

**Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem  
Bölcsészet- és Társadalomtudományi Kar**

**Történelemtudományi Doktori Iskola**

Vezetője: Dr. Óze Sándor DSc

Enyedi Tamás

**Újrahasznosított vallások: Egyiptom a századforduló Hermetikus és Thelemikus  
gondolkodásában**

Doktori (PhD) Értekezés

**Témavezetők:**

Dr. Mezei Balázs DSc

Dr. Bácskay András PhD

Budapest, 2019

**Pázmány Péter Catholic University**  
**Faculty of Humanities and Social Studies**

**Doctoral School of History**

Head of Doctoral School:

Dr. Óze Sándor DSc

Tamás Enyedi

**Recycled Religions: Egypt in Fin de Siècle Hermetic and Thelemic Thought**

Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

**Supervisors:**

Dr. Mezei Balázs DSc

Dr. Bácskay András

Budapest, 2019.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Method, Sources, and Assumptions .....	7
The Occult Revival and History of the Golden Dawn .....	14
Disenchantment and the decline of religion .....	14
Was there an Occult Revival? .....	20
Esoteric trends of the late nineteenth century .....	25
An occult genealogy .....	33
The Reception of Egypt.....	37
Which Egypt it is? .....	44
Sources, Influences, Beliefs and Ideas .....	47
Freemasonry .....	48
Theosophy .....	49
Kabbala.....	51
Hermeticism .....	53
Rosicrucianism .....	56
Egypt .....	58
Changes in approach to magic.....	71
Rituals, lectures, and other materials .....	74
The process of initiation .....	74
Clothing and ritual implements .....	76
Neophyte .....	78
The Z documents interpretation .....	81
Zelator .....	87
Theoricus .....	87
Practicus .....	89
Philosophus .....	89

Equinox Ceremony.....	90
Second Order.....	91
Ritual of the Portal of the Vault of the Adepti .....	92
Adeptus Minor.....	93
Adeptus Maior and subsequent grades.....	96
Consecration of the Vault of the Adepti.....	100
The place and function of Egyptiana in the Rituals .....	101
The teachings of the grades of the Golden Dawn .....	104
Some notes and conclusions.....	109
Afterlife .....	114
Aleister Crowley, Thelema and Egypt .....	117
Childhood and school years .....	117
University and the mystical awakening .....	121
Member of the Golden Dawn.....	123
Looking for a road to travel.....	125
The Book of the Law.....	127
Liber AL vel Legis .....	133
Functions of the text.....	133
The Stele of Revealing .....	135
The structure of the <i>Book of the Law</i> .....	136
Thelemic gods and their Egyptian counterparts.....	138
Other Egyptian elements in the <i>Book of the Law</i> .....	143
Conclusions .....	152
Bibliography.....	156
Primary Sources: .....	156
Monographs:.....	159
Articles: .....	167

Summary .....	171
Összefoglaló .....	172

## *Introduction*

In 2017 a hidden war was raging in Nevada, between a faction of self-described witches and an “ancient secret order” called the Alpha Omega Rosicrucian Mystery School. The conflict broke out when Michael M. Hughes organized a gathering of witches and supporters in an effort to perform a ritual with the intent of cursing the Trump administration. This was dubbed as a group of satanic terrorists by David Griffin, leader of the AΩ, who vowed to protect the President with magic as well. In the ensuing conflict casualties amounted to a totaled Jaguar limousine and the death of a dog, all caused by magical attacks, according to Griffin. The events of this war reached the greater audience in the form of some articles in tabloids but otherwise the whole set of events would be unnoticeable. Save for one thing. The organization Alpha Omega, and David Griffin as well claims lineage to the nineteenth century Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, as the successor of MacGregor Mathers, initiated by the Secret Chiefs in that same tradition, clad in crimson robe with a golden nemyss, ankh, crook and scourge in hand. This group is one of the many successor organizations with some form of purported lineage to the most influential magical order of the turn of the century Britain.<sup>1</sup>

The nineteenth century brought interesting changes to the field of Western esotericism, both in theory and in practice. The effects of these changes can still be felt in today’s esoteric sphere, popular culture, art, and new religious movements as well. The aim of this dissertation is to shed light, categorize, and explore the influence of ancient Egypt on the developments of late nineteenth century Western esotericism, with a particular focus on its British segments, through the example of the most influential occult group, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and the early work of Aleister Crowley, