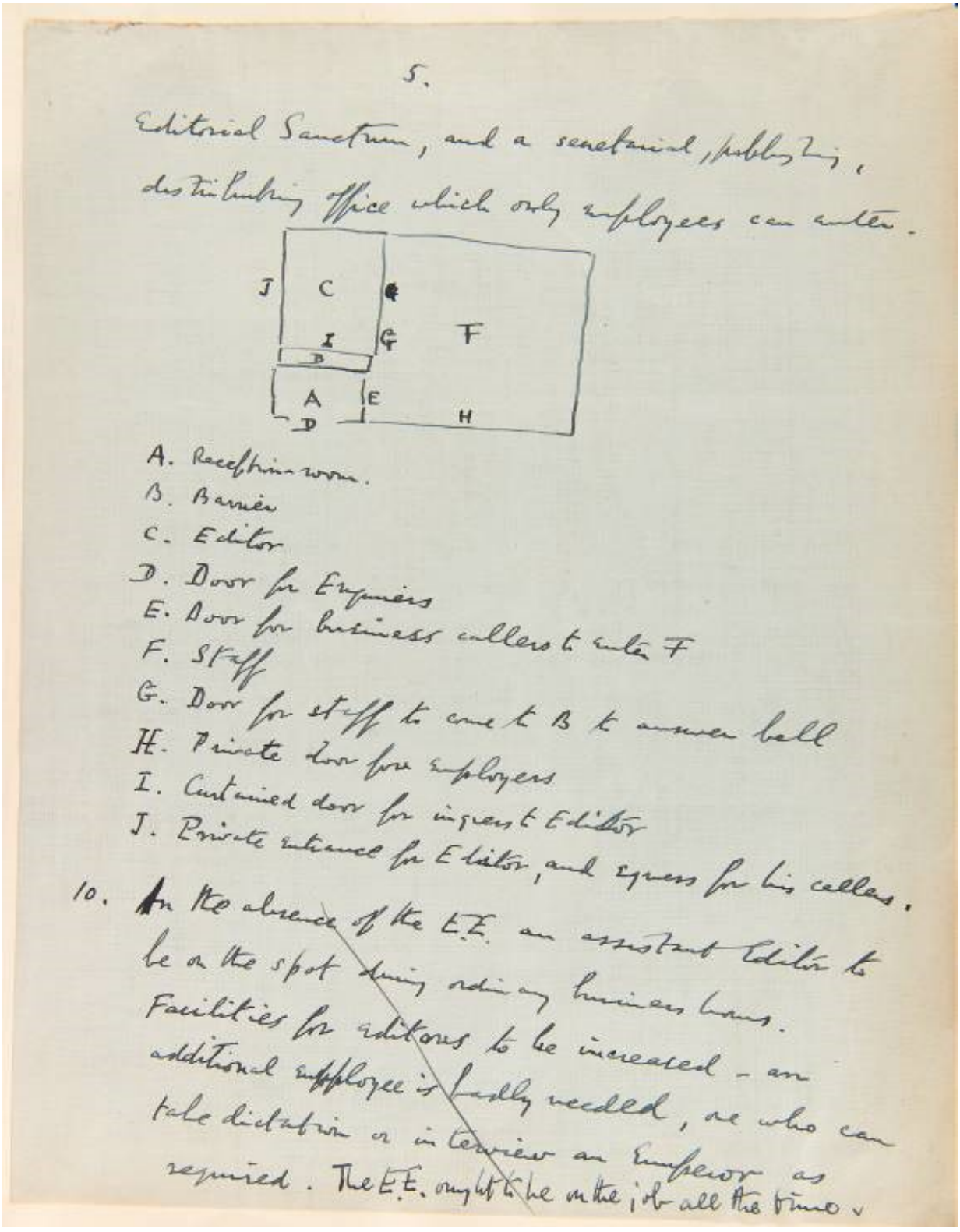

Fig. 10. Sketch of an "Editorial Sanctum" by Aleister Crowley. Photo by the Warburg Institute.

The first image consists of a floor plan for a temple (fig. 9). The legend is difficult to read, so I have done my best to accurately transcribe it here:

A) Swallow of W. betw[een] pillars

B) Throne of R. H. K. [Ra-Hoor-Khuit, an Egyptian deity]

C) Altar of R. H. K.

D) Δ of evil

E) Room to prepare C

In this diagram, the rest of the building is comparatively bare, while the temple sanctum is drawn and labelled in detail. This sanctum, presumably designed for Crowley's magical orders, is modeled on the Egyptian Stele of Revealing which was held at the Museum of Boulak when Crowley and his then-wife, Rose Edith Kelly (or "W."), happened upon it during their honeymoon in Egypt in 1904. Their 'discovery' of this central icon of Crowley's Thelemic system is outlined in "The Temple of Solomon the King" in *Equinox*, volume 1, issue 7, and is accompanied by a dazzling color photograph of the original stele. Crowley and Kelly took the item's catalogue number, which was 666, as an omen that wisdom would soon be theirs (Fuller 355-400). The deities depicted in the stele are the divine voices of Crowley's *Book of the Law:* the sensuous and expansive Goddess of the Night Sky, Nuit, forms the archway; the serpentine Hadit, complement and companion of Nuit, is the winged disc looming just below her; and the powerful and terrible god of war and vengeance, Ra-Hoor-Khuit ("R. H. K."), is seated on the throne (Fuller 368-370).

This image of the temple stele is reminiscent of Crowley's proposed floor plan for *The English Review*, despite the literary magazine's presumed non-spiritual aims (fig. 10). The legend reads as follows:

A) Reception room

B) Barrier

C) Editor

D) Door for Enquirers

E) Door for business callers to enter F

F) Staff

G) Door for staff to come to B to answer bell

H) Private door for employers

I) Curtained door for ingress to Editor

J) Private entrance for Editor, and egress for his callers

The proposed layout for the office space resembles a Golden Rectangle. The main waiting area "for Enquirers" is like a vortex—the point of highest energy within the Golden Rectangle, the space where the smaller rectangles within it divide into more and more smaller rectangles, infinitesimally. Specific areas of the office are accessible only to specific categories of persons, ranging from general callers (the 'uninitiated'), staff (the 'outer order'), to business callers and the almighty editor who can directly enter and exit the editor's office (the 'inner order'). The significance of the word "sanctum," denoting sacred space, in describing the editor's office is remarkable given that Crowley is dealing with a literary magazine and not an occult or religious organization; Crowley treats the station of editor in as high a regard as he does that of the master of the temple.

When reading *The Equinox*, then, we would do well to remember that this publication is as much a magical object as a literary object; therefore, it makes little sense to separate the mystic from the artist in Crowley, nor does it make sense to do this for any of the other adepts of modernism such as Yeats, Blavatsky, Collins, Farr, Orage, Shakespear, Underhill, Blackwood, Anderson, Heap, Marsden, H. D., Carter, or Compton-Rickett.

Crowley's Keys: The ABC of Occultism

What is it that seekers are initiated into when they take up *The Equinox*? Crowley suitably begins his print run with "An Account of A∴ A∴," or the secret history of Crowley's magical Order, the Argenteum Astrum (or Silver Star). Crowley presents this account as having been written by The Councillor Von Eckartshausen (1752-1803) nearly a century prior to the publication of this journal and the emergence of Crowley's order. Von Eckartshausen writes:

> The interior Order was formed immediately after the first perception of man's wider heritage had dawned upon the first of the adepts; it received from the Masters at first-hand the revelation of the means by which humanity could be raised to its rights and delivered from its misery. It received the primitive charge of all revelation and mystery; it received the key of true science, both divine and natural. (8)

This passage attempts to legitimate Crowley's claim to an ancient occult heritage through the testimony of a man who died a century prior. Morrisson notes, in agreement with scholars like Surette and Tryphonopoulos, Eliade, Bogdan, and Materer, that this is a "typical move for occultists," and adds that, while Crowley's scientific illuminism partakes of a wisdom born in antiquity, it nonetheless aspires to be "of great value to modern science…" ("Periodical" 18). This move, though made in the occult sphere, is much like that made by *The Egoist* in the modernist literary sphere; "Memoirs of a Charming Person" similarly situates itself within an ancient occult lineage to bolster the mystique of those who published it. For the modernists and Crowley alike, once these editor-adepts have positioned themselves as the most recent torchbearers of this venerable tradition, they seek to light the fires of a 'new' religion for modern times (whether purely aesthetic, or genuinely spiritual). Unlike the modernists, however, Crowley, has no fear of being implicated in occultism: not in the way in which Marsden and Weaver sought to distance themselves

from the "mystic mush" of Yeats ("Letter"); not in the way in which Anderson and Heap masked their occult investments with a playful, eclectic literary anarchism; not in the way in which Orage's occult style was eclipsed by that of Farr, thus preserving his reputation as a serious socialist and man of letters.

No, Crowley has no fear of such exposure. Instead, he seeks to reveal. An editorial, presumably written by Crowley and appearing on the first page of *The Equinox*, proclaims that "The time has come to speak plainly, and so far as may be in the language of the multitude" (1). Crowley desires to put the message out there for all, knowing full well that only the few, at first, will partake of it. Just because this message arrives "without miracle or mystery" (1), there is no guarantee that it will also arrive without effort on the part of the seeker. Crowley urges seekers not to "forget the spirit in the letter," just as Blavatsky and Collins do in *Lucifer*. The variation on the metaphor of "spoon-feeding" as invoked in *Lucifer* and repeated in *The Little Review*—even reaching back to Agrippa—comes to mind. These mysteries, now more physically accessible than ever before, are not necessarily any more intellectually accessible: they are still not meant for "ignorant vulgars." Crowley himself states, "Some of the contents of this REVIEW may be difficult or impossible to understand at first, but only in the sense that Homer is unintelligible to a person ignorant of Greek" (1). Crowley, taking up the mantle of the Master, refuses to tell us outright what we think we want to know. Instead, as the modernist occultists did obliquely in the forms of bookseller's inventories, advertisements, and book reviews in their little magazines, he does plainly. In "Liber Exercitiorum," he assigns a reading list which I have reproduced here in full:

> "The Yi *K*ing" [S. B. E. Series, Oxford University Press].
> "The Tao Teh *K*ing" [S. B. E. Series].
> "Tannhäuser" by A. Crowley.
> "The Upanishads."
> "The Bhagavad-Gita."
> "The Voice of the Silence."
> "Raja Yoga" by Swami Vivek|nanda.

"The Shiva Sanhita."
"The Aphorisms of Patanjali."
"The Sword of Song."
"The Book of the Dead."
"Rituel et Dogme de la Haute Magie."
"The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage."
"The Goetia."
"The Hathayoga Pradipika."
Erdmann's "History of Philosophy."
"The Spiritual Guide of Molinos."
"The Star in the West" (Captain Fuller).
"The Dhammapada" [S. B. E. Series, Oxford University Press].
"The Questions of King Milinda" [S. B. E. Series].
"777. vel Prolegomena, &c."
"Varieties of Religious Experience" (James).
"Kabbala Denudata."
"Konx Om Pax." (32-33)

There is no mistaking it—this is an esoteric journal first and foremost. While Crowley is happy to provide us with this set of 'keys,' he is happier still to let us fumble through every key on this rather large ring before we can open the temple door for ourselves. He leaves us with this disclaimer: "An intelligent person may gather more than a hint of [the nature of the Great Work] from the following books, which are to be taken as serious and learned contributions to the study of nature, though not necessarily to be implicitly relied upon" (32). If there is any doubt left that it is up to us to do the heavy-lifting for our own mystical trials, Crowley spells it out unequivocally at the end of the editorial: "Let him further remember that he must in no wise rely upon, or believe in, that master. He must rely entirely upon himself, and credit nothing whatever but that which lies within his own knowledge and experience" (34). With this declaration of his own 'taciturnity' as part of his performance of the adept attitude, Crowley simultaneously upholds the occult tradition of secrecy, and respects the mental independence of his readers.

Crowley's sage advice to aspiring adepts echoes Ezra Pound's advice to would-be litterateurs. Pound acknowledges in his tome of modernist initiation, *The ABC of Reading* (1934), that the "THE

READER'S AMBITION may be mediocre, and the ambitions of no two readers will be identical" (35). Like Crowley, Yeats, Orage, Blavatsky, and Collins, Pound maintains, "The teacher can only aim his instruction at those who most *want* to learn, but he can at any rate start them with an 'appetizer', he can at least hand them a printed list of the things to be learned in literature, or in a given section thereof" (35). What these parallels demonstrate, both to the occultist and the modernist, is the dualistic role of the reader-adept as both apprentice and solitary seeker. Even an autocratic Grand Master like Crowley (or Pound, for that matter) expects his apprentices to be more than passive followers if they are to be deemed worthy of respect. In a folder of Crowley's instructions on sex magick prepared for the O. T. O. (the Ordo Templi Orientis),[92] Crowley speaks of his "duty" to teach the Law of Thelema ("Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law"; "love is the law, love under will"), but in such a manner that teaches them "independence and freedom of thought and character, and to warn them that servility and cowardice are the most deadly diseases of the human soul" ("Liber CI, O. T. O." 13). Crowley also states in *Magick in Theory and Practice* that "The testing of the spirits is the most important branch of the whole tree of Magick. Without it, one is lost in the jungle of delusion. Every spirit, up to God himself, is ready to deceive you if possible, to make himself out more important than he is…" (147). Remembering that Crowley sees readers, publishers—everyone—as "spirits" acting in accordance to the writer's Will (141), it is the duty of every adept reader to be suspicious. Crowley is the God of *Equinox*. And he, too, must be tested in this most extreme form of discovery learning.

That said, it is not enough for Crowley to simply hand over a mere list. In *Archives and Networks of Modernism*, Michael O'Driscoll comments on what he calls the "encyclopedic" or

[92] The O. T. O is still an active organization. As per their website, "The O. T. O. is dedicated to securing the Liberty of the Individual, and his or her advancement in Light, Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, and Power. This is accomplished through Beauty, Courage, and Wit, on the Foundation of Universal Brotherhood. The O. T. O. is in sympathy with the traditional ideals of Freemasonry, and was the first of the Old Aeon orders to accept [Crowley's] *The Book of the Law*" ("About the O. T. O.").

"indexical textuality" of modernism (3)—a condition that Pound was well aware of. The vexed relationship between the modernist and the archive (as illustrated by Pound, or famously by T. S. Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual talent") can lead to an overwhelming preoccupation, an archive fever, the paralysis that leaves one unable to write, held prisoner by the ghastly weight of all that has already been written. O'Driscoll points to Flaubert and Joyce as those who have identified "a kind of inert encyclopedism" as the "sickness at the centre of modern consciousness," to which "Pound's critical and aesthetic program is designed to provide the cure" (15). Pound, ever suspicious of academics and institutions of knowledge, grapples with this problem in *ABC:*

> You have been promised a text-book, and I perhaps ramble on as if we had been taken outdoors to study botany from the trees instead of from engravings in classroom. That is partly the fault of people who complained that I gave them lists without saying why I had chosen such-and-such authors. YOU WILL NEVER KNOW either why I chose them, or why they were worth choosing, or why you approve or disapprove my choice, until you go to the TEXTS, the originals. (45)

In this passage, Pound struggles with his role as curator (or Master) and seeks an animating power for his dead catalogues (i.e. learning on a field trip, as opposed to a stale classroom lecture). It is up to the reader to animate the list for themselves. Crowley was cognizant of this same problem, and he turns to the initiatory quality of esoteric literature to obtain that animating power. As he writes in *Magick in Theory and Practice*, "all Art is Magick" (82). Thus, the poetry and short stories in *The Equinox* are not just window-dressing; they are part and parcel of the process of initiation.

Astral Visions: "The Temple of Solomon the King" and "The Dream Circean"

Having provided questing adepts with a course of reading, Crowley animates this "dead catalogue" with his esoteric literature, which includes a complementary theoretical map of the astral

plane through his dream diaries, and "The Dream Circean," a short story of a mystical quest blending dreams, hallucination, imagination, and real-world experience into a unified 'occult reality.' Crowley's blend of overt occult proselytization as well as his more subtle literary approach is as entertaining and seductive as it is enlightening. This accompanying material animates the reading list and subverts the "inert encyclopedism" of modernity and occultism. Seekers taking up *The Equinox* would recognize within the poems and stories therein the central themes, motifs, and tropes of initiation in this growing body of modernist writing that features "narratives of initiation into hermetic orders and representations of ritual magic workings" (Morrisson "Apocalypse" 102). Taking this concept a step further, I argue that esoteric literature not only offers a *narrative* of initiation, but is a *stage of initiation* in itself. Such works can serve as an index of further occult readings, as a practical demonstration of occult phenomena, and as a means of implicating readers in occult practice.[93] In reading, one imagines. In an occult reality, disciplined imagining is as good as doing—it is all experience.

In reading Crowley's chronicles of astral travel, fictional or otherwise, we are experiencing no less than a guided meditation, a glimpse of our own imaginative possibilities. Crowley, and many occultists like him, refuse to privilege one type of reality over another. The most common usages of the term "fiction," as per the *Oxford English Dictionary* consist of "arbitrary invention," opposed to "fact," sometimes in a manner of "feigning, counterfeiting" ("Fiction, n."). While there is certainly "invention" present in the process of writing esoteric literature, occult writers would balk at the charge that their insights are "arbitrary" or "opposed to fact" when they choose to convey these insights in an imaginative, animated (thus, lunar) form, rather than in a theoretical, scholarly (solar)

[93] Matte Robinson observes in *The Astral H. D.* that this great alchemical poet "did not focus on 'revealing' esoteric secrets to her reader; instead she used her work to draw readers in to the same search, to unite them with the eternal image or egregor, to implicate them in the *activity*" (Robinson 153, emphasis his). Crowley, in encouraging readers to keep a dream journal, in revealing his own dream visions, and leading a text-based guided meditation, similarly implicates his readers in occult practice.

form. When we examine the following 'fictional' texts in a larger web of texts (or, the "recombinant flux") within the *Equinox,* we see such literature as complementary to, or illustrative of, the more didactic teachings present in the journal. To Crowley, and occultists in general, meditations, dreams, and hallucinations were all equally 'real.'

This idea of an occult reality is explained in volume 1, issue 2 of *The Equinox* in the second installment of "The Temple of Solomon the King (Book II)," written by Captain J. F. C. Fuller. In this essay, Fuller explains that, to the adept, "a dream is of as real a nature as awakenment, but on a different plane in existence, the conditions of which can alone be judged and measured by experimental science" (296). Following on the heels of the first batch of published Golden Dawn rituals, this essay provides an account of a mystical vision quest undertaken by "Frater P." ("P" stands for Perdurabo—the Golden Dawn alias of Aleister Crowley) (295). Before the narrative commences, there is a disclaimer:

> But before entering upon these visions, it will be necessary to explain that by a vision we mean as definite a psychological state and as certain and actual a fact to the mental eye, as the view of a landscape is considered to be to the physical eye itself. And so when we have occasion to write "he saw an angel," it is to be taken that we mean by it as absolute a fact as if we had written "he saw a mountain," or "he saw a cow." It, however, is not to be accepted that by this we lay down that either angels or cows exist apart from ourselves, they may or they may not; but it is to be taken that angels, and mountains and cows are ideas of equal value in their own specific spheres: the astral and the material…." (295)

Much like in the "Dream Circean," we are exposed to an experience that is both (subjectively) fact and fiction, both imagined and experienced. It is more than just a "narrative of initiation." It is a vision quest that initiates, a guided meditation to take us, as readers, to these same places in our own imaginations.

These astral experiences, whether presented as memoir or fiction, exemplify Owen's observation that "Practical occultism… taught Adepts not only how to establish self-conscious control of 'the dream-world' but also how to travel in the astral body while in the sleep state" (165). To the occultist, "visionary and sleep states" are simply "alternative media in which to continue their occult activities" (165). While those lacking in magical will are helpless before the psychic onslaught of unconscious images during the sleep state, the adept takes control of the dream world. Florence Farr, a rival of Crowley's from their Golden Dawn days, similarly differentiates that helplessness in the sleep of the uninitiated from the "consciously guided dream" of the sages (qtd. in Owen 165). Fuller reproduces an entry from Crowley's magical journal to illustrate the "realities" of astral vision, allowing it to speak for itself as a template in conveying the revelatory possibilities for our own, personal astral journeys in lucid dreams, in meditations, and in hallucinations:

> On turning to the left I saw that near me was a rock door, and then for the first time I became aware that I was clothed in my robes of white. Passing through the door, I found myself on the face of a high cliff that sank away into the abysms of space below me; and my foot slipping on the slippery stone, I stumbled forward, and would of a certainty have been dashed into that endless gulf, had not the shepherd caught me and held me back…. Then wings were given me, and diving off from that great rocky cliff like a sea-bird, I winged my course through the still air and was filled with a great joy. (303)

An editorial comment explains that this fragment comes from but one of eighteen visions commenced and recorded by Crowley between November and December of 1898 (302). The unnamed editorial "we" also felt "obliged to re-write them completely, and elaborate them," for the original recordings by Frater P. were "all written in his private hieroglyphic cipher" (302). The experience presented to us is not quite 'fiction' like "The Dream Circean" as it would have been marketed to Jackson and readers of *New Age*—not in the sense that that Crowley presents his

knowledge through the eyes of a fictive narrator. Yet, like "The Dream Circean," this vision from "The Temple" performs a similar feat—that is, to push the boundaries of a reader's imagination, to take them on a mental (or astral) trip through the act, the ritual, of reading. Through reading, the reader *does*.

Morrisson also makes this connection between reading and doing. Citing E. J. Langrod Garstin's "The Value of Ritual," Morrisson reminds us that ritual is "a kind of vehicle for the obtaining and experiencing of knowledge, not simply a conscious passing on of information" ("Apocalypse" 108). Since the distinction between 'fact' and 'fiction' is largely meaningless as far as the occultist is concerned, the ritual of reading through the textual encounter of Crowley's astral experiences is, arguably, as much a (lunar) form of initiation and performance of occult knowledge as is reading a more formally recognizable (solar) ritual presented straight up.

Both texts show the generative power of occult practice, the ability to magically create something from nothing. In its most rudimentary form, the magical journal is what it is: a chronicle, a memoir, a very personal index of experience. Crowley's "scientific illuminism" sought a practical method to anchor occult experience in a more objective form, and keeping a dream journal is a valuable way of doing this. As Western esotericism scholar Egil Asprem notes, "the careful use of a magical record" is a tool "to stress the externalization of personal experience which makes inter-subjectivity possible" (151). When alchemically refined and aestheticized, such a journal, and the experiences they contain, can become objective means of conveying those occult truths. As Owen points out, Anna Kingsford, Theosophist and yet another of Crowley's enemies, held the same view that "her dreams sometimes supplied the framework for her published fictional stories" (180). This seems to reveal another distinct facet of modern occultism—that these dreams and meditations of revelation and experience can be aestheticized and then published for profit. Yet, even though a

general readership can appreciate aestheticized occult experiences, there are many layers of meaning that they will never fully comprehend.

* * *

"The Dream Circean" was published in *The Equinox* volume 1, number 2 in 1909 after Crowley's failed bid to have the story published in *The New Age*. Rather like how Morrisson admits that *Moonchild*, an arguably 'modernist' work, is generally not very radical in form ("Apocalypse" 102), the same could be said of this story—as could it be said of the other emerging modernist esoteric fiction of Mabel Collins or Mary Butts. Crowley's prose, like his poetry, may seem 'old hat' to those modernists that Crowley's biographer Tobias Churton calls the "self-conscious 'radicals' of the new generation" (qtd. in Clukey 103); yet, "The Dream Circean," a story Crowley claims was based on a dream he actually had, nonetheless possesses many features that would appeal to their modernist sensibilities, such as its adept attitude, its subtle lessons in symbolism, and its identification with a long line of esoteric wisdom reaching back to the ancient world. I would even dare to venture that Orage and Jackson erred in rejecting Crowley's story: though published five years before *The Egoist* was born, "The Dream Circean" would have sat comfortably next to "Memoirs of a Charming Person," that translated occult text that did all the same work that Crowley's story does. "Memoirs" was an important text that defined a readership and a literary movement. If "The Dream Circean" was published in a proper modernist venue such as *The New Age*, it could have likewise found a home among the esoteric and elitist adepts of modernism.

While the subject matter would certainly have appealed to the mystically inclined writers of the avant-garde, Crowley's account of a dream that he claims to have actually had is stylistically conventional; and yet, this style is consistent with Crowley's writings of his own 'real' occult

experiences, such as the astral travel excerpt from his dream diary. Owen points out that when Crowley wrote about his infamous trip to Algiers with Victor Neuberg to summon the demon Choronzon and ascend to the station of "Master of the Temple," he did so "in the direct language of realism. He… deals with the episode as a magical undertaking, and represents it as clear evidence that he has achieved enlightened consciousness" (211). So, although we ought not to expect a modernist *tour de force* of parataxis and fragmentation, we do see a decentering of the self, an intersubjectivity, an aristocratic, adept attitude, an indebtedness to the French symbolist poets and realist novelists, and a participation in a modern periodical culture.

"The Dream Circean" takes place in Paris in the late nineteenth century. A framing narrator, Roderic, meets a deranged old man who has become known as "le Revenant de la Rue des Quatre Vents" for his wraithlike wanderings up and down the same streets, looking for the lost woman of his dreams. When Le Revenant tells his story to Roderic, he takes over the narrative and the perspective shifts from the third to the first person. With this gesture, Crowley performs an occult "intersubjectivity" as he dissociates himself from his own dream vision and projects it onto a fictional character. Le Revenant's first-person narration paradoxically presents Crowley's lived experience as simultaneously intimate and distant.

Arriving at the substance of Crowley's dream, Le Revenant describes how he saves a beautiful young girl from the clutches of the "vilest harridan" and her depraved servant (Nay 116). He kills the woman and, after a lengthy duel with her servant, Jean, bests him in combat. Disgraced, Jean plunges into the River Seine and drowns. Weary from battle, Le Revenant realizes that he has wandered far from the house where he had saved his golden-haired virgin; he searches the Road of the Four Winds high and low, to no avail. This loss becomes an obsession, and Le Revenant wastes day after day wandering up and down this same road, desperate to find that house, and that woman,

again. The Parisians come to recognize him from his fruitless wanderings; they mock him and give him his new name.

Ten years later, in a chance encounter, Le Revenant meets a great magus who instantly diagnoses the wanderer's affliction, exclaiming, "Unhappy man! … thou art sacrificing thy life to a phantom" (126). Le Revenant begs to be trained in the secret sciences, to find his discipline and rid himself of his curse. The magus agrees, under three conditions: Le Revenant must pay a fee; he must also donate money to a mental hospital every Good Friday; and he must swear never again to set foot on the Road of the Four Winds. Le Revenant accepts the proposal and studies under the magus for many years before the master quits his mortal existence. Now alone, and confident that he is cured, Le Revenant walks to the Road of the Four Winds for what he thinks will be the last time, to "celebrate" the fact that he is now cured. As soon as he steps onto that road, however, the old monomania seizes him, and he resigns himself to his fate: he will forever walk that road, unsatisfied, until death claims him.

The most interesting aspect of this story, for the purposes of initiation, is the hallmark of esoteric literature that is the encounter with the Master—a feature we have seen in "Memoirs of a Charming Person" in *The Egoist* through Le Comte de Gabalis. Here, Le Revenant encounters a powerful magus in the streets of Paris who appears to be the historical magician Eliphas Lévi. Yet, when this character introduces himself, he gives his name as "Eliphaz Levi Zahed," though the uninitiated call him "the Abbé Constant," which is also the historical Lévi's given name—Alphonse Louis Constant. However, the character from the story declares himself not to be Lévi, "the great magician," but "the *enemy* of the great magician" (emphasis mine, 79). While the historical French magus's name is sometimes spelled the way that it appears in Crowley's story, it is widely spelled Eliphas with an "s" instead of a "z," and the "Zahed" is often dropped; Crowley himself spells this name as "Eliphas Lévi" in *Confessions*, and Fuller similarly uses the "s" when writing about the

historical Lévi in "The Temple of Solomon the King," which appears later in this same issue, although he does not use the *accent aigu* (é) (239). For the purposes of clarity, I will henceforth refer to the historical magus as Lévi and Crowley's dream magus as Zahed.

Is this a simple issue of typological variation for a non-English name, or could this discrepancy be significant? I lean towards the latter, especially in light of this dream-magus being "the enemy of the great magician," even though he behaves like the real-life Lévi would have behaved, acting in a similarly benevolent fashion as instructor to aspiring adepts. It is doubtful that there was another magus of Lévi's stature living in Paris at the same time as he lived, sharing nearly the same name; if this character *is* different than the historical Lévi, or is in fact his enemy, Le Revenant does not take notice of this and, if he does, he seems to forget this right away; he simply observes that "Eliphaz Levi was the most famous adept in Paris at the time" (Nay 79).

So, if the confusion around the identity of the magus in Le Revenant's (or Crowley's) dream is indeed deliberate, I offer two possible explanations. First, this could be Crowley's representation of a dream distortion, where people or symbols from one's waking life appear in their dreams in distorted form; this fantasy is based on Lévi, but is not actually him, but a dream distortion of Le Revenant's making. If Crowley himself encountered the magus originally in his 'real' dream that he claims to have actually had, he may similarly have done so in a distorted form. This explanation suits the theme of the story just fine—that dreams are distorted, and that false realities can ensnare the unwary. Second, and more intriguing is this: the unusual spelling of the character's name and his role as a negation of the actual Lévi could be a deliberate tactic meant to catch the attention of careful readers. As Jon Woodson explains, this strategy is a common device in esoteric literature; not only do 'real' occult masters appear in works of 'fiction' to bestow esoteric wisdom upon adept readers, but they often appear "in disguise," as could be the case here (*To Make a New Race* 3). Esoteric literature can contain deliberate 'mistakes' to get the attention of adept readers. Woodson calls this

the technique of "lawful inexactitude," where an "intentional mistake is an indication that it is an esoteric text" (6).[94] This technique was favoured by the Harlem Gurdjieffians who sought to preserve their esoteric knowledge through fiction. Crowley may be up to something similar here, and I interpret this "lawful inexactitude" as an invitation by Crowley to read the story symbolically, using the writings of Eliphas Lévi as a key.

Remembering that Crowley considered "The Dream Circean" to be "a real story as well as a fable," we can see some autobiographical elements. In *Confessions*, Crowley offers a short note on "The Dream Circean," telling us that he wrote it while he was "incurably sad about Rose" (572): that is, Rose Edith Kelly, his estranged wife who had slipped into alcoholism and dementia after the couple had lost their infant daughter during a "grueling" expedition through China two years prior (Owen 192). Le Revenant's tragic loss of his love could be read semi-autobiographically, with Crowley himself playing the role of this living ghost, lost in life, distracted from his purpose, having lost his will after having lost a child, and then a wife—both, perhaps, symbolized by the golden-haired maiden.

In addition to understanding this story as the tragic tale of a delusional man seeking a love he can never find, we can also read it as an allegory of a Practical Person and a subtle introduction to the philosophy of the historical Eliphas Lévi; needless to say, the appearance of Lévi in the story, and his divulging of occult wisdom, creates a web of intertextuality that not only situates Crowley and his story within the esoteric wisdom tradition, but also invites using Lévi's thought as an interpretive key. Reading "The Dream Circean" in this way provides the animating power to

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[94] In "Esoteric Prosody," Woodson explains how the Harlem Gurdjieffians or Oragean Modernists use this technique, citing the example of how poet Gwendolyn Bennet reveals an interest in her own occultism through her tribute to Alexandre Dumas. But we, as readers, do not know if she is writing for Alexandre Dumas, the father, or his illegitimate son, also named Alexandre Dumas. Woodson argues that Bennet *wants* the reader to think of Alexandre Dumas Senior and his associations with the occult, even while the actual grave described in the poem belongs to his son of the same name.

Crowley's "dead" reading list, especially when considering that *Transcendental Magic* appears on that same list.

There is support for this interpretation within the story; despite his voracious reading of "books, manuscripts, papyri," Le Revenant is unable to avail himself of their full wisdom: "all these were lifeless" like Crowley's list, or Pound's index (Nay 128). Frustrated, Le Revenant asks himself, "Should one say that the master withheld initiation, or that the pupil failed to obtain it?" (128). This is the same sort of question that questing adepts (or students in a discovery learning program) might themselves ask, and Crowley warns us against such failure in the previous issue of *The Equinox* as he assigns his reading list. Le Revenant is, like so many other Practical People, an inept reader. However, trapped within the story, Le Revenant cannot see a way out, and cannot recognize himself as a symbol. We adept readers, however, can perceive him as such.

One of the key lessons learned from the master in Crowley's story is that "all this veil of life is but a shadow of a vast reality beyond, perceptible only to those who have earned eyes to see withal" (129). This wisdom not only resonates with the gnostic conception of an illusory and corrupt material world (perhaps symbolized by the dream world of Paris and the perfect woman) concealing a more perfect spiritual world (our world, the 'real world'), but also the knowing that fiction can contain real wisdom—and here, Crowley imparts us with some of his wisdom, in the guise of an amusing and diverting tale of "a young man full of romantic ideas of honour and purity" (*Confessions* 573). Le Revenant becomes aware that he is trapped in a false reality (perhaps, even realizing, like the characters of Lawrence Durrell's *Monsieur*, that he is trapped in *this story*, in the thrall of a demiurgic author). So too are we adepts trapped in the illusion of this physical world (which itself veils a more perfect spiritual world—we too are trapped in a story of a different sort). This is one of the key ideas of Lévi's philosophy, which should come as no surprise given its roots in the hidden philosophy of the ancient world.

Three days before his death, Zahed makes another haunting declaration to the narrator: "The veil of the Temple is but a Spider's web!" (Nay 129).[95] This, to me, is the biggest insight of Crowley's story, as Zahed only has a few spoken lines, so this one certainly stands out. Not only does Zahed deliver unto Le Revenant, and to readers, the message that we are all lost in sleep and divorced from an ultimate reality, but there is the encouragement that wisdom is nearer to us than we might think. "The temple" is a symbol of wisdom and enlightenment, and only a spider's web stands between seeker and reward. A spider's web is insubstantial and can be easily brushed aside—by a true magus. But, if the seeker is no magus, and is but a mere fly, they would be caught in that web of delusion, trapped at the threshold of wisdom. So close, and yet so far. This metaphor of the web on the threshold of the temple thus refers not only to Le Revenant, trapped like a fly with desire for his dream Circean, or to the adept who could similarly fall prey to the delusions of the mystic's path; it could also refer to readers in a literary sense: think of poor Mr. Binns, who fell prey to Ezra Pound's trap in *The Egoist* when he saw literal demons in Shakespear's "charming and spritely" translation of Montfaucon.

Crowley's story itself could also be read as a spider's web that 'catches' readers, grabbing their attention, stimulating their imagination, and inviting the worthiest among them to continue reading *The Equinox* and the other works listed in Crowley's initiatory index. Fiction has the animating power to bring to life the doctrines presented earlier. Crowley hopes to lure in readers with his 'fiction,' thus trapping them like flies, that much nearer to the temple. This is especially true when considering the careless, general reader who reads the story only as a work of fiction, which

[95] The fictionalized Lévi's words seem also to have haunted me. The dying words of this dream magus lingered in my own subconscious mind and resurfaced at a point when I was struggling with how to proceed with this chapter. I awoke from an anxious sleep one morning after having dreamt that I, too, met Lévi and he said these same words to me. I knew then that this phrase had power, and indeed, it revealed to me the key to my close reading of "The Dream Circean," which is to read Lévi's *Transcendental Magic* and apply Lévi's interpretation of symbols in order to read Crowley's story esoterically. This experience also helped me apply Lévi's thinking to "Memoirs of a Charming Person" and truly realize its value as instruction in "symbolism in its profounder sense."

would have been more likely if this story had been published in *The New Age* for a broader readership, rather than to a dedicated occultist audience here in *The Equinox*. But, as we saw with *The Egoist*, those readers in *The New Age* who comprehend the deeper purpose of the story would have bragging rights in the reader response columns.

Another sense comes to mind when we think of webs: the story is part of a web of associations that invites adept readers to seek out more wisdom intertextually. Since Zahed (Lévi) is the most important character in "The Dream Circean," I turn to his great work as the 'key' to Crowley's esoteric cipher: *Rituel et Dogme de la Haute Magie*, or *Transcendental Magic*: *Its Doctrine and Ritual* as it is called in the English translation by Crowley's hated nemesis, A. E. Waite. Attentive readers would have noticed this book in Crowley's reading list, so it makes sense to pursue this reading to apply it to Crowley's interpretation of Zahed and his wisdom.

In "The Candidate," the first section of *Transcendental Magi* after the introduction, Lévi seeks to define his readership, to challenge them as initiates, for as we might expect, his book is not just a presentation of knowledge but also an act of initiation. He asks:

> But you, before all things, who are you, thus taking this work in your hands and proposing to read it? On the pediment of a temple consecrated by antiquity to the God of Light was an inscription of two words: "Know thyself." I impress the same counsel on every man when he seeks to approach science. Magic, which the men of old denominated the SANCTUM REGNUM, the Holy Kingdom, or Kingdom of God, REGNUM DEI, exists only for kings and for priests. Are you priests? Are you kings? (27)

So, in Lévi's own words, self-knowledge is actually "the veil" to the temple; without this knowledge, one cannot make any use of their teachings—they cannot enter the temple. Being "lost" in his monomania, trapped in delusion, Le Revenant has no self knowledge, only a helpless resignation to his fate: he has no *will*, which is the defining trait of the adept. In a lesson reminiscent of that

delivered by the Count in "Memoirs of a Charming Person," Lévi adamantly declares, "the man who is enslaved by his passions or worldly prejudices can be initiated in no wise; he must reform or he will never attain; meanwhile he cannot be an adept, for this word signifies a person who has achieved by will and by work" (31). Crowley himself, like Le Revenant, had temporarily lost his own will while he was "incurably sad" about the loss of his beloved. At that time, he would have been unable to make any spiritual progress—and neither would the obsessed Revenant.

And, just as Zahed in Crowley's story mentions a veil, so too does the real Lévi when he discusses the relationship between initiation, revelation, words, and being:

> Let us now enter on the series of initiations. I have said that revelation is the word. As a fact, the word, or speech, is the veil of being and the characteristic sign of life. Every form is the veil of a word, because the idea which is the mother of the word is the sole reason for the existence of forms. Every figure is a character, every character derives from and returns into a word. For this reason, the ancient sages, of whom Trismegistus is the organ, formulated their sole dogma in these terms: "That which is above is like unto that which is below, and that which is below is like unto that which is above." (Lévi 33)

This quotation relates to "The Dream Circean," a story that is the spider's web concealing the temple. The story itself is the veil, the web, the word that is the "veil of being" that concerns an occult reality, both in the story and in *our* lives. And if that which is above is like that which is below, the 'reality of the story' is 'below' ours, which is itself 'below' another greater reality, the ultimate spiritual reality.

Lévi also explains early in his book the significance of the Kabbalah and the Hebrew alphabet, and he provides a crash course in numerology and symbolism. One of these symbols is, of course, the cross. But the cross has an esoteric meaning, beyond the exoteric symbol of the Christian faith commemorating the death of Christ. As Thomas A. Williams elaborates in *Eliphas Lévi: Master*

of Occultism (1975), the cross, to Lévi and other cabalists, represents "the quaternary world of creation" (117). Seen in this way, "the elements… of the cross form a pair of Cartesian coordinates, the perfect image of the world of time and number from which the magus must win his freedom" (117). In Crowley's story, Le Revenant hopelessly wanders the Road of the Four Winds, which could also be interpreted as a cross. The image of the Road of the Four Winds conjures to mind the cross's esoteric meaning, the compass's cardinal directions; the "four winds" are the four elements. Recalling our lesson on occult symbolism from "Memoirs of a Charming Person," the magus's divine quest is to master these winds of earth, fire, air, and water—which themselves symbolically represent the world, desire, intellect, and emotion in Western magic. According to Lévi,

> The world is a field of battle, where liberty struggles with inertia by the opposition of active force. Physical laws are millstones; if you cannot be the miller you must be the grain. You are called to be king of air, water, earth and fire; but to reign over these four living creatures of symbolism, it is necessary to conquer and enchain them. (31)

Just like we might interpret the advice from the Count in "Memoirs" to seek sexual union with the elemental creatures (gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, and undines) as a metaphor for mastery in the world that these elementals represent, we might make a similar interpretation here.

In reading "The Dream Circean," esoterically and intertextually, via Eliphas Lévi, Crowley's work of 'fiction' becomes a vehicle for delivering 'real' occult knowledge. It is a lesson in symbolism and a cautionary tale to the occult dabbler. Le Revenant, distracted by worldly aims and fumbling through initiation, does not stand still and resolute at the cross's center: he stumbles along each direction, blowing about the four winds like detritus in the Parisian streets. While Crowley himself may have become distracted from spiritual pursuits when submerged in the grief of his own losses, his plight, and that of Le Revenant, is an allegory for all who lose their way on the mystic's path. This warning to the ignorant and the vulgar, which Crowley explicitly gives in the first issue of

Equinox, is itself a performative gesture that has been made by all the great magi throughout history and replicated, in some way or another, by modernist writers in the network of adeptship. In the pages of Crowley's journal, there are secrets: the many can read them, but only the few will understand. This esotericism and exclusivity, whether literary or spiritual, appealed to modernist and occultist alike.

Conclusion: The Astral Double of Modernism

As I have shown in this chapter, Aleister Crowley was an important figure who was inextricable from esoteric spheres, both occult *and* modernist. Although Crowley would object to being *called* a 'modernist' and likened to his hated enemy, Yeats, he was actively involved in modernist periodical culture through his contributions to *The New Age* and *The English Review*, and through the reviews of his works in those same magazines. Further, his occult story, "The Dream Circean" shows all the hallmarks of the esoteric literature that made such a splash in *The Egoist* in the form of "Memoirs of a Charming Person." Moreover, this same aesthetic can also be found in the Theosophical publications such as *Lucifer*, which is the subject of the next chapter—Mabel Collins, Blavatsky's co-editor had written several novels in this style, and excerpts appear in her magazine as well. This aesthetic, along with the established esoteric or alchemical method of reading and writing forms a direct continuity from *Lucifer* in the 1880s, through to the transitional Edwardian-Modernist *New Age*, and on to *The Equinox*, and then to *The Little Review* and *The Egoist*, two distinctly modernist periodicals.

In which other modernist magazines can we find a similar esoteric perspective and aesthetic? Conversely, in which other occult periodicals can we find robust connections to modernist figures, aesthetics, or politics? Even the most 'pure' occult journals like *The Equinox* or *Lucifer* broke new ground in terms of distinctly modern, arguably modernist, literary techniques that

make them ripe for deeper study by other scholars of modernism in the future. While I have examined "The Dream Circean" in this chapter, there are likely many other stories and poems published in *The Equinox* and other occult periodicals that similarly manifest the complex entanglement of modernism and occultism.

As for Aleister Crowley himself: though I stop short at calling him a 'modernist,' I cannot help but get the sense that he is the Ezra Pound of the occult sphere. His presence looms large, his writings are prolific, and his brazen, willful attitude (so arrogantly self-certain in his brilliance), puts the magus in a similar position as the modernist troubadour—almost to the point of overdetermining the study of occult periodicals as Pound did for so long in the study of modernist periodicals. But, the point of this chapter was not to fan the flames of Crowley's mythos in the magical world (even as I respect it or do justice to it) or to induct Crowley into the secret society of modernism; it was to show that Crowley and his *Equinox* can be of as much interest to scholars of modernism as they can be to scholars of Western esotericism, and that the stylistic similarities between "The Dream Circean" and "Memoirs of a Charming Person" pointedly illustrate the uncomfortable relationship between modernism and the occult in the early twentieth century.

Remember that Dora Marsden feared a sort of contaminating effect of the occult; she was concerned that she, and other contributors to the *Egoist*, could be seen as "too ridiculous" for their association with it ("Letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver"). Yet, these egoists were heavily invested in the occult: they still read its texts, adopted its attitudes, appropriated its symbols, and harnessed its mystique, despite their ambivalence toward occultism as a spiritual practice. Perhaps *The Equinox* holds up a mirror to *The Egoist*: an editor-adept steeped in the occult tried his hand at writing for an audience that was likely aware of the rise of modernism. And, while Crowley wrote in modernism and interacted with its most recognizable figures, he still felt as ambivalent about modernism as those literary modernists did about practical occultism.

When closely reading Crowley's esoteric literature, we notice that Crowley makes all the same moves as do his modernist counterparts writing literary journals, only more overtly so. He does not sneak in an occult course of reading as the editors of *The Little Review* or *The Egoist* coyly do in paratexts, scattered over many issues; rather, he gives it to us straight and animates it with an amusing piece of 'fiction' centering on not only an accessible tale of a deluded lover but also on the teachings of the great magus, Eliphas Lévi, and the lineage of ancient philosophers within which Lévi also situates himself. Like Blavatsky and Collins in *Lucifer*, Crowley tells us up front that these readings will be difficult—not for "ignorant vulgars," to again echo Agrippa's warning as given in the opening epigraph of this dissertation. The modernists use these same techniques, despite the problem of belief—they still play the same game. While *The Equinox* uses its literary flair to empower its occultism, the modernists used the mystique of the occult to fuel their literary esotericism.

There are certainly many, many more occult periodicals to be studied—but Crowley's gravity was simply too heavy for me to ignore in this preliminary foray. This chapter on the *Equinox* is one of very few direct and substantial takes on this publication within the field of the New Modernist Studies, and it still barely scratches the surface of the implications this periodical has for esotericism, be it modernist or occult. More attention can still be given to the other writers who contributed to the journal or to the editors of more obscure, yet equally interesting, occult periodicals. Simply put, the dark-robed magus is a black hole—once my study was pulled close enough to his center of gravity, there was no escaping it. The only way out is through! Perhaps, though, other scholars will choose to spiral around other aspects of this publication, or tesseract right past it in pursuit of other vortices.

Thanks to Morrisson's pioneering foray into the periodical culture of the occult revival, *The Equinox* is now on the radars of some modernist scholars as the vehicle for the publication of the Golden Dawn rituals. Hopefully, this chapter has shown that there is much more material within

Crowley's periodical that merits scholarly attention. Even if the literary offerings of *The Equinox* are not as stylistically radical as the canonical texts of modernism, Crowley's periodical is still cut from the same socio-political cloth and implicated in the same networks of publication as were the modernist magazines. As more and more scholars come to accept the entanglement of occultism and literary modernism, the periodical cultures of the twentieth century will become increasingly important sites for the examination of those entanglements. Just as *The Little Review* or *The Egoist* or *The New Age* engage with occult thinkers and mimic their strategies of initiation and exclusion, so too do occult periodicals, such as *The Equinox*, look to an emerging style of literature that satiates the modernist appetite for exclusivity. Esoteric literature animates the doctrines presented within the pages of occult periodicals and expands their influence to a more literary audience already predisposed to secrecy and elitism. If we accept the mantra of the New Modernist Studies that "modernism began in the magazines," we might also accept that modern occultism was right there all along, like a shadowy double in the astral plane, lurking between the lines of those very same pages.

Chapter 5

"Bring[ing] Light to the Hidden Things of Darkness": The Occulted Proto-Modernism of *Lucifer*, 1887-1891

NIX NIHIL
"Helena Petrovna Blavatsky,
Matriarch of Theosophy,
Arbiter of the Occult,
Priestess of Isis,
Messenger of the Mahatmas!
Hear me here and now;
guide me through
your labyrinthine letters!"

BLAVATSKY
"In our voices united,
we speak the power you seek and find—
pause and reflect!
The messages will come, yes.
Take heed and consider the messenger."

Lucifer is not only a serious transmitter of occult wisdom, but it is also a bold literary magazine in its own right—or it at least had the potential to be in its early days. Debuting in 1887, and co-edited by the co-founder of the Theosophical Society, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and Victorian novelist Mabel Collins, *Lucifer* is an eclectic mix of clever editorializing, philosophical musing, and literature of all genres. Blavatsky and Collins revel in their literary flair, and this magazine breaks the ground that will later serve as the foundation for the avant-garde literary magazines of modernism. Although *Lucifer* itself is generally not considered to be a 'modernist little magazine,' it shares many aesthetic and political features—and some contributing authors[96]—with

[96] Indeed, when I first glanced through the Index to *Lucifer*, I was rather surprised at how few recognizable (early) modernist names were to be found: Æ or George Russell, the Irish occultist, contributed a few articles in volume 3; Algernon Blackwood of the Golden Dawn and writer of esoteric literature such as *The Centaur* (1911) contributed a few short articles on occultism from a writer's perspective; and William Butler Yeats, the Archmage himself,

the avant-garde literary journals that would appear prior to the Great War, such as *The Little Review, The New Age*, and *The Egoist*, and it adopts many of the same techniques of occult rhetoric and form as does Crowley's *Equinox*.

This chapter shows how the occult aesthetics and initiatory practices on display in the first volume of *Lucifer* anticipate the periodical culture of the modernist writers since Blavatsky and Collins also cultivate an adept readership through the interdependency of occult philosophy and esoteric literature; the calculated shock value of the name *Lucifer* served to galvanize a spiritual counter-public, and the esoteric literature within this occult journal provides an animating force complementary to the more formally presented intellectual and philosophical doctrines printed elsewhere in the journal.[97] Foremost among these is Collins's esoteric novella, "The Blossom and the Fruit: The True Story of a Magician," which was serialized in the first twelve issues of *Lucifer*, spanning the years 1887-1888. This novella resembles literature that would later appear in the other periodicals considered in previous chapters, such as "The Dream Circean" in Crowley's *Equinox*, or "Memoirs of a Charming Person" in *The Egoist*.

Lucifer represents the reinvigoration of Theosophy in England after it suffered a crushing setback in India following the devastating Hodgson Report issued by the Society for Psychical

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contributed just one article, "Irish Fairies, Ghosts, Witches, etc." (volume 3, pp. 399-404), which is essentially a section from *Celtic Twilight*. However, Yeats also published in *The Theosophist* and *The Irish Theosophist*, so he was involved in other Theosophical journals besides *Lucifer*. While I was initially discouraged that I did not find more early modernist names in the *Lucifer* network to solidify its connection to modernism, I really came to appreciate just how important Collins's presence was in terms of breaking up the drier material of *Lucifer* with her entertaining and illuminating novella. Blavatsky and Collins hold their own as progressive writers, and their editorship left its mark on the next generation of modernists, even though *Lucifer* is missing some of those elder voices that I was expecting to hear more from.

[97] In the final stages of editing this dissertation, I noticed that Christine Ferguson had published a new article that also argued for *Lucifer* as occult initiation. See "The Luciferian Public Sphere: Theosophy and Editorial Seekership in the 1880s" (2020) for her excellent take on this Theosophical magazine and the problems inherent in marketing an esoteric society to an exoteric, mainstream reading public. My study differs in that it assumes a modernist perspective rather than a Victorian one, and it gives more consideration to the esoteric fiction that animates the doctrines presented in this important journal. Together, our different approaches illustrate *Lucifer*'s liminality that blurs the boundaries of Victorian and modernist studies. In both fields, Theosophy is given due consideration as a spiritual and cultural force.

Research in 1885. In that report, SPR investigator Richard Hodgson challenged the existence of Blavatsky's spiritual masters, determined that their letters were forged by Blavatsky and her associates, and questioned the credibility and integrity of Blavatsky and the Society at large (Dixon 26).[98] In short, this report largely destroyed the reputation of the Theosophical Society among the 'respectable' and 'scientific' intelligentsia in Europe.

In their efforts to manage this setback, the Theosophists in Adyar, India prohibited Blavatsky from suing the Coulombs, the disgruntled groundskeepers who allegedly worked to sabotage the shrine room in the Society's headquarters in an effort to influence Hodgson into finding that Blavatsky, and the Society, were frauds. Dismayed by this lack of support, Blavatsky left Adyar, disappointed and ill, and would never again return to India (Godwin 25). The following two years were a whirlwind of activity culminating in the establishment of the Blavatsky Lodge in London in 1887, the publication of a masterpiece in *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888, and the establishment of the Esoteric Section of the Society, in which devoted disciples would receive Blavatsky's personal instruction, also in 1888.

Mabel Collins was one of the initial signatories calling for the establishment of both the Blavatsky Lodge and the Esoteric Section. Clearly, Collins was an important early Theosophist, though she seems to have been largely forgotten in histories of the Society. During this time, Collins and Blavatsky became intimate, if uneasy, acquaintances. In *Mystical Vampire*, Collins's biographer, Kim Farnell, details how Blavatsky was living in Ostend, Belgium, writing *The Secret Doctrine*, but was persuaded to return to London by Arch and Bert Keightley and other concerned Theosophists who believed that Theosophy was languishing in England (65). On May 1, 1887, the Keightleys boarded a steamer bound for England, apparently physically carrying Blavatsky, now sick with bronchitis and a

[98] Hodgson's conclusions remain controversial. Jocelyn Godwin, a scholar of Western esotericism, notes that a study in 1986 by Vernon Harrison, himself a member of the Society for Psychical Research, declared this position "untenable" (Godwin 23). But in 1885, the damage had already been done.

kidney infection, aboard the ship (66). The destination was Maycot, Collins's cottage in Norwood that she took up after the failure of her marriage to the minor author Robert Keningale Cook, who died in 1886 (34). Collins was honored to host Blavatsky (64), yet this arrangement would prove "difficult": Farnell bluntly notes that "Blavatsky hated Maycot, and didn't trust Mabel" (69). In a letter to William Q. Judge, head of the Society in America, Blavatsky calls Maycot "Very, very seedy and weak," yet still "rather better" than death by bronchitis, which she managed to avoid while recovering there (qtd. in Farnell 67). These cramped living arrangements were less than ideal, and Blavatsky moved out in September later that year. With the assistance of the Keightleys, Blavatsky took up residence at 17 Lansdowne Road. The house would become "the new centre of theosophy" (Farnell 77). Despite the difficult living situation at Maycot, Collins and Blavatsky would join forces to co-edit a new journal commemorating this outburst of Theosophical activity in London in the late 1880s. That journal is *Lucifer*, the first issue of which appeared in London on September 15, 1887.

Initiation

I again find myself in the Radcliffe Camera Library. This time, I behold *Lucifer*. Like the journal's namesake, it is as gorgeous as it is intelligent.

> Edited by H. P. Blavatsky and Mabel Collins. 19 cm by 25.5 cm. Price: One shilling. "Lucifer [:] A Theosophical Monthly designed *to bring light 'to the hidden things of darkness*."'

This is a quality publication. The cover is printed on pale blue card, and silver highlights illuminate a descending child bearing the morning star, tearing through the midnight-blue darkness. The pages are of quality stock. They are frayed around the edges, presumably from being cut by hand. The smell is subtly sweet—not as musty as that of the other journals. When I take up this volume, I feel Madame Blavatsky's pale eyes beaming into me; a circle of robed figures attends in silence, interrupted by the shrill bark of a pup. Mabel Collins coddles the animal and gives me a final smirk, before all these figures fade into mist…

> The Light-bearer is the Morning Star or Lucifer; and 'Lucifer is no profane or Satanic title. It is the Latin *Luciferus*, the Light-bringer, the Morning Star, equivalent to the Greek φωσφόρος… the name of the pure, pale herald of daylight.' –Yonge.
>
> London: George Redway, 15 York Street, Covent Garden.

* * *

Fig. 11. The resplendent cover of *Lucifer*, volume 1, number 1. My photograph does not adequately capture the brilliance of the midnight blue ink and the silver highlights.

Lucifer: A Fall from Grace, or a Call for Critique?

The title of this Theosophical journal is bound to turn some heads today, and it must have been downright shocking in 1887. Naturally, observers may question the prudence of choosing such a loaded word. The editors, knowing full well that they were playing with fire, so to speak, set the tone for their endeavor with an article entitled "What's in a Name?: Why the Magazine is Called 'Lucifer.'" The article is not signed, but it reads like Blavatsky; she is indeed credited with writing it in Ted Davy's *Cumulative Index to* Lucifer *volumes I-XX,* published by the Edmonton Theosophical Society. In an amusing understatement, Blavatsky acknowledges that the title of the magazine is "rather equivocal to orthodox Christian ears" (1). She grants that "piously inclined readers may argue that 'Lucifer' is accepted by all the churches as one of the many names of the Devil…. Lucifer is *Satan*, the 'rebellious' angel, the enemy of God and man..." (2). Yet, Blavatsky argues that "This epithet of 'rebellious' is a theological calumny… one that makes of deity an 'Almighty' fiend worse than the 'rebellious' Spirit himself" (2). As if this inflammatory statement is not itself equivocal enough, Blavatsky further asserts that the pettiness of this God who punishes free will with eternal torment is a "human invention" responsible for "the most morally repulsive and horrible theological dogmas that the nightmares of light-hating monks have ever evolved out of their unclean fancies" (2).

With a flash of fire and brimstone, Blavatsky offers a corrective to the errors of the Church even as she tries to find common ground with Christian readers in other articles; there were Theosophists of all religious stripes in the Society, and Blavatsky did not want to prevent all Christians from becoming Theosophists, so long as they are willing to admit the abuses of power and the corruption of doctrine by the Church. In her series on Esoteric Christianity commencing in issue number three (see "The Esoteric Character of the Gospels [I and II]"), her thesis hinges on the

premise that "Christ—the true esoteric SAVIOUR—*is no man*, but the DIVINE PRINCIPLE in every human being" ("[I]" 173). Despite these editorial efforts, it is difficult to imagine Christian readers, or the general public, not getting upset by this aggressive attack on their Church, especially in light of Blavatsky's arrogant open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury in the fourth issue, wherein she relentlessly criticizes the Archbishop for losing touch with the esoteric character of 'his' own gospel, thereby misleading the public.

In this letter, "'Lucifer' to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Greeting!", Blavatsky acknowledges that Theosophists have been regarded as "enemies of Christ" from the Christian perspective (16), and briefly clarifies that the purpose of the Society is to "revive in each religion its own animating spirit," to recover "spirituality in religion" and to cultivate "the sentiment of BROTHERHOOD among men" (16). This perspective is entirely fitting for an editor of a magazine called *Lucifer*, and this position aligns Theosophists with the tragic 'villain' of the Bible—a passionate, intelligent, and inquisitive character punished and demonized for exercising free will and daring to defy dogma in the pursuit of truth. Blavatsky has no compunction about directly accusing the Church leaders of misunderstanding or suppressing the truth in their holy texts. Blavatsky observes, "in almost every point the doctrines of the churches and the practices of Christians are *in direct opposition to the teachings of Jesus*" (242). Because the Church had lost touch with the "esoteric foundation" (243) of its origins, she accuses the Archbishop of knowing "absolutely no more of those 'mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven' which Jesus taught his disciples, than does the humblest and most illiterate member of your church" (243).[99]

[99] As shocking as Blavatsky's tirade against the Archbishop may have been, perhaps the real shock is that he may have listened to her exhortations. As the *Boston Globe* would report eight years later in 1896, the Archbishop's wife, Mary Benson, served as a delegate to the Theosophical Conclave in Boston, and their sons organized a Theosophical society in London ("Ordered by an Unknown [Adept]" (2). While the Archbishop himself may not have become a Theosophist—he held his post as Archbishop until his death—he at least tolerated his immediate family's involvement with the Society.

As we can see in Blavatsky's provocative editorial gestures, *Lucifer* is indeed an excellent name for a modern journal whose mission is to challenge Christian supremacy and established patriarchal norms in general; it also fits in with the distinct mode of esoteric pedagogy (and the dry sense of humour) of Theosophy's illustrious Matriarch. In a somewhat hostile 2012 article, bluntly called "Blavatsky the Satanist," Per Faxneld observes, "Blavatsky was often perceived as a quite vulgar and coarse person. She swore profusely, dressed garishly, and had a strong sense of irreverent humor…. It is not hard to imagine that such a lady would derive considerable pleasure from upsetting Christians with a pinch of esoteric Satanism" (206). Johanna Petsche similarly notices that Blavatsky "loved to shock and astound" (101), though she more generously recalls that "People had been mesmerized by her mystique, her colourful life and unique solutions to contemporary predicaments" (108). However, Blavatsky's choice for *Lucifer* and her attacks on the Church in her early articles are more than just some personal sadism at work.

These so-called "Satanic shock tactics" (Faxneld 203)[100] take the adept attitude to the n^{th} degree, and anticipate the combative, aggressive style of the modernist avant-garde journals, which themselves feature a network of contributors familiar with Theosophy and Blavatsky, even if they may not have read *Lucifer* in particular. Such writers include Yeats, Anderson and Heap, Orage, Farr, Shakespear, Compton-Rickett, Carter, Blackwood, Pound, Marsden, Lewis, among others. Modernist scholars will recall the infamous advertisement for *Blast* magazine appearing in the April 1914 issue of *The Egoist* proclaiming, in all capital letters, the "END OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA"

[100] About halfway through his article, Faxneld confesses that his title, "Blavatsky the Satanist" may have been a bit disingenuous, before winking at the proverbial camera and assuring readers that he did it on purpose to exploit the same shock as Blavatsky did for *Lucifer*, even though he knows that Luciferianism and Satanism are different concepts. His note reads in full: "The somewhat drastic and provocative title of the present article was conceived with Blavatsky's attention-grabbing tactic in mind (since you are reading this, it apparently worked as planned), reflecting and demonstrating her approach. As will be seen in the conclusion, I do not believe the label 'Satanist,' in a strict sense, is appropriate to apply to Blavatsky, even though she did employ a 'Satanist' discourse in limited contexts" (Faxneld 217n9). While I must admit I was a tad annoyed by this gesture, I cannot help but admire it for its own dramatic performance of its argument.

(Fig. 12). One might also remember from that sensational periodical's debut that Lewis blasted the Bishop of London, "The Curate of 'Eltham,'" the Reverend Pennyfeather, and the Reverend Meyer (Lewis 11; 21). By 1914, of course, it was a modernist commonplace to "blast" the Church, but the bold Blavatsky had already done it with much more brutal aplomb over two decades earlier.[101] *Lucifer*, then, like *The Little Review* that emerged contemporaneously with *Blast*, "makes no compromise with the public taste"—especially when it comes to blasting Christianity.

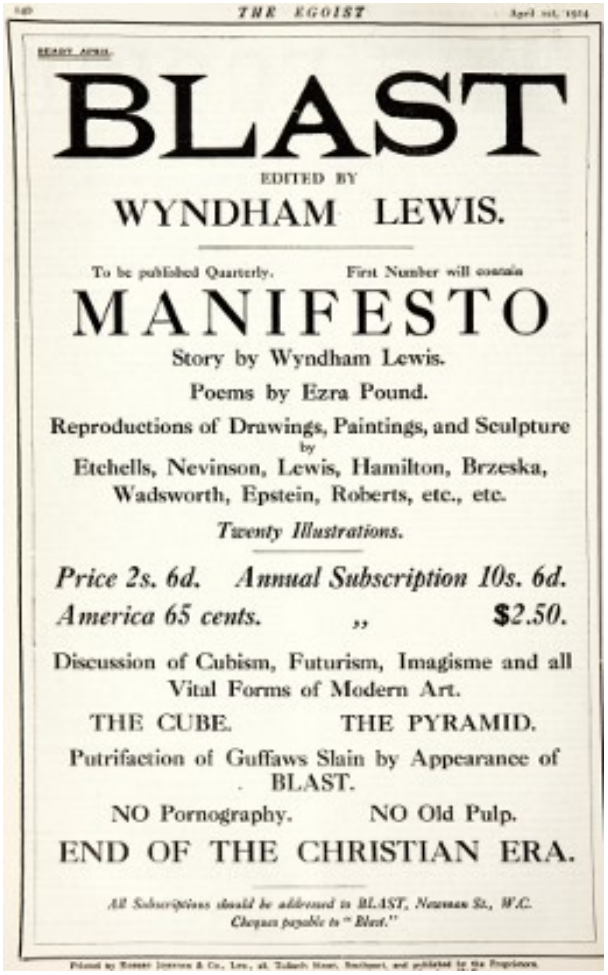

Fig. 12. Advertisement for *Blast* magazine, published in *The Egoist*, volume 1, number 7, p. 140. Like Blavatsky and Collins, the modernists also enjoyed some "Satanic shock tactics."

[101] Interestingly enough, Lewis and company also blast Annie Besant (21), who would succeed Blavatsky as editor of *Lucifer* after her death in 1891. Perhaps this is because Besant represents the 'hot and wet' (and feminine) Romantics (due to her emotional/mystical practice and her esoteric Christian-flavored style of neo-Theosophy) in opposition to the 'cold and dry' (masculine) style of the *Blast* modernists. Or, perhaps, Theosophy had simply lost some of its cultural momentum.

Further, *Lucifer* anticipates the same tensions facing the modernist little magazines in terms of who their audience was and how wide that audience should be.[102] Such an aggressive title helps set this Theosophical community apart, but would that prove detrimental to the magazine's success? Blavatsky did not seem to think so. As she suggests in *Lucifer*'s debut editorial, "What's in a Name? Why the Magazine is Called 'Lucifer,'" this strategic title plays with an esoteric reading of Christianity's villain and plainly puts the journal in a position to attract a counter-public of adept readers; such readers understand, or are at least open to learning how to understand, the esoteric nature of occult philosophy. Blavatsky engages in some esoteric storytelling through the technique of prosopopoeia, where she recreates conversations on the name *Lucifer* with fictionalized versions of people she may have spoken to when contemplating the launch of the new magazine. She tells "a well-known novelist" that the "class" to which the magazine is designed to appeal is "the public" (3). However, this novelist retorts, "For once I shall be one of the public, for I don't understand your subject in the least, and I want to. But you must remember that if your public is to understand you, it must necessarily be a very small one. People talk about occultism nowadays as they talk about many other things, without the least idea of what it means. We are so ignorant and—so prejudiced" (3).

Though Blavatsky intends to appeal to "the public" and seeks to "educate" them (3), she has no qualms about frightening off those committed to misunderstanding the journal title. Indeed, the wisdom here is best served to the wise, and the editors explicitly disavow the masses in the early

[102] As many previous scholars of Western esotericism have shown, Theosophy as an *occult* society had always struggled with this 'elect versus mass' conundrum, especially as it worked to differentiate itself from popular spiritualism. Faxneld refers to Stephen Prothero's argument that Theosophy "began as an attempt by members of an elite to reform 'vulgar' Spiritualism, considered by many scholars a populist movement, by uplifting its adherents from their ghost seeking into the lofty realms of 'ethically exemplary theorists of the astral planes'" (206). In fact, the first meeting of the newly-christened Theosophical Society took place on October 16, 1875, in the drawing rooms of Emma Hardinge Britten, a spiritualist and editor of *Two Worlds*, a spiritualist journal (Farnell 51). Despite this early connection to spiritualism, however, both Blavatsky and Collins would come to view spiritualism as irresponsible, even dangerous.

issues of *Lucifer* just like Agrippa, Lévi, Crowley, and the other occult masters do in the introductions to their great works. Blavatsky declares, "We are sworn enemies to popular prejudices," in response to criticism that the name *Lucifer* will "mark [the] magazine with the wrong colour at starting" (4). The provocative title is a filter that sifts out those Practical People prone to reading esoteric texts too literally, thus appealing to an audience of initiates, or aspiring initiates—in a word, only a true *theosophist* would understand what "Lucifer" can mean at first glance. Such a reader may not even join the Society as a member, but a 'small T' theosophist would still have much to gain from the musings and debates within this official journal of the Theosophical Society in London.

This tension between an elect versus a mass readership similarly afflicts the modernist little magazines to come, as they too strove for 'chic' and appealed to a 'hip' literary audience while paradoxically aiming to reach a sufficiently broad readership so as to sustain their literary endeavors. Again, "What's in a Name?" illustrates this tension well. A so-called "Man of the World" offers the editors a word of caution: "It's quite evident, when one stays an instant to think of its derivation and meaning, that Lucifer is an excellent word. But the public don't stay to think of its derivation and meanings; and the first impression is the most important. Nobody will buy the magazine if you call it Lucifer" (4). To some extent, this "Man of the World" was right; in an 1889 interview with Blavatsky in the *New York Times*, William Quan Judge, Head of the Theosophical Society in America, noted, "The magazine, *Lucifer*, I do not think is paying expenses yet. It is a very costly thing to get up, and its circulation has necessarily slow growth" (10). That same year, Blavatsky herself bemoaned the magazine's meagre sales, though she, in her typical fashion, took a twisted pride in the fact that *Lucifer* was "being boycotted by the pious booksellers and railways stalls" (*The Key* 287). What *Lucifer* lost in sales, it made up for in notoriety and bringing a greater awareness to Theosophy in general. It seems clear enough that these shock tactics were not just employed to offend for their own sake—it is the same fashioning of something 'new' by way of blasting the 'old,' like the

modernists were wont to do—here, with spirituality more so than art. While other editor-adepts such as Anderson and Heap wanted to cultivate a religious reverence for art, they too gleefully reveled in drawing the ire of conservative readers through their promotion of occultism and anarchism in their editorials, articles, poetry, and advertisements. There is a seductive appeal in the dangerous strategy of attacking the Church, and that same appeal was noticed and exploited by the vanguard of modernism and Theosophy alike.

Following Blavatsky, Collins makes a similar move in limiting her public in "Comments on 'Light on the Path'" when she writes, "All the rules contained in 'Light on the Path,' are written for all disciples, *but only for disciples*—those who 'take knowledge.' To none else but the student in this school are its laws of any use or interest" (10, emphasis mine). In other words, the teachings of Theosophy are being made public for the good of all, but not just anyone would have the inclination, patience, and foundation of esoteric learning to properly mobilize what they read in *Lucifer*. As in most other esoteric traditions, the aspiring adept must *work* for their enlightenment. Yet, solar wisdom is not attained by intellect alone—lunar intuition is also a prerequisite, and it can be developed like any other skill. Collins's *Light on the Path*, for example, is intended to be "deciphered by one who reads astrally" (9), one who reads the words on the page, but at the same time, spiritually assimilates knowledge on a higher level, beyond the reach of the intellect. One remains open to the Truth as it fills them. Collins cautions that, until this step is taken and one learns how to "read astrally," "the swift knowledge, which is called intuition with certainty, is impossible to man. And this positive and certain intuition is the only form of knowledge which enables a man to work rapidly or reach his true and high estate, within the limit of his conscious effort" (10).[103] This is what Collins means by "tak[ing] knowledge"—it is the cultivation of the inner

[103] Another Theosophist expands on this idea, and references Collins's thinking, in an 1893 issue of *Lucifer*. John M. Pryse likewise distinguishes the conventional intellectual from the committed disciple: "the one who has only a cold intellectual interest will only gain a superficial understanding of [Theosophy]; the one who is fervent in the Cause

eye to see true wisdom beyond the words on the page. Naturally, the great masses of people in the world have not yet reached this state, but a Theosophist might be ready to try.

It should come as no surprise that Blavatsky and Collins would take this discerning approach to doling out their wisdom, even as they print it for "the public" in a magazine; Blavatsky had been warned years earlier by her Mahatmas that there is a grave danger in revealing too many secrets too quickly. In the Mahatma Letters, held by the British Library, Mahatma Koot Hoomi Lal Singh warns Theosophist Alfred Percy Sinnett in a letter dated October 15, 1880, that "they [the ignorant masses] would kill you before you could make the round of Hyde Park; if it were not believed true—the least that could happen would be the loss of your reputation and your good name—for propagating such ideas" (f.4v). Hoomi goes on to remind Sinnett of previous great thinkers who spoke out with new truths and were crushed, like Galileo, Agrippa, and even spiritualist mediums (f.7v); the Mahatma maintains that, to prevent the same happening to them, Theosophists "must understand why to the uninitiated our acts must seem often unwise, if not actually foolish" (f.8). Part of this strategy necessarily involves maintaining an air of secrecy, doling out knowledge selectively and incrementally, and testing aspiring adepts even as the hidden wisdom expands to reach a wider audience. The title of the journal performs this role admirably.

It is not only the "Satanic shock" of the title that would meet the approval of modernists like Orage, Farr, Anderson, Pound, or Lewis; the alternative view of history would also appeal to them. This is most evident in the life, works, and politics of H. D., an important contributor to *The Egoist* and one of the best-known occult poets of modernism after Yeats. In his 2016 book, *The Astral H.D.*, Matte Robinson traces H. D.'s esoteric learnings, giving considerable attention to the "Luciferian Doctrine." According to Robinson, "Luciferianism, as distinct from Rosicrucianism,

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will understand more—just that side of Theosophy toward which he assumes the right attitude; while no one will possess a proper appreciation of Occultism who has not mentally vowed to take up its practical study as soon as opportunity grants" (214).

Martinism, or the Christian Kabbalah, is not presented as an institutionalized tradition at all: rather, the term as [French occultist Robert] Ambelain uses it tends to designate an attitude or position taken toward the spiritual history of humanity" (112).

Although we are departing from proper Theosophy here, the affinity between Theosophy and Luciferianism should be apparent—both propose a spiritual quest free of blind belief in dogmas, both see the Christian Church as having lost its way, and both embrace or appropriate science, rather than decrying it as a threat.[104] Moreover, the adept attitude (knowing how to read texts *and* history) also unites these esoteric traditions with the esotericism of modernism.[105] Robinson acknowledges the allure of the occult as a marker of cultural capital in the sense that the possession of esoteric wisdom "might confer some privilege, give one a sense of being part of an elite group" (169), and this can be as true for Theosophy, The Golden Dawn, Thelema, or any other esoteric order, as it can be for modernism itself.

While the title of the magazine functions as a barrier to initiation against those prejudiced masses who are unable to identify with the esoteric reading of Lucifer as an icon of free will, inquisitiveness, and ingenuity, the literature within *Lucifer* fulfills a complementary role: it makes more intelligible to aspiring adepts the doctrines presented elsewhere in the journal, or in the Theosophical canon in general. Farnell notes that Collins's breakout spiritual treatise, *Light on the Path* was one of the first Theosophical texts to present Theosophical ideas in a straightforward, easy-

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[104] Robinson notes, "While members of some religions feel pressure to deny scientific data and theories because of perceived threats to the narratives held sacred by their faith, the Luciferians embrace scientific enquiry because they believe that its results are the best evidence for their point of view" (106-107). The occultist's embrace of science is born out in the pages of both occult periodicals in this study. An epigraph in *Lucifer* states, "Occultism is the science of life, the art of living" ("What's in a Name?" 7). Similarly, the masthead of Crowley's *Equinox* reads, "The Method of Science, the Aim of Religion."

[105] Robinson reminds us that, to Longenbach, it is "not so much the subject matter as the attitude of occult literature that was most important for the modernist literature of Yeats and Pound. Both poets cultivated a poetry of cabalistic obscurity and wrote their own keys to elucidation" (qtd. in 171). Further, this "cabalistic obscurity" is "used to divide audiences into the 'initiated' and the 'uninitiated'… and is never merely esoteric, but always tied as well to 'political values'" (171). To Robinson, Longenbach's so-called "secret society of modernism" aims to "recover or rediscover these ancient values, establishing itself as an 'aristocracy,' a term which Longenbach intends to have political as well as spiritual connotations" (171).

to-follow style that could make sense to readers short on esoteric knowledge; this is in stark contrast to Blavatsky's key texts *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, both of which are intellectually-demanding, multivolume works of many hundreds of pages. Collins's "The Blossom and the Fruit" therefore fulfills a similar demand for simplicity and comprehensibility as does *Light on the Path* from those new to the pursuit of the Great Work. Again, this tactic should be familiar by now, as the editors for *The Egoist* and *The Equinox* also take full advantage of it—that is, teaching real occult principles through 'fiction.'

While both *Light on the Path* and "The Blossom and the Fruit" are relatively accessible, they are not necessarily *obvious*. Robinson's observations on H. D.'s praxis as an esoteric initiator and guide are equally applicable to Collins's technique. He notes, "H. D. did not focus on 'revealing' esoteric secrets to her reader; instead she used her work to draw readers in to the same search, to unite them with the eternal image or egregor, to implicate them in the *activity*" (Robinson 153). This method, which both H. D. and Collins harness, is as much a part of Luciferianism as it is of Theosophy in the context of *Lucifer* magazine. An anonymous contributor to *Lucifer* knows this truth as well, as they write in "Thoughts on Theosophy" that "nothing *dogmatic* can be truly *theosophical*" (134). As esoteric literature, "Blossom" casts light on the path of the adept in a manner that is suggestive, rather than argumentative. Thus, it provides intuitive, discovery-based, lunar guidance, rather than didactic, solar instruction.

As for the Luciferian side, H. D. would come to believe that "the true identity of Lucifer is not the same as the one promulgated in popular, exoteric tradition; rather, he is a 'god of hope,' linked far more closely with Jesus (via his affinity with the brilliant star of the morning) and Venus (via his name as well as his planetary attributes)" (Robinson 112). Robinson adds the goddess to the equation, observing that the planet Venus is "associated simultaneously with the goddess of love and Lucifer, the lightbringer" (104). Significantly, Luciferianism's fixation on Lucifer as a sort of spiritual

underdog "culminat[es] in a theory that would be close to H. D.'s heart: that much of what popular literature and belief has demonized and lumped in with Satan is actually a positive force, divine yet separate from Yahweh, and *feminine*" (113).

The editorials in *Lucifer* show that this same idea of Lucifer as a positive, revolutionary, and androgynous figure is also close to the hearts of both Blavatsky and Collins, just like it was for H. D. Similarly, the editors were aware of the associations between Lucifer, Jesus, Venus (both planet and goddess), and hope. In addition to "What's in a Name?", Blavatsky explores and expands on Lucifer in "The History of a Planet," also in the very first issue. In this article, Blavatsky situates the planet Venus within mythology and further explores Lucifer's name and philosophy. Blavatsky rebukes the devil, but asserts, "The Church believes in the devil, of course, and could not afford to lose him," as she again differentiates the exoteric Satan from the esoteric Lucifer (18). In her typical bombastic fashion, she asserts, "one can hardly refrain from wondering that *educated* people should be still ignorant enough at the close of our century to associate a radiant planet—or anything else in nature for the matter of that—with the DEVIL!" (22).

Before moving on to the important role that Collins's "Blossom" played in Theosophical initiations in *Lucifer*, it is worth briefly noting that meditations on Lucifer also come in poetic form in the magazine's early issues. First is the "The Lady of Light," by Gerald Massey in issue two (81), and then comes "To the Morning Star" by Helen Fagg in issue five (339). Both poems are typical quasi-Romantic poems written in a regular meter—not particularly innovative stylistically. But, in terms of their content—praising Lucifer—they are daring indeed and complement the spirit of the journal as a whole by animating the history and philosophy of Lucifer as given by Blavatsky and others in more didactic form. Fagg's poem simply continues to recuperate Lucifer as a being of light and knowledge, but Massey's poem goes further. The very title "The Lady of Light" reinforces the

connection of a divine femininity latent in this androgynous angel, and calls for a feminist vision of the future:

> With the flame of thy radiance smite
> The clouds that are veiling the vision
> Of Woman's millennial mission,
> Lucifer, Lady of Light! (82)

Indeed, the androgynous nature of Lucifer is so important to Blavatsky and Collins that one or both of these editors provide a footnote at the end of this poem explaining it:

> The reader well versed in symbology and theogony is, of course, aware that every god and goddess of the ancient pantheons is androgynous in his or her genealogy. Thus our Lucifer, the 'Morning Star,' being identical with Venus, is therefore the same as the Chaldean Istar, or the Jewish Astoreth, to whom the Hebrews offered cakes and buns, addressing her as the Lady of Light and the Queen of Heaven. (82n1)

The editors' commentary here further connects the planet Venus as representative of not only that goddess, but also as an equivalent symbol to other Goddesses "Istar" and "Astoreth" (their spellings). In *The New Age*, Florence Farr's mystical-feminist *tour-de-force*, "The Rites of Astaroth" similarly rehabilitates these slandered goddesses (and the slandering of femininity), as does H. D. in her "Tribute to the Angels" when she attempts to recuperate Venus (and, by implication, Lucifer):

> for suddenly we saw your name
> desecrated; knaves and fools
>
> have done you impious wrong,
> Venus, for venery stands for impurity
>
> and Venus as desire
> is venereous, lascivious […]
>
> return, O holiest one,
> Venus whose name is kin

to venerate,
venerator. (*Trilogy* 12)

Hence, we see in the figure of Lucifer, as interpreted by Theosophists and Luciferians alike, a spark of femininity, a rising force to counter the Patriarchy of the exoteric church. So, this repositioning of Lucifer as tragic hero rather than a villain, and as an androgynous, even feminine, symbol of spiritual revolution, rather than humanity's Great Enemy, further positions *Lucifer* as the harbinger of a massive shift in consciousness during the *Fin de Siècle* and sets the stage for the recuperation of the dignity of women that was taken by the Church and its early fathers.

The Blossom and the Fruit: An Allegory of Initiation

In the dissertation Introduction, and in the previous chapter, I drew attention to Mark Morrisson's term "esoteric fiction," which describes "narratives of initiation into hermetic orders and representations of magical workings" (102). While Morrisson uses this term to describe a proto-modernism in the writings of Aleister Crowley during the Great War, he notes that this genre "had come into its own in the late nineteenth century" and he cites "The Blossom and the Fruit" by Collins as an example, though he does not analyze the text itself. Although I prefer the term "esoteric literature," which makes no claim to an empirical 'reality,' I accordingly respond to this learned Adept of Modernist Studies by providing some more detail about how "Blossom" can be situated within an emerging proto-modernist corpus.[106]

Collins's romantic novella serves as not only an entertaining page-turner; it is also a fictionalized dramatization of adeptship. It is the tale of the advanced disciple—or the *chela*, in

[106] Theosophists in 1887 would similarly be suspicious of the term "esoteric fiction," as one anonymous contributor comments on the rise of esoteric literature in the mainstream media. In "The Signs of Our Times," the writer remarks, "'Works of fiction,' the various novels and romances are called. 'Fiction' in the arrangement of their characters and the adventures of their heroes and heroines—admitted. Not so, as to the facts presented. There are no fictions, but true presentiments of what lies in the bosom of the future, and much of which is already born—nay corroborated by scientific experiments" (88).

Theosophical terms—questing for knowledge and struggling toward enlightenment. Considering the multifaceted esoteric wisdom presented in the recombinant flux of *Lucifer*, key plot points in the novella echo certain precepts given elsewhere in the magazine. For example, the first installment of "Blossom" entreats the reader to "accept (while reading this story) the theory of the reincarnation of souls as a living fact," given that the story explores a love triangle that has been playing out over dozens of incarnations (23). No sooner does this first installment of "Blossom" end before the doctrine of reincarnation is explicated in an article by Archibald Keightley called "A Law of Life: Karma," which immediately follows (39).

As another case in point, the revelation in the story of the existence of the White Brotherhood, a mysterious body of adepts guiding the course of human history, is strategically complemented by "The Seclusion of the Adept," where Collins explains that living adepts on Earth are so hard to find because they are in hiding, doing their spiritual duty, unmolested by the ignorant and dangerous general public. Here, she explicitly refers to the "Great Brotherhood, which was once the secret splendour of Egypt" (380), thus connecting her semi-fictional White Brotherhood with occult history. This same editorial practice can be seen in the modernist periodical *The Egoist* in particular, with its serialized occult novella, "Memoirs of a Charming Person," appearing next to other vaguely occult and theosophical musings about the nature of art and the life of the artist; and of course, the occult journal *Equinox* likewise surrounds its esoteric literature with more formal articles that allow for the unlocking of deeper, esoteric meanings in the literature. Occult writers have long known that fiction animates doctrines, and that these doctrines can, in turn, illuminate fiction.

Although the story appears to perform certain principles and attitudes of adeptship, some of the more literal-minded readers of *Lucifer* seem not to have gotten it. In issue four, Collins takes valuable space to address the negative feedback she received from her readers:

> Some of the readers of LUCIFER have taken great exception to the love passages between Fleta and Hilary, saying that they are not up to the standard of Theosophic thought, and are out of place in the magazine. The author can only beg that time may be given for the story to develope [sic]. None of us that is born dies without experiencing human passion; it is the base on which an edifice must rise at last, after many incarnations have purified it; "it is the blossom which has in it the fruit." (258)

That Collins would have to apologize to certain readers who do not seem to get the story comes as something of a surprise, especially given her explicit warning in the very first issue of *Lucifer*, only three issues earlier, instructing readers not to be too literal in their reading of whatever texts they may encounter in the magazine:

> It is reading, not between the lines but within the words. In fact, it is deciphering a profound cipher. All alchemical works are written in the cipher of which I speak; it has been used by the great philosophers and poets of all time…. ("Comments" 8)

Even though this magazine is written by and for Theosophists, there were apparently still some overly Practical Theosophists among its readership. It appears that, in focusing too much on their disdain for the "love passages," such readers underestimated how valuable such a story could be in terms of introducing new readers to the ethics of adeptship and showing how a fictional disciple, living in a Romantic world, models the challenging, and often lonely, journey toward enlightenment.

Moreover, the story's early focus on "passion," a universal emotion, could serve as a bridge to new occultists who had not yet committed to the years of study that Theosophy, on its intellectual face, demands. "Blossom" helps these readers imagine what life as an occultist can be like. It shows them how to walk the path—and sometimes, how *not* to walk the path—in an intuitive, affective way that is quite different from the logical, intellectually rigorous way of learning about Theosophy from its canonical philosophical treatises, like *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* (these weighty and

difficult tomes, too, must also be read astrally). As is the case with *Light on the Path*, the reader must again "take knowledge." Moreover, the occultist's journey must start *somewhere*, and a love story is a familiar place to start, both in terms of the human experience and in terms of literary genres. The readers who complained about the love story did not yet know that the love plot is abandoned over the course of the novella, as the protagonist similarly abandons her earthly passions.[107]

While similar misunderstandings happen in the letters section of modernist journals, Collins's response stands in sharp contrast to the more modernist, or perhaps male, strategy of *ridiculing* readers who 'don't get it.' A similar scenario plays out in *The Egoist* when one of its readers objected to "Memoirs of a Charming Person." To recap, this letter by Henry Bryan Binns, published in the tenth issue and entitled "The Dangers of Occultism" opens, "I hope I am not taking too seriously the Cabalistic extravaganza now appearing in your pages if I refer to the ugliness of the matter suggested" (200). Binns fears that reading about, or writing about, "demons" or the elemental spirits "push[es] the door open for the admission of very undesirable visitors" (200). Ezra Pound, as we remember, pompously declared in the Correspondence section in the following issue that if Mr. Binns objects to "Memoirs of a Charming Person," then Pound, and the editors, in return "object to Mr. Binns" (220). While Binns was unable to see how the occult story revealed a modernist attitude and a system of correspondences, some of the more literal-minded readers of *Lucifer* were unable to see how this proto-modernist story, with its romantic trappings, reveals an occult attitude toward the pitfalls of sensation.

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[107] Thus, "The Blossom and the Fruit" contains a critical occult truth that anticipates both "Memoirs of a Charming Person" and "The Dream Circean." That is, that earthly passion, and especially the pursuit of sexual gratification while there is still work to be done, is one of the traps in which the aspiring adept can fall. Here, though, it is a female adept overcoming her sexual distractions (first, with Hilary, then with Ivan), rather than the Count (or some other male Master) crudely whispering to his apprentice, "carnal intercourse with women" is "one thing incompatible with wisdom" ("M. de V.-M." 153). Here, Collins passes on this age-old wisdom of keeping one's mind on the divine prize, while purging the misogynistic view that women are the source of impurity, thus presenting it in a 'new' way, through a New Woman heroine eschewing male distraction. This is the sort of feminist intervention that the adepts of modernism such as Shakespear, Farr, and H. D. employ to distill the pure occult truths from the patriarchal doctrine in which they are contained.

Indeed, the love story does serve an educational purpose in outlining Theosophical principles. In the novella's introduction, a prehistoric "savage" girl (23) has killed her lover after he, "exulting in his greater strength, tried to snatch her love before it was ripe" (24). In a later life, the essence of this same girl is reincarnated as a princess named Blossom, and she runs away from her kingdom with a young man to escape her father (27). Though happy on the outside, she questions her reality. Not yet realizing it, she yearns for divine love—erotic love, and this material world, are illusions (28). Years pass; she ages and dies. The deceased princess sleeps in a pleasant dream garden, but this is still an illusion in death concealing from her the true spiritual source.[108] Striving for *real* fulfillment, the discarnate princess wills her own reincarnation and prepares to be born again to learn in this new life the lessons she had failed to learn in her previous lives. She takes the hand of a companion soul to climb "the same steep ladder of life" to true enlightenment, to divine love (29).

Once the proper story begins, "The Blossom and the Fruit" centers around two star-crossed lovers and their complicated relationship: Hilary Estanol is a young man born into a family of minor nobility; he has been beguiled by the beauty and wisdom of Princess Fleta—the titular "magician," the same Princess Blossom and prehistoric girl from the introduction. Early in the story, Fleta flaunts her skill in glamors and illusions, divination, and prophecy. Hilary is paradoxically attracted to this magical princess, but he is also repulsed by her occult knowledge and intimidated by her powerful will. Hilary pursues Fleta as a lover, though she knows she cannot truly fulfill him, as she is striving toward a higher spiritual purpose. She also happens to be betrothed to the Crown Prince. The story follows the struggles of both Hilary and Fleta to overcome their earthly passions and to

[108] In the *Theosophical Glossary*, Blavatsky describes this state as Devachan, "in which the Higher Ego will remain until the hour for a new reincarnation arrives; and the *eidolon* ["the human phantom, the astral form" (111)] of the ex-Personality is left alone in its new abode. Here, the pale copy of the man that was, vegetates for a period of time, the duration of which is variable and according to the element of materiality which is left in it, and which is determined by the past life of the defunct" (172).

take the next step on the path to true fulfillment. Crucial to their journey is the breaking of a negative karmic cycle that has dominated their lives, past and present, since the dawn of souls.

Hilary is afraid of Fleta, and knows she is a master to him. In an early encounter, he is bewitched. He feels "a sudden dread of her as someone stronger than himself; and also an impassioned desire to serve her, to be her slave, to give his life to her utterly" (36). And while she seems a Master to Hilary, she serves masters of her own—the enigmatic adepts of the White Brotherhood. In particular, Fleta is spiritually and romantically attracted to Ivan, one of the earthly masters of the Brotherhood.[109] Just as Fleta in "Blossom" in an accomplished sorceress, she is still a neophyte to Ivan, and Ivan is beholden to powers higher still. This hierarchy of initiation is elaborated upon further in Collins's essay, "The Demand of the Neophyte" (170). Despite the personal power of any aspiring adept, Collins warns, the disciple or *chela* will

> come within the grip of an iron law. If he demands to become a neophyte, he at once becomes a servant. Yet his service is sublime, if only from the character of those who share it. For the masters are also servants; they serve and claim their reward afterwards. Part of their service is to let their knowledge touch him; his first act of service is to give some of that knowledge to those who are not yet fit to stand where he stands. (171)

As we can see here, Fleta's taking on Hilary as a lover and apprentice is one such act of service that furthers her own growth towards adeptship and divine love, just as Ivan has taken on Fleta as his disciple—though he, in his wiser state, rebukes her romantic advances and pushes her toward solitude and hardship, so that she may grow on her own. *Lucifer* itself can similarly be read as an act of service in this regard, as it puts readers in touch with a master in Blavatsky and with other experts

[109] When Fleta first encounters Ivan in a secret monastery, she says of him: "And he is the master of knowledge, the master in life, the master in thought, of whom the Princess Fleta is but a poor and impatient disciple. Master, forgive me! I cannot endure to hear you speak as if you were a monk, the mere tool of a religion, the mere professor of a miserable creed" (265). She bows before him, arousing great jealousy in Hilary, who would bow before her.

in Theosophy, including Collins and the Keightleys, through the magazine's counter-public. If, like Fleta, readers can "take knowledge," they become better readers and better Theosophists.

While "Blossom" certainly begins as a love story, it can also be read as a dramatization of the different stages of occult initiation. Hilary is the hapless neophyte who, though limited in his knowledge, is brave and earnest. Fleta is the more advanced initiate who knows all the 'parlor tricks' of magic. But, with her increased power comes the increased burden of responsibility. While the narrative form is initially conventional, Collins, literary magician that she is, has a few tricks up her sleeve. Hilary Estanol is positioned to be the story's romantic hero, though Fleta appeals more to the adept mindset of *Lucifer*'s Theosophical readers. Fleta eventually usurps Hilary as the story's protagonist as he, surprisingly, fails in his personal quest and is essentially banished from the narrative. Fleta, too, suffers her own setbacks and failures. Ultimately, though, it is she who has the wisdom and the will to overcome these and cross the threshold into enlightenment, while Hilary ultimately damns himself in choosing a life of convenient illusions and delusions. But, at least Fleta is now free of him, and she is able to continue her spiritual evolution unhindered.

Fleta's first attempt at initiation fails after Ivan takes her to a secret temple in the astral plane (352). Even though she is "resolved to face all—and to conquer all" and enter the temple (355), she is found wanting by the "thousands" of "white figures" because she loves Ivan and is therefore anchored to the material world (355). When she is expelled from the temple's threshold, she awakens back in the material plane with a quickened mind, but an ill body. She has also lost her powers. Hilary finds her laying in the forest outside the Brotherhood's monastery, and Fleta bitterly informs him of her failure and reveals to him (and to the reader) what is essentially the moral of the story: "I have failed because I loved—because I love like any other fond and foolish woman!" (357). Angry at herself for her failure, but determined to succeed, she vows, "I shall cast out that love that

kills me from my heart—I shall enter the White Brotherhood. And, Hilary, you too will enter it. But, oh! Not yet! Bitter lessons have you yet to learn! Good-bye, my brother" (359).

These "bitter lessons" were actually introduced by Collins in the first issue of *Lucifer* in "Comments on 'Light on the Path.'" Fleta's failure plunges her into a spiritual Abyss, from which she must recover, recapitulate, and free herself of attachment. Collins explains that the occultist "has to survive the shock of facing what seems to him at first sight as the abyss of nothingness. Not till he has learned to dwell in this abyss, and has found its peace, is it possible for his eyes to have become incapable of tears" (13). Similarly, in "The Mystery of All Time," an anonymous writer adds,

> The freedom needed is not from those who cling to you, but from those to whom you cling. The familiar phrase of the lover "I cannot live without you" must be towards which cannot be uttered, to the occultist. If he has but one anchor, the great tides will sweep him away into nothingness. (48)

This is the struggle of the disciple; to free oneself from attachment, and to instead embrace detached compassion. After her initial failure, Fleta spends time recovering; she plays the role of queen as her husband is crowned as king, though she tells him bluntly that he will never possess her or be able to control her. She regains her confidence and eventually leads an army into a disastrous battle, resulting in the death of her husband. These dark events force her on a new pilgrimage in search of divine knowledge. Her travels lead her to a ruined estate, where Ivan is waiting for her. He ascertains that she is truly ready to free herself of mortal desire and attachment before disappearing. In a state of meditation, Fleta sees the masses of humanity trapped in cyclic history and wants to help them in a divine sense. She sees fit to give up her craft, to be more than a mere magician. Fleta walks to a small garden near the edge of a sea cliff, focuses her power, and releases herself of her burdens. In a surprising ending, Fleta achieves enlightenment, at the cost of her mortal existence. She literally wills

herself to death. She vows, "For all that lives, I live!" and renounces her mortal life. The passage reads:

> Her voice rang out on the air and startled herself. It seemed unrecognizable, it was so bell-like. She looked down, and her glance fell on the dial. It was sun-down. For a second, which seemed like a superb eternity, she stood quite still, her mind, her soul, her being, bathed in an unconsciousness which was more vivid than any consciousness. And then she fell forward, her face upon the earth, beside the rose-bush, among the flowers…. (461)

And thus concludes "The Blossom and the Fruit," followed by a brief epilogue where a gardener happens upon Fleta's corpse. Her body is merely dead matter, like all else in this gross, material world; the 'real' Fleta is no longer a 'fragment,' but has rejoined the divine whole.

For those Practical Theosophists who did not see the early connection between Theosophy and the love story, the ending should be clear enough since it echoes the prime precepts given by Collins in *Light on the Path*, the philosophical treatise that put her on the Astral Map of Theosophy:

> 1. Kill out ambition.
> 2. Kill out desire of life. (1)

Of course, this being 'fiction,' Fleta's gesture is metaphorical; readers are not encouraged to take their own lives. It is a reminder of a spiritual truism that we are *in this world*, but not *of* it.[110] A pseudonymous writer going by "Pilgrim" echoes this truism in "The Great Quest," citing Collins's famous work:

> Now the teachings which have been put before the world in 'Light on the Path' state the other side of the question. "Each man is to himself absolutely the way, the truth, and the life." And again, "For within you is the light of the world, the only light that can be shed on

[110] Collins has her own version of this truism in "The Seclusion of the Adept": "[The adept] lives now not in the world, but with it; his horizon has extended itself to the width of the whole universe" (383).

> the Path. If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere." (290)

This is the underlying message of Collins's "Blossom," and of Blavatsky's attacks on the Church: the followers of exoteric Christianity are encouraged to idolize Christ and seek the approval of the Church and its clergy; instead, they should aspire to find the Christ within, to embody that same spirit of universal love and self-sacrifice, and to free themselves of the chains of dogma and the powers that exploit it.

So long as the seeker is burdened by attachment, the need for approval, the need for mortal love as medication for their own deficiencies and loneliness, the need for satisfaction of the ego, true wisdom shall ever elude them. Thus, Fleta at last becomes a true adept in death, no longer a mere 'witch' or 'black magician.'

Conclusion: Luciferian "Ladies of Light"

"The Blossom and the Fruit" is notable not only for its presentation of important occult and Theosophical themes in the guise of 'fiction,' but it is also a socially-progressive story about a female adept following her own path. This story, which dominated the first dozen issues of *Lucifer*, features a woman protagonist who is much more capable than her male counterparts. It is also an esoteric twist on the subgenres of Victorian sensation fiction and New Woman literature that had both emerged from the 1860s and 1870s and, in the case of New Woman literature, lingered well into the 1940s (Kraft 358). Kim Farnell describes Victorian sensation fiction as a sub-genre of literature that arose in 1860 and "relocated the Gothic novel to modern, middle class England" (33). Some typical features include "cliff-hanging conclusions to chapters with plots involving guilty family secrets, bigamy, insanity and murder. Energetic heroines and hypersensitive heroes are also typical." Farnell also observes that "The term is a pejorative one although highly descriptive." As for New Woman

literature, Siv Ellen Kraft characterizes the New Woman as one who "remained unmarried, supported herself, participated in public life as an independent actor… and tended to be sympathetic to, if not actively engaged in, feminist activism as well as the broader field of 'progressive' agendas, such as vegetarianism, anti-vivisection, anti-vaccination, homeopathy, peace movements, and anti-Imperialism" (Kraft 359). Accordingly, New Woman novels address issues salient to modern femininity, including work life, higher education, and the challenges women face regarding love, sex, and marriage (Kraft 363n5). Significantly, many authors of these novels were themselves New Women. Kraft further notes that Theosophical feminists were attracted to this genre, and expanded it by adding spiritual and philosophical challenges, although they seldom explicitly referred to key Theosophical terms and concepts. Kraft suggests that this generalist approach was undoubtedly "an attempt to reach out broadly with their messages [;] this strategy was sometimes explicitly discussed by members" (Kraft 363n5).

This is the story of a woman who defies her husband, her lover, and her father to pursue her own spiritual destiny. Her heart is her own, and she shares it with whom she chooses, giving as much or as little as the moment allows. But, this is no hackneyed narrative of an everyday working girl trying to balance love and a career—this is the tale of an aspiring adept renouncing everything, and shifting the course of history and nations as the waves of her Will sweep across Europe. What begins as "Victorian sensation fiction" becomes something else entirely as Fleta forsakes sensation within the story. Outside the story, the demiurgic writer Collins does the same, as she abandons the romantic sub-plot halfway through the narrative to illustrate the harsh and often lonely life of the adept who walks a path upon which no one else can follow.

Although the pages of *Lucifer* are not quite as abuzz with discussion about "the woman question" as are later journals such as *The Freewoman, The New Freewoman*, and *The New Age*, it should not be forgotten that this journal was co-edited by two women in 1887, one of whom, of course,

was the female head of a quasi-religious movement—a historical anomaly in itself. The other editor was a renowned woman novelist whose literary career eclipsed those of both her estranged husband, Robert Keningale Cook, and of her father, Mortimer Collins. And, while neither woman would identify explicitly as a "feminist"—especially Blavatsky, who proclaimed that she had "nothing of the woman" in her (qtd. in Kraft 371)—they were inclined to restore the balance of the Sacred Masculine and the Divine Feminine, as one might expect given that the first principle of Theosophy is "To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, colour, or creed" (Blavatsky *The Key* 39).

This "brotherhood," as Blavatsky would later add, would likewise be formed without distinction of sex. As Joy Dixon puts it, "what counted [in Theosophy] was the work to be done, not whether it was done by a man or a woman… [and] women as well as men could aspire to the position of Adepts or Mahatmas, and that examples of such women could be found in India and Tibet up to the present day" (174). And yet, though neither editor explicitly articulates a feminist position, Theosophy is already marked by a "positive attitude towards female leadership" (Faxneld 209). As Faxneld reminds us, "the prominent position of Blavatsky—and later, to an even greater extent, Besant—probably furthered the influx of female members who viewed Theosophy as sympathetic towards feminism" (209).

Perhaps, after all, it is the Luciferian spirit that summoned so many different progressives and radicals of the age. United under an icon of revolution, Theosophy attracted the whole gamut of those ushering in the "New Age": feminists, socialists, anti-Imperialists, anti-vivisectionists, vegetarians, and vegans (Kraft 359). While Theosophy would slowly fall out of fashion among the spiritually-inclined masses through the course of the twentieth century, the legacy of Theosophy

remains. And, while membership is no longer what it used to be during the *Fin de Siècle*, there are still Theosophical lodges around the world.[111]

Almost twenty years after this story was published, modernists were still writing about "the woman question." And, as outlined in Chapter Three, it was another noted woman occultist that dominated the early issues of A. R. Orage's illustrious *New Age* magazine: Florence Farr. I cannot say whether or not Farr had read "The Blossom and the Fruit," but she may well have; she joined the Society in 1902 (Dixon 148) and, before that, was a reader of *Lucifer*—and a one-time correspondent.[112] At that time, Farr was best known as an actress rather than for her former high station in the Golden Dawn as the Chief Adept in Charge in Anglia, a post she held from 1897 to 1902 before internal schisms within the Order, and its exposure to the public, prompted her resignation (Greer 191; 265). Her later *New Age* articles on politics and sexuality were written from a distinctly occult perspective surely inspired by her Theosophical and Golden Dawn years, despite her eventual growing away from both organizations. She criticizes the genteel, essentialist femininity of Marie Corelli, and sings in praise of the New Women in literature and drama, like Hedda Gabler and other heroines of Ibsen's plays, as symbols of the 'rising psychic tide' of a New Age. Princess Fleta, that *adept* New Woman of the *Fin de Siècle*, provides a fascinating case study as an especially potent New Woman for her occult powers and relentless determination; she could certainly provide a role model not only to the younger Farr but also, perhaps, to the H. D.s, the May Sinclairs, or the Mary Buttses of the day.

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[111] Academics tend to write about Theosophy as if it is a purely historical phenomenon divorced from living members, but this is not the case. The Edmonton Theosophical Society has been nothing but cordial and supportive of this research—not only through a private bursary, but also through their insider knowledge and generous critiques that helped me understand things about Theosophy or *Lucifer* magazine that I would never have found on my own! There are also extant lodges in Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal, and Toronto, and a dozen others in the United States, and more still in Europe and Australia.

[112] Farr had written *Lucifer* long after Blavatsky and Collins's tenure in response to later editor G. R. S. Mead's criticism of her book on Egyptian magic ("S. S. D. D." 512-513). She apologizes for being a "student" of the subject and regrets not having space to discuss the provenance of various papyri that informs her study of Egyptian rituals.

Lucifer was also, on some level, important to Aleister Crowley. A promotional flyer and blank subscription form to *Lucifer* can be found in Crowley's archives, the Yorke Collection at the Warburg Institute in London, along with facsimiles of some of the Mahatma letters and some of Blavatsky's writings.[113] Although I was unable to find any copies of the journal in the Collection, it is reasonable to suppose that Crowley read *Lucifer*. He certainly read "The Blossom and the Fruit," which he called "probably the best existing account of the theosophic theories presented in dramatic form" (qtd. in Farnell 84). Crowley also praises "Blossom" in his autobiography as "the novel which has left so deep a mark upon my early ideas about Magick…" (*Confessions* 690). With its occult credentials and its proto-modernist tendencies, "The Blossom and the Fruit" merits scholarly revisitation.

Flowing along the astral currents of *Lucifer* through to the modernist journals that would follow it, we find the same editorial stylings, "shock tactics," and literary techniques, themes, symbols, tropes, and motifs of esoteric literature; we can detect the imprint that *Lucifer* (and other earlier occult periodicals) left in the 'Great Mind' of the next generation of younger modernists. Thus, a clear connection, almost a direct genealogy of editorial practice, manifests between the literary and the occult spheres of modernism through their periodical cultures.

Indeed, Blavatsky fully intended that the magazine have a fiery, passionate will of its own; in a letter to Judge later printed in *The Irish Theosophist*, she admits that Judge's journal, *The Path* (which debuted in April 1886), was more properly Theosophical than *Lucifer*, which empowered *Lucifer* to further the Theosophical cause through its provocative spirit. As Blavatsky explains,

> If I thought *for one moment* that *Lucifer* will "rub out" *Path* I would never consent to be the editor. But listen, then, my good old friend. Once that the Masters have proclaimed your

[113] The finding aid for the Yorke collection has these items listed under its New Series, box 33, "Hardback notebook Manuscript, transcript and printed material relating to the Theosophical Society."

> *Path* the *best*, the most *theosophical* of all theosophical publications, surely it is not to allow it to be rubbed out…. One is the fighting, combative Manas; the other (*Path*) is pure Buddhi…. *Lucifer* will be Theosophy militant and *Path* the shining light, the Star of Peace. If your intuition does not whisper to you 'IT IS SO,' then that intuition must be wool-gathering. No, sir, the *Path* is too well, too theosophically edited for me to interfere. ("H. P. B." 156)

Unfortunately, the militant Flame of the Lightbringer burned *too* brightly; Blavatsky and Collins had an acrimonious falling out—Collins herself may have been a bit too much of a New Woman for Blavatsky's liking, especially when it came to sex; the widowed Collins was certainly not shy around some of the Theosophical men, and perhaps women, she encountered. In *Mystical Vampire*, Farnell outlines Blavatsky's reasons for expelling Collins from the Society. Apparently, Collins had been "engaged" with Archibald Keightley, and the two had experimented in "Tantric worship and black magic"—in other words, sex magic (82). Moreover, she may also have been sexually "entangled" with Archibald's uncle (who was one year his junior), Bertram Keightley, as Yeats observes in his autobiography (qtd. in Farnell 84). The Irish Archmage had once witnessed Blavatsky upbraid Collins for this *ménage à trois* at a Theosophical meeting as she announced, "I cannot permit you more than one" (qtd. in Farnell 84).[114]

Further, Collins had also apparently "flirt[ed]" with Michael Angelo Lane, a Theosophist whose lips were a little too loose concerning the activities of the Esoteric Section. A May 1889 letter by Yeats to John O'Leary notes simply, and vaguely, that Collins was dismissed from the Society for "flirtation" (qtd. in Farnell 83). Collins may have also been sexually involved with Vittoria Cremers, an American Theosophist; Farnell cites a pamphlet from Crowley's Thelema Lodge wherein the

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[114] Collins was not the only renowned occult writer to fall afoul of Blavatsky's distaste for practical magic—Yeats himself would eventually be forced to resign for similar, albeit less sensational, reasons. According to Marie Roberts, "Practical magic and experimentation had been forbidden by H. P. B. but she did concede to the demands of a pressure group to form an Inner Circle devoted to the theory though not to the practice of the Cabala" (130). Yeats, however, was "instrumental in plunging this group into occult research" and experimentation with practical magic, leading to tension with the Society and his eventual resignation (130).

magus boasts of his knowledge that Collins "occasionally chose a female for her bed-fellow" (qtd. in Farnell 85). This sexual entanglement involving multiple partners—even nephew and uncle—and lesbian relationships attracted far too much gossip for Blavatsky's liking. After all this, Collins was dismissed for her "treachery and disloyalty" (83). Collins resigned from *Lucifer* in February 1889, and Blavatsky, who had been in poor health for years, died in 1891.

While *Lucifer* continued until 1897 and ran many excellent articles on Theosophy and occultism under the editorship of Annie Besant and G. R. S. Mead, it would never regain its Luciferian 'star power.' Without the acerbic wit of Blavatsky, Theosophy's bombastic co-founder, and the literary flair of Collins, the renowned Victorian novelist turned medium, then occultist and mystic, *Lucifer* would never recover its potential to be not only a spiritual but also a *literary* force in Theosophy.

Conclusion

Portrait of an Academic-Adept: Legacies of the Adepts of Modernism

NIX NIHIL
"Ezra Pound, Modernist Omnipresence,
Imagiste, Vorticist,
Troubadour, occultist:
already you have said so much—
is it too much to ask for a little more?"

POUND[115]
"You have frozen me;
you try to banish me.
Maybe I deserve it,
maybe not.

Our business will be swift—
You already know what you're looking for.

You are resolved. Enjoy what you see.
You already know what you'll say—
Why bother asking?"

* * *

At last, this dissertation—and my academic pilgrimage—comes to a close. My journey began in Kamloops, BC (BA, Thompson Rivers University), led to Burnaby, BC (MA, Simon Fraser University), and took me to Edmonton, AB (PhD, University of Alberta), and back. In between, I visited London, Oxford, Salisbury, Leeds, Trondheim, Surnadal, New Haven, and New York. Each

[115] Ezra, oh, Ezra. I do apologize for freezing you, but it was necessary. You have already been given your glory. You are *The Pound Era*. You are in nearly every archive I visited. You erupt from every modernist periodical I have studied. You are a founder of my scholarly discipline. I may have questioned your morality, O Troubadour, but I have never questioned your importance in the field of modernist periodical studies. I have simply refused to let you define the trajectory of my research, inescapable as you are.

city had its own magic to offer, and that magic manifested in the form of this dissertation, this grimoire. These destinations may not sound as 'exotic' as the locales travelled by the likes of Crowley, Gurdjieff, and Blavatsky during their courses of esoteric research (Tibet, Nepal, Egypt, Russia, India), but for my own apprenticeship as a researcher of the mysteries of art, magic, and life, they are no less magnificent.

As experienced as I was as a musician and business professional when I first entered into a doctoral program at the age of twenty-nine, I again became a neophyte, a novice, a page. Now, with this dissertation complete, this spell spun of laughter and sighs, I seek to prove that I have attained some degree of mastery, that I am worthy to reach the next plateau on the interminably high mountain of academic adeptship—to face with ink and voice the Grand Trial administered by my venerable Supervisory Committee. Will I be accepted among them, as a fellow Doctor of Philosophy? Or will I, like many a deluded dilettante, be cast into the Abyss?

I think back on the words of Orage, editor-adept and schoolteacher: "The Editor is akin to the teacher," he reckoned, "[and] the teachers who succeed, in short, always remain pupils as well as teachers" (697). As I consider these words, I think of what I, as an apprentice, a seeker, a neophyte, a *chela*, a page, have learned from the adepts of modernism, and what I now, as a teacher, as a master in my own right, pass on to my students who take my classes on "magical literature."

* * *

"The portal is open," I announce each semester on the first day of class, to a new crop of first-year students entering my domain. I ring my tingshas and pass around a burning stick of incense. "What are your names? What are your astrological signs? To which Hogwarts House do you belong? What program are you in? Why are you here?"

I tell them the aim of but one semester's worth of their Great Work in this Defense against the Dark Arts class (or, Case Studies in Research/Introduction to Critical Analysis): "In this class, thou wilt learn how to think, read, and write like a magician. Thou wilt learn sound spelling and grammar (spelling and glamor). Thou wilt learn how to think critically, how to dispel the illusions of advertising and propaganda. Thou wilt learn the secret history of magic in Western culture, and see how that history permeates its literature, from the Canonical Greats to the popular culture you consume. Thou wilt realize that all art is always political—and so is magic."

I tell them the 'tricks of the trade' that they too will come to master: "Thou wilt learn the alchemical symbols of sun and moon, the Yeatsian tinctures of 'primary' and 'antithetical,' exoteric and esoteric; thou wilt also learn of the Platonic elements and their correspondences, for each has its temperament, its direction, its color. Thou wilt know the name of Hermes the Thrice Great, and his successors in Yeats and H. D., the modernist masters of alchemy, and identify those others in that same, illustrious lineage. Thou wilt keep a *grimoire*, wherein thou wilt document thy thoughts on these truths of art and magic in the texts thou wilt encounter; inscribe therein thine insights and questions, thy loves and hates, thy dreams and fears. Find thy truths in history and myth alike. Face thine own minds, slay thy doubts, and master thyselves. Be not a *muggle*, but an *adept*. *Sapere Aude*!"

I tell them of my role as their humble instructor-magus: "I am here to guide thee, but thou must not take everything I say on faith; thou must think for thyselves; thou must *work* to discern the hidden meanings of the symbols thou wilt encounter in thy course of reading. The doors to wisdom are out there, and I can show them to thee; but thou must choose thine own doors to open; thou must select thine own keys. Thine abilities may vary, but I am here to support thee, and to push thee to thy personal best; I reward risk and forgive error—but there must always be *effort*. Not everyone can seize the golden As hovering at the heights of Helicon, but with honest effort, all will thrive in the testing—everyone will get where they need to be."

I always end the Ritual of the First Seminar with a 'joke,' as I incant the solemn words: "I hereby initiate thee into the Cult of Academia! Thou art now neophytes of English (102/103)."

When the snickers die down, I ring the tingshas once more and murmur, "the portal is closed. Begone, spirits. Thou art dismissed."

* * *

The aim of this dissertation has been to demonstrate that the counter-publics of modernist little magazine cultures rely on the exact same strategies and tactics of initiation and exclusion harnessed in occult periodical cultures. Both groups aimed to set themselves apart from a more conventional, conservative reading public that consumes the exoteric newspapers and magazines of the mainstream press. Given the strong occult presence in the modernist magazines, and the network of contributors who moved freely between the literary and occult spheres, it is incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to separate these two periodical cultures.

The network of adeptship constructed in this dissertation spans three modernist magazines in *The Little Review*, *The Egoist*, and *The New Age*, and leads back to literary figures with ties to the leading occult groups of *fin-de-siècle* England, some of whom published in the avant-garde magazines of occultism such as *The Equinox* and *Lucifer*. The little magazines of modernism have much in common with these occult journals, and they utilized the exact same 'tricks of the trade' as did their occult predecessors. The modernists took these same tricks, 'made them new,' and thus gave rise to a new age for literature to accompany the new age for spirituality. For many of these adept writers and editors, these aims were one and the same.

These avant-garde magazines of both modernism and occultism share a common adept attitude that positions their readers among an elect counter-public, communicates with those readers

using an occult vocabulary rooted in Hermeticism and alchemy, and banishes incompetent readers from their magic circle (Practical People, consumers of mainstream media, etc.). Occultism is a force of mystery and intrigue, and was mobilized to shock, to stir up controversy, and take advantage of the outrage of those Practical People that these magazine cultures sought to exclude in the first place. The avant-garde nature of Theosophy, the Golden Dawn, the Argenteum Astrum, and the Fourth Way resonated with the avant-garde literature and politics of the era. In aligning themselves against conservatism in art, politics, and religion, these magazines all formed their own counter-publics, and they found kinship with each other through their common, esoteric worldview. At the intersection of radical spirituality and radical politics comes a radical aesthetic—modernism. Whether the politics lead to feminism, anarchism, socialism, or a radical individualism, the philosophy and aesthetics of occultism have a magical effect as a glue that holds together people who identify with any or none of these political ideologies in the context of a modernist periodical culture. Therefore, occultism offers a hidden coherence to some of "the mess and muddle of modernism" (Latham 407).

Also common to the figures considered in this study is an understanding shared by all mystical writers and adepts: that their art, their periodicals, are a form of magic, a way of causing change in the world. The writers under consideration are all concerned with transmitting the perennial philosophy, or the wisdom tradition of ancient times, refashioning it through this new media of periodicals to raise the consciousness of the modern world. Whether they do so overtly, like in the occult journals, or covertly, through the editorials, reader responses, poetry, 'fiction,' reviews, and even advertisements in the modernist magazines, all of these periodicals transmit esoteric wisdom to a reading public in the early twentieth century.

Nearly everyone in this network had encountered Theosophy, so Blavatsky's shadow looms large over the period. Some of the elder modernists, such as Yeats, knew her personally; after her

death, Mead and Besant made an impression on the younger modernists. Collins's "The Blossom and the Fruit" influenced Aleister Crowley's ideas on magic and helped give rise to a proto-modernist genre that Morrisson calls "esoteric fiction." Crowley's own short story, "The Dream Circean," shares some of the same features found in Collins's works. Further, Crowley infiltrated modernist periodical cultures through his friendships with Orage, Jackson, and Austin Harrison, and his numerous contributions to modernist periodicals such as *The English Review* and *The International* ensure his place in the modernist archive. Furthermore, Anderson and Heap include a Crowley quotation in *The Little Review*, Ezra Pound lampoons his "outpourings" in his book review column in *The Egoist*, and an anonymous reviewer in *The New Age* took up a full 1.5 pages to properly evaluate a book on Crowley's philosophy. "The Dream Circean" almost found a home in *The New Age*. These connections illustrate that the occult not only shaped modernism in an aesthetic, philosophical, and political sense but also profoundly affected modernism in a material sense: without money and working space courtesy of Theosophists such as Lewis Alexander Wallace and Winifred Leisenring, two of the three modernist magazines in this study, *The Egoist* and *The New Age*, may not have ever gotten off the ground.

These magazines, then, grew from the cultural context of occultism. While personal relationships with occultism vary from writer to writer, it is clearly a foundation upon which modernism was built, whether the people who built up from this foundation were believers (such as Yeats, Crowley, Orage, Farr, Shakespear, Underhill, Anderson, Heap, H. D., Marsden, Carter, Blackwood, and Compton-Rickett) or non-believers (Aldington, Weaver, and Pound). Regardless of belief, all of these figures recognized the evocative power of occult language and symbols. They also recognized that the adept attitude of occultism and its claim to a mythological or historical lineage reaching back to antiquity bestowed upon them cultural capital. They found a secret power to set trends and make taste—rather than compromising with the public taste. Thus emerged the "secret

society of modernism" (Longenbach x). Each of these adepts of modernism recognized the power of symbolism, and how the occult facilitates the transmission of a symbolic language through which writers 'in the know' can communicate with each other.

I hope this study has, once and for all, done away with the notion put forth by Mircea Eliade that "the majority of the pseudo-occult groups are hopelessly sterile. No important cultural creation whatever can be credited to them" (134). To recall this passage from the Introduction, Eliade further argues that "the few modern works in which initiatory themes are discernable—James Joyce's *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*—were created by writers and artists who make no claim to have been initiated and who belong to no occult circle" (134). While this may be true, Eliade overlooks Pound's *Cantos*, Yeats's *A Vision*, and H. D.'s *Trilogy*, three other classic texts of modernism trafficking heavily in occult ideas that arguably initiate readers into an esoteric (and poetic) tradition. Further, given the direction of the New Modernist Studies in determining that "modernism began in the magazines," this study has shown that three of the most important little magazines of modernism likewise trafficked in occult ideas, passed on the names of the great classical and occult philosophers of history, and initiated their readers into an elect counter-public. These generation-defining magazines were absolutely "important cultural creation[s]" despite—even because of—their occult content. Moreover, the "pseudo-occult groups" themselves—the Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn especially—profoundly shaped the avant-garde of modernism which eventually became part of the Canon of English literature. These groups indeed ushered in a new age, even if we still have a long way to go towards realizing a universal kinship formed without distinction of gender, sexuality, ability, race, class, or creed. To say that "no important cultural creation whatever can be credited" to occult groups is patently untrue.

The importance of occultism in twentieth century magazine culture does not end here. Tracing these occult strands leads to areas of inquiry for future work in modernist periodical studies.

One tantalizing avenue that I regret not exploring in this dissertation lies in the occult connections in the periodical culture of the Harlem Renaissance. Retired professor Jon Woodson observes that when Orage ran a Gurdjieff school in New York in 1925-1931, he came into contact with several African-American writers ("Esoteric" 16). The ideas of Orage, Ouspensky, and Gurdjieff caught on among these writers to such an extent that Woodson goes so far as to coin the term "Oragean Modernism" to describe the aesthetics of a subset of Harlem Renaissance writers who incorporated the teachings of the Fourth Way into their poems and novels. Figures such as Gwendolyn Bennett, Zora Neale Hurston, Djuna Barnes, Ralph Ellison, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, and Jean Toomer have all been linked to the Work or the Method of the Fourth Way. Many of these writers published in black-centric magazines such as *Fire!*, *The Crisis*, *The Messenger*, and *Opportunity*. Woodson's books on this network, *To Make a New Race* (1999) and *Oragean Modernism* (2013), focus mostly on esoteric techniques observable in long poems and novels. What else can we see in the Harlem Renaissance when this same "Oragean" lens is brought to bear on the periodical cultures of these adept African-American writers? Further, how do these same writers in turn adapt or modify the Gurdjieffian Method for their own purposes as black subjects?

The network of adeptship reaches beyond the Great War and into the next generation, through the interwar period and beyond World War II. Anarchist and pacifist writer Henry Miller read in the Gurdjieff network and had likely encountered Anderson's mystical anarchism in *The Little Review* (Nesbit 29), and his friend and lover, Anaïs Nin, along with other British and American Surrealists, Apocalyptics, Personalists, and New Romantics, use many of the same esoteric techniques to communicate with each other, and with occult-savvy readers. Their interest in occultism is well documented, but, as is the case with the pre-Great War modernists, little work has been done on how the aesthetics and politics of the occult are expressed through the pages of these literary magazines (see my article in *Archives and Networks of Modernism*). Like the earlier little

magazines of high modernism, the avant-garde journals of the interwar years and World War II, such as *Booster/Delta*, *Poetry London*, *Kingdom Come*, *Bolero*, and *Seven*, similarly transmit esoteric wisdom to an initiated or adept audience. As James Gifford shows in *Personal Modernisms*, these magazines were part of a worldwide anarchist network reaching from England to the United States, Egypt, and China. Robert Duncan, who was famously mentored by H. D. in his magical and poetic practice (see Robinson), is also a part of this same network. Given that Miller, Nin, Duncan, and Lawrence Durrell were all learned in occult philosophy, and that these widely read, adept anarchists were central figures in a worldwide network, what possibilities lie in tracing its occult threads? Can an esoteric reading redeem the failed and obscure Apocalypse poets of the Second World War?

Leaving behind the world of magazines, the legacy of the adepts of modernism can still be felt today. Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin, fascinated by the magick of the Great Beast, bought Aleister Crowley's estate ("Boleskine House"). The Beatles included Crowley on the cover of their album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. One of my favorite 'classic' heavy metal songs by Ozzy Osbourne is called—surprise—"Mr. Crowley." Even Canadian poets writing in the sixties, seventies, and eighties, such as George Bowering and Penn Kemp, have learned much from Yeats and H. D., tapping into the evocative power of alchemical language and sound.

Considering the occult tradition in its broadest strokes in the contemporary moment, Joanne Kathleen Rowling, one of the most commercially successful authors of all time, based her fantasy series, *Harry Potter*, on classical myths, interweaving the real history of alchemy and occultism into her series: the neophyte Harry is led by a feminized Hermes (Hermione) into the underworld, where he crosses the Abyss and emerges an adept (and, a bit more grown up); Cornelius Agrippa appears on a chocolate frog trading card; the real alchemist Nicolas Flamel, nearly 666 years old in Rowling's universe, produced the Philosopher's Stone with his wife, Perenelle; the four Hogwarts Houses align with the four elements and temperaments; there is a stable, practical, solar mundane world, and a

mutable, imaginative, lunar wizarding world. Practical People are called "muggles." This series has become a cornerstone of the literature of my generation and beyond. I teach the first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, in my first-year English classes on "magical literature." Virtually every student arrives having already read it as a child. Aren't they surprised to discover as young adults a dense mass of 'authentic' occultism that flew right over their heads when they were children!

I have often told my students, with some exaggeration, that if they do not know the most important stories in the Christian Bible, 90% of all literature in the English Canon will be incomprehensible to them. Perhaps I should argue with more conviction that, with some knowledge of the histories and myths of magic and alchemy, some portion of that remaining 10% can come within their grasp. This study is a case in point—at least, when it comes to the periodical cultures of modernism…

* * *

With skrying sphere in hand, and third eye ablaze, I can already read the Akashic records and detect the presence of future texts to be written in this third dimension; I see trickles seeping through cracks in a critical dam that once partitioned the fields of Western esotericism from the New Modernist Studies; I hear the whispers at conferences and see the asides in recent published articles. A dissertation becomes a monograph. Yes, the omens are out there. It is only a matter of time before this trickle becomes a flood as other periodical scholars discover just now interesting, exciting, and educational these, at times, *strange* esoteric publications can really be. They will come to know how their influence really shaped the minds and hearts of the writers and editors of the more "standard" modernist journals that they already know and love.

So mote it be. And so it is!

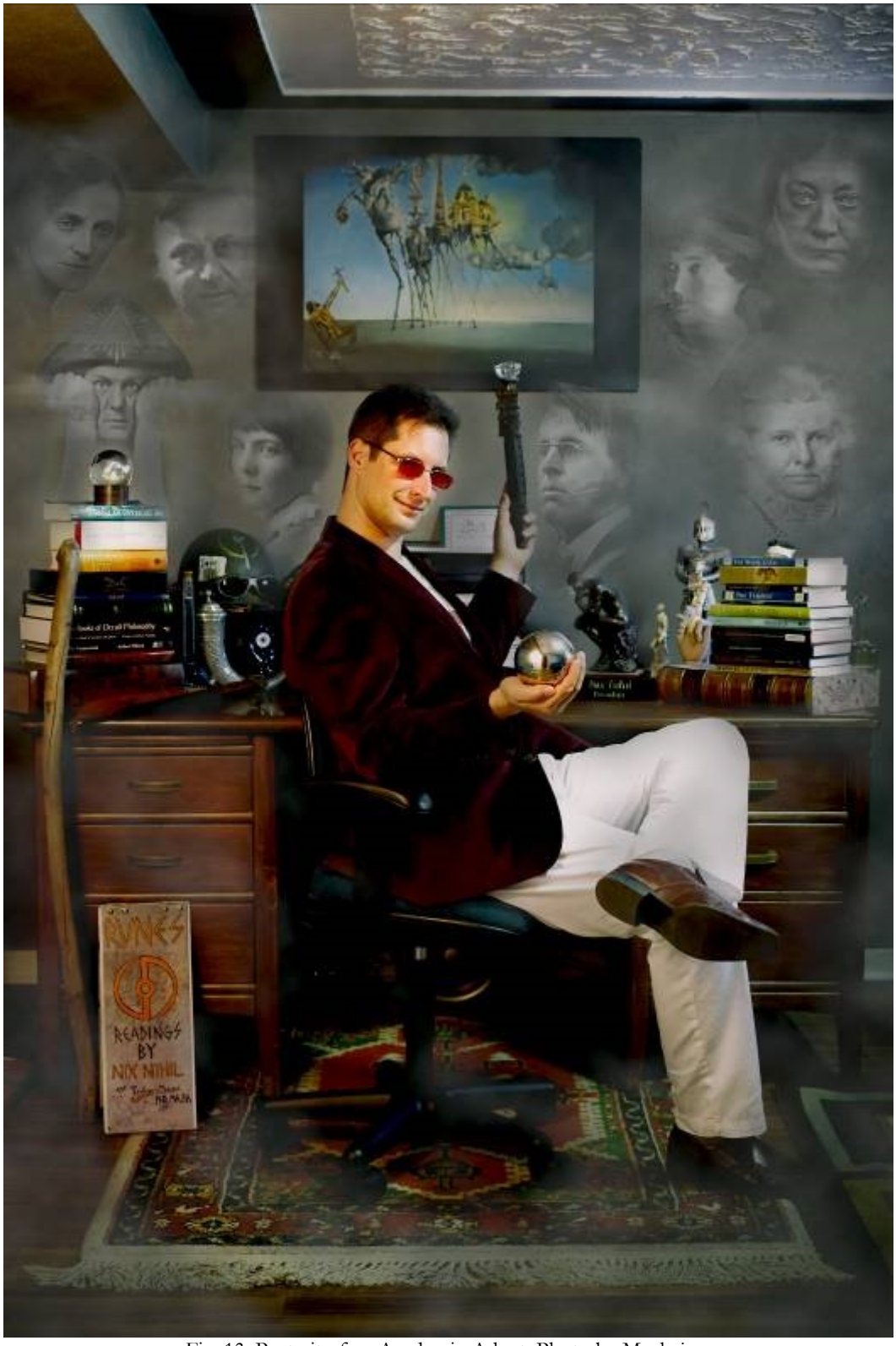

Fig. 13. Portrait of an Academic-Adept. Photo by Mechajoy.

[Citation Needed]

A scholarly spell for academic-adepts.

"Say the name
to summon the ghost" —
so said some unfashionable
psychoanalyst…

A ritual to keep you near:
a way to remain present
in your presence.

If I can't keep you forever,
then let me cite you,
or at least read you,
to stay near you.

I am alive in the archive
and at your disposal,
though I hope you won't dispose of me—
relegate me
to the dustbins of history.

Through scholarly necromancy,
regenerate us!
Venerate us!
Invoke the wisdom;
summon a friend.

Evoke the voices of community—
a chorus of discord and harmony—
a paradox of beauty.

May the only words I will have ever uttered
be always-already the right ones
even when I am wonderfully
wrong in my own way.

It will be empirically proven that
I love you with everything I've got—
[…] [citation needed]

Set down this!
Quote me on it?

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Appendix

Research Rituals: From the Grimoires of Nix Nihil (Selected Entries, 2016-2017)

The following entries document conversations between myself (Nicholas Lee Beauchesne), Nix Nihil,[116] and the spectral archons responsible for the archival documents associated with each magazine considered in this study. I decided it was best to address them, rather than peripheral figures, since they are still embodied in the archive through the collections that they preserved and eventually consigned. For example, Dora Marsden may have been a more appropriate editor-adept to evoke for Chapter 2, but I encountered Marsden through Weaver and her Egoist Papers—so Weaver gets the hail. The divinations for Weaver, Blavatsky, Crowley, and Orage were conducted in the UK between June and July of 2016 (at the British Library and the Warburg Institute in London, and at the Brotherton Library in Leeds). The readings for Anderson and Pound were conducted a year later (outside the Beinecke Library at Yale University in New Haven, USA).

All divinations were conducted before I set foot in any archive. I have only included here the master readings through which I received the epigraphs that open each chapter. I left out castings for Agrippa, Yeats, Underhill, and H. D. These master readings were conducted by drawing three runestones. Three is a good number for a simple narrative: one stone each for a beginning (where am I now?), a middle (where to next?), and an ending (where do I end up?). Daily research divinations were sometimes conducted using a similar procedure, though with only one stone.

I have not included those daily readings in this Appendix. If you seek them, adept, you will have to find them yourself in my *Book of Travels* at the Special Collections and Rare Books Library at Simon Fraser University (in British Columbia, Canada) after I am dead.

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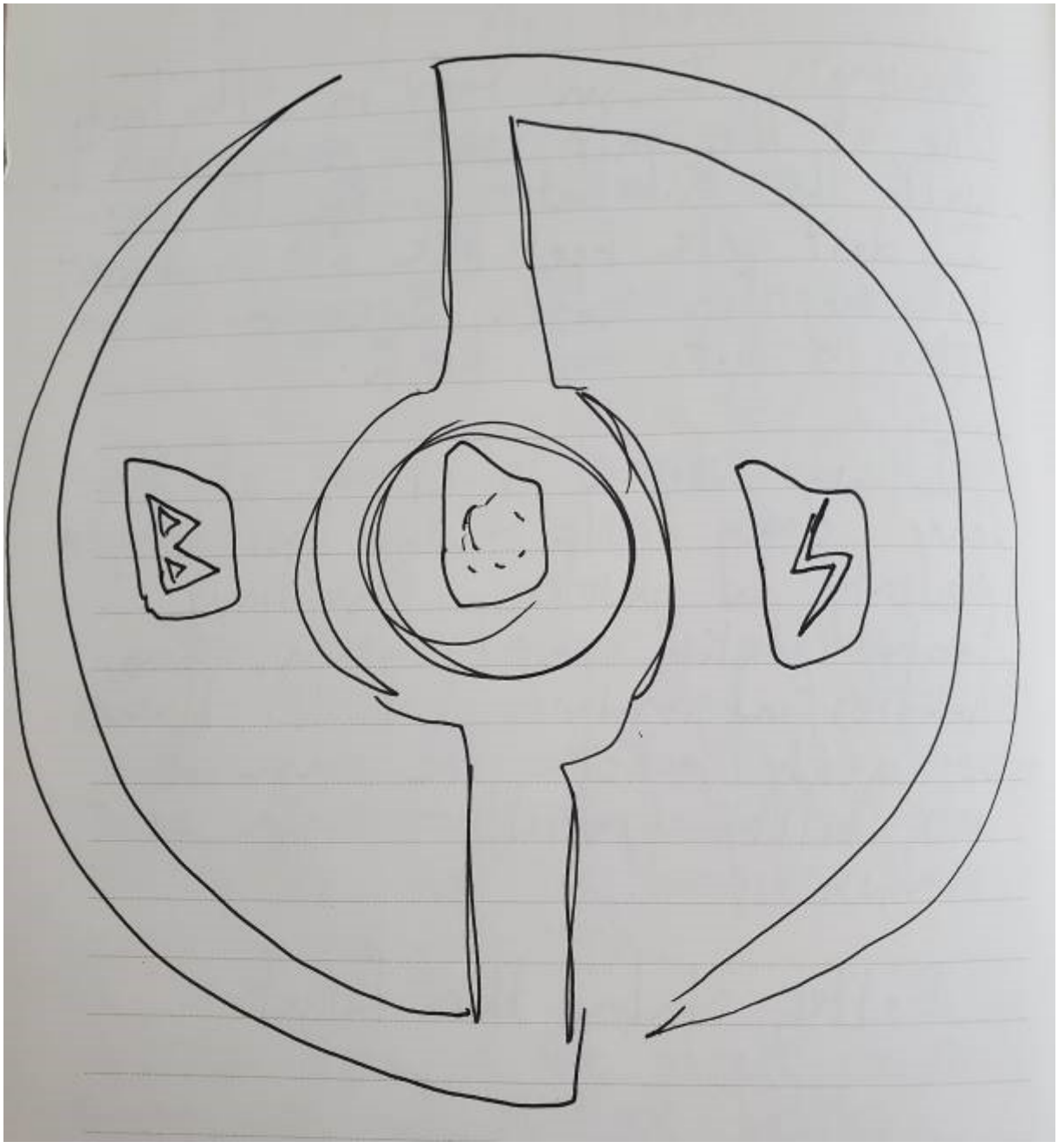
[116] Nix Nihil is… [DON'T FORGET TO COME BACK AND COMPLETE THIS FOOTNOTE ONCE THE DISSERTATION IS FINISHED!]

This is the procedure:

1) Go to the physical premises of the archive in question.
2) Find as private an area as possible to avoid the intrusive glares of muggles.
3) Sit or kneel on the ground. Clear the mind, breathe deeply, and eliminate active thoughts as much as is possible. Remain open and aware, though receptive. Call upon whatever Powers for a correct and truthful divination.
4) Ring a bell to signify the opening of the portal, the beginning of the magical working.
5) Call up the Archon. Visualize them with the Third Eye. Recite their names and epithets. Ask for their aid and a guiding message—a different angle through which to approach their archive intuitively rather than rationally.
6) Using the left hand, draw three runes and cast them.
7) Formulate a message based on the archetypal meaning of each icon. Consider them alone and together. Enflame the Heart and Third Eye to fills the gaps.
8) Document the results in a grimoire.
9) Express gratitudes, bid farewells.
10) Ring a bell to signify the closing of the portal, the completion of the magical working.

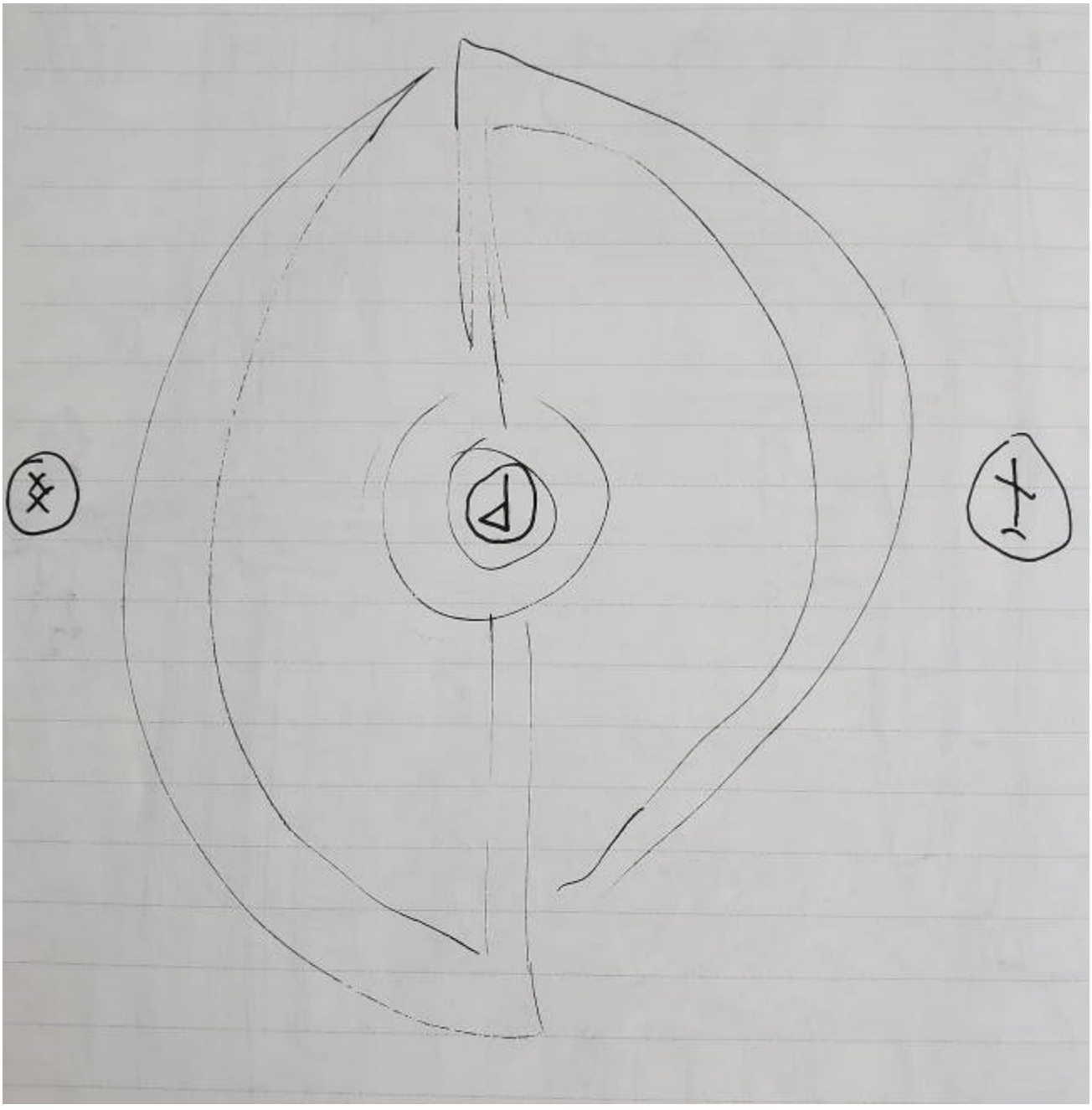
Congratulations, adept; now you, too, can conduct your own research rituals and evoke your own favorite archons. Somewhere between the conscious, the unconscious, and the Beyond, you will get your message. Enjoy!

I. Margaret Anderson



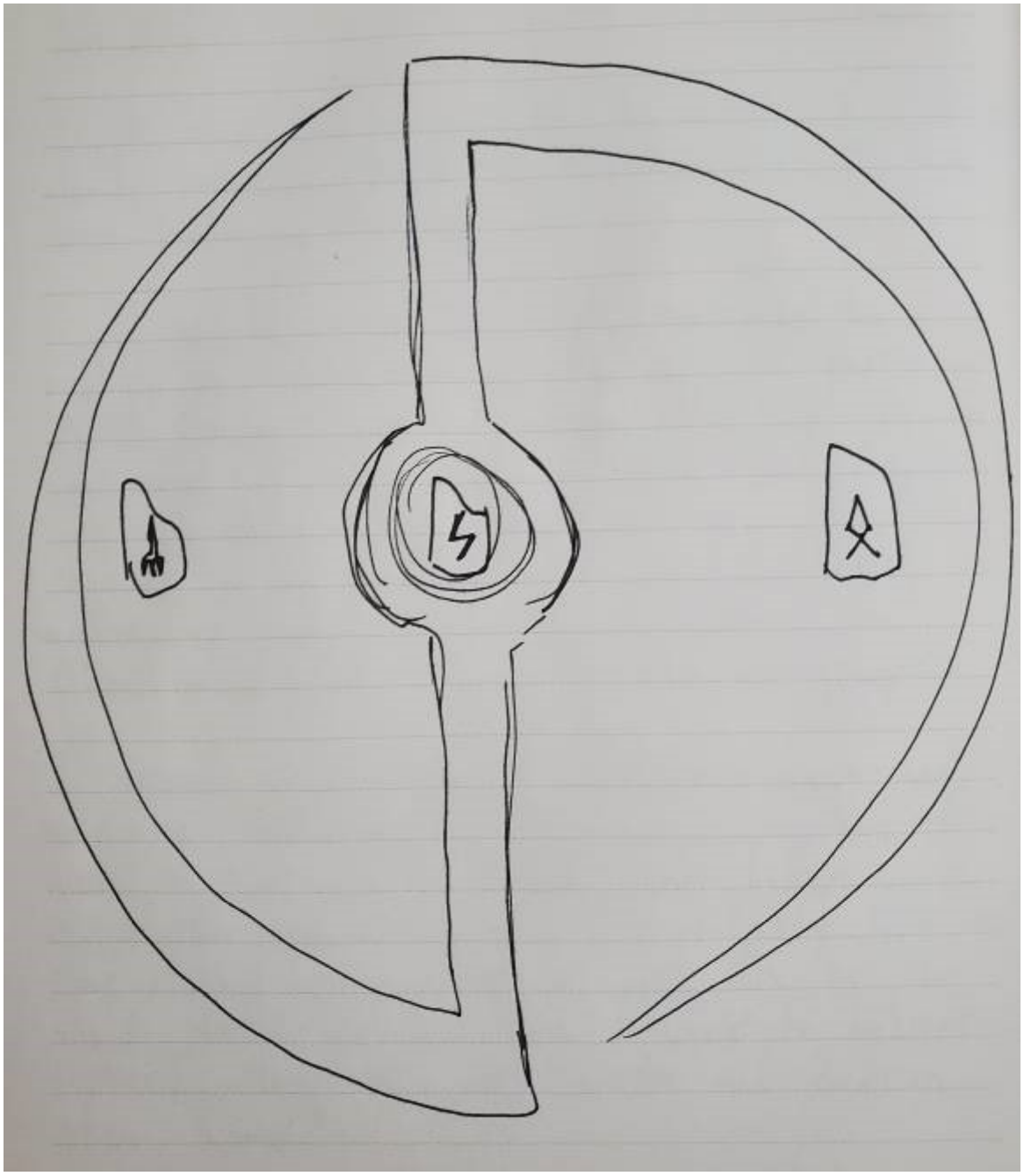
Runes:
Berkano (Birch; Birth; New Beginnings).
Wyrd (Blank; Mystery; Contingency).
Sowilo (Sun; Lightning; Power)

II. Harriet Shaw Weaver



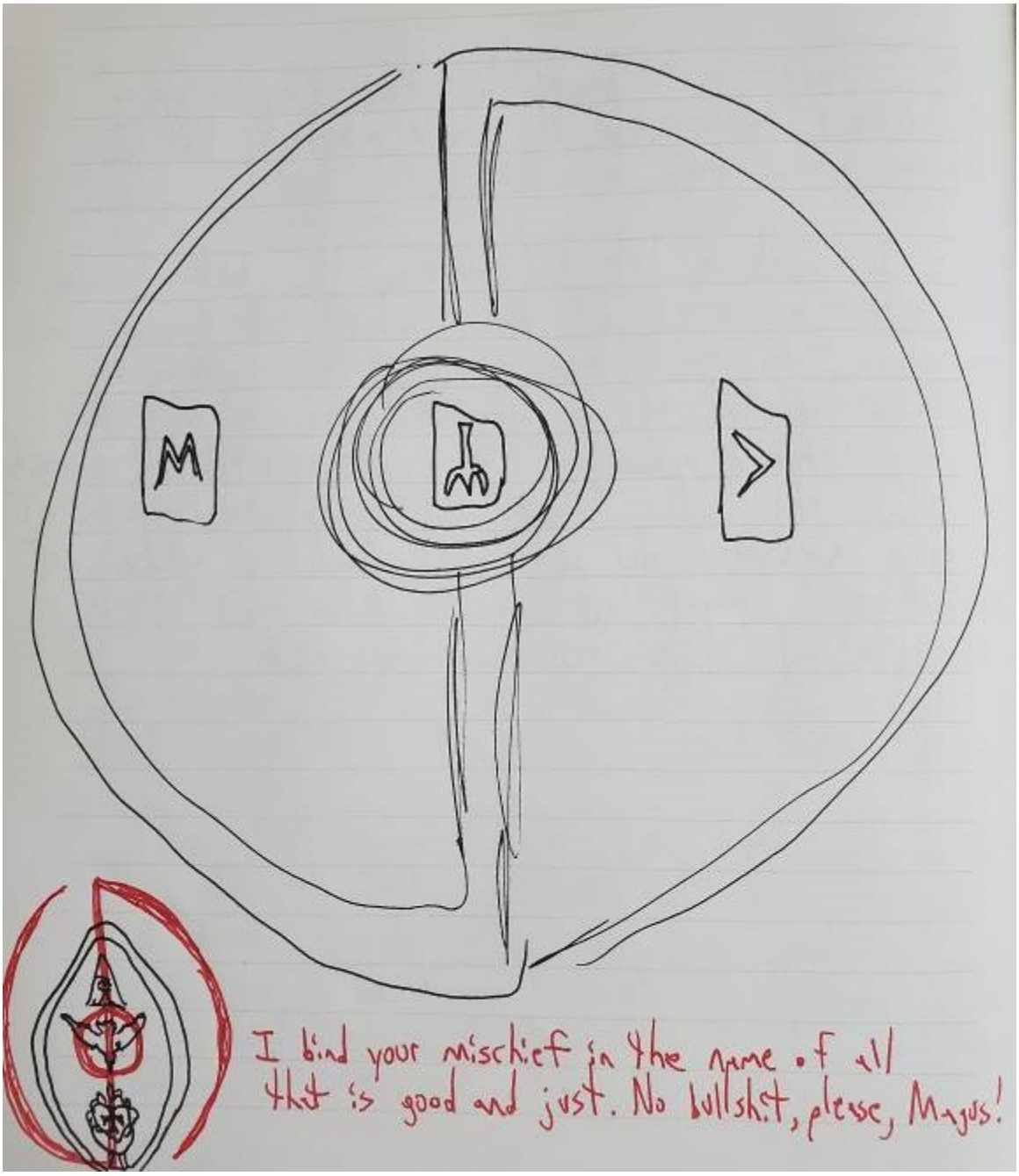
Runes:
Ingwaz (Seed; Emergence; Accomplishment)
Wunjo (reversed) (Unhappiness; Frustration; Failure).
Nied (Need; Necessity)

III. Alfred Richard Orage



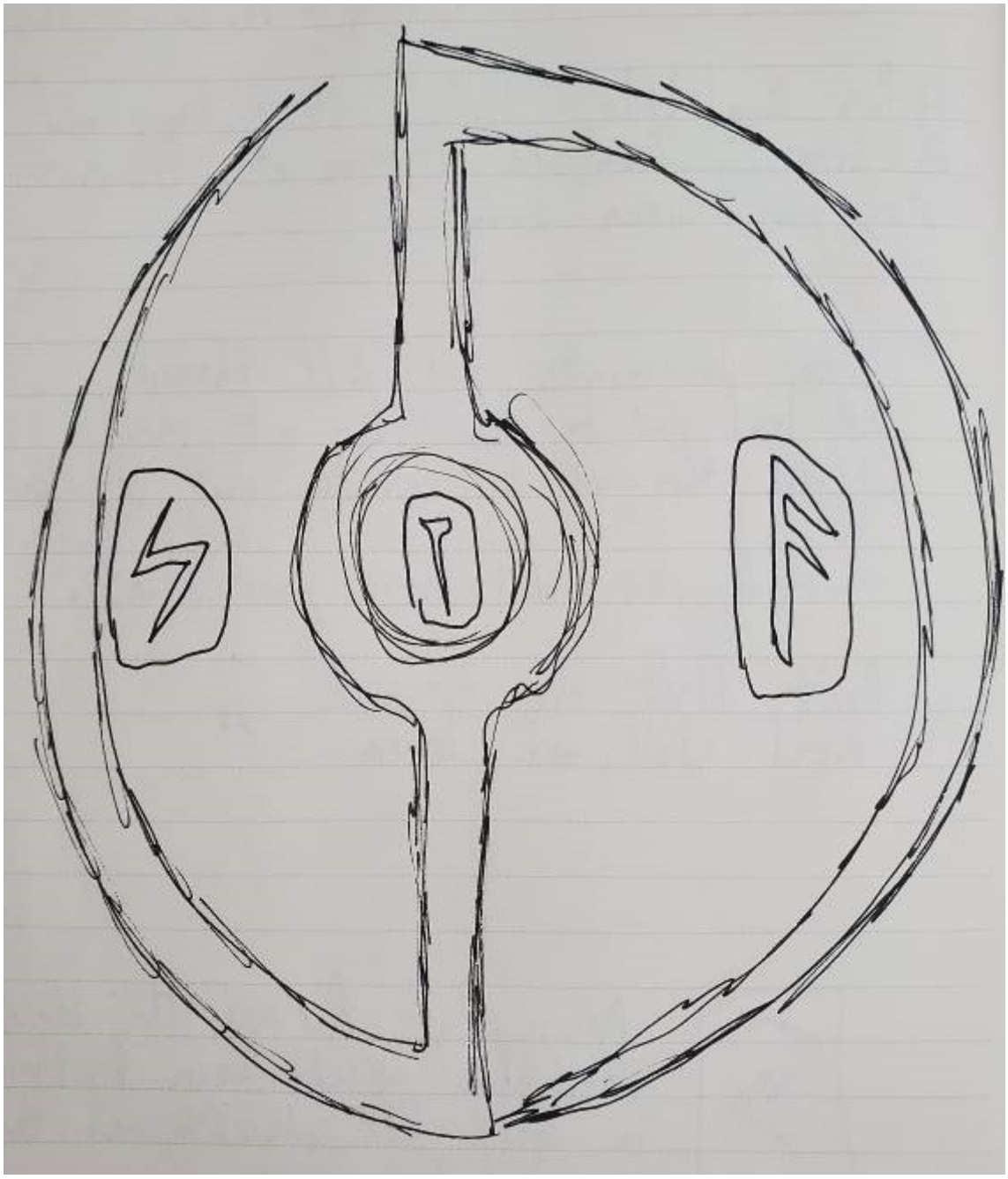
Runes:
Elhaz (reversed) (Elk; Grounding; Lowering Defenses)
Sowilo (Sun; Lightning; Power)
Dagaz (Light; Day; Awakening; Superconsciousness)

IV. Aleister Crowley



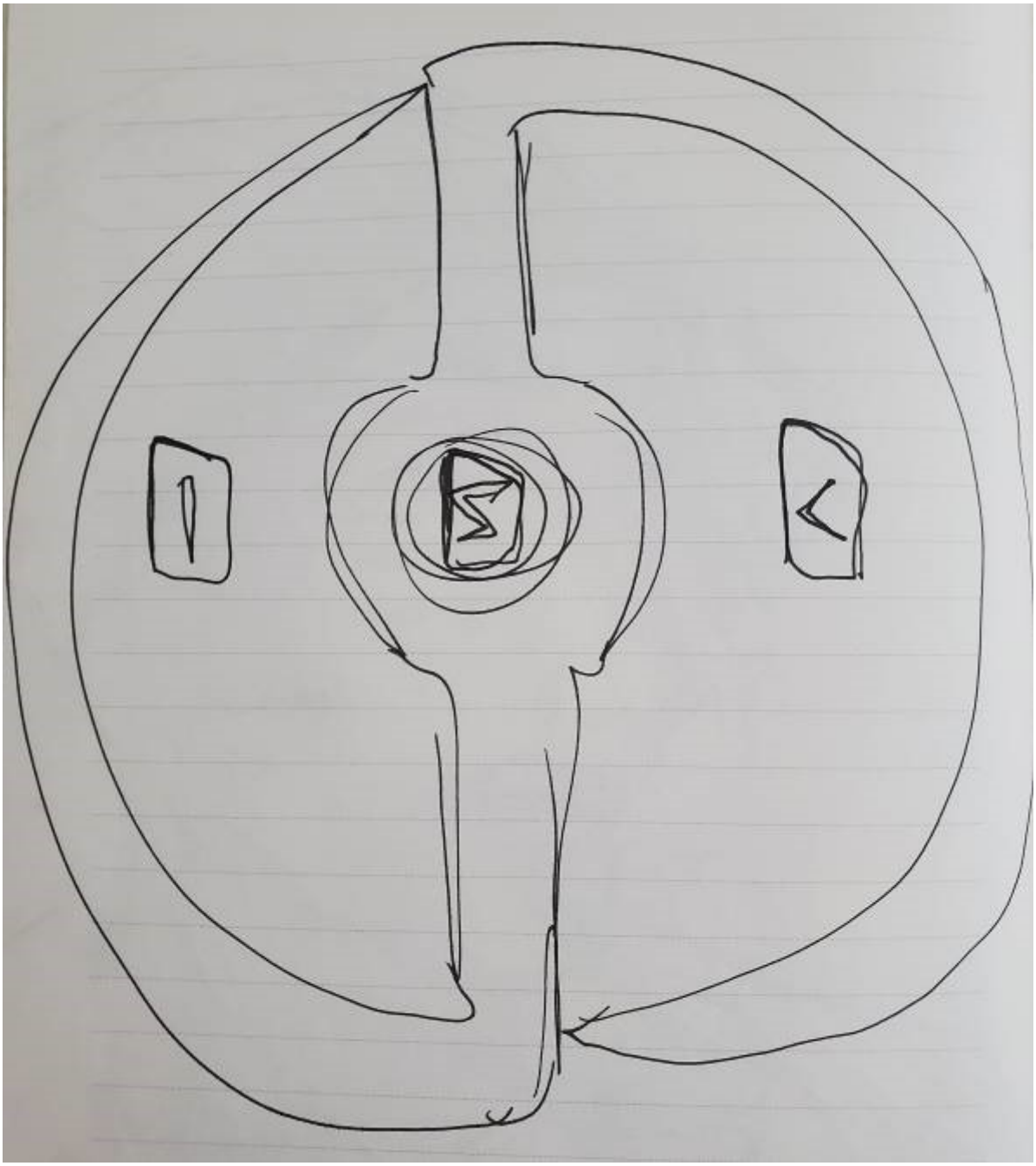
Runes:
Ehwaz (Riding; Trust; Teamwork; Collaboration)
Elhaz (reversed) (Elk; Grounding; Lowering Defenses)
Kenaz (reversed) (Torch (dimmed); Obfuscation; Darkness)

V. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky



Runes:
Sowilo (Sun; Lightning; Power)
Isa (Ice; Freezing; Stoppage)
Ansuz (Messages; Communication)

VI. Ezra Pound



Runes:
Isa (Ice; Freezing; Stoppage)
Sowilo (Sun; Lightning; Power)
Kenaz (Torch; Clarity; Enlightenment)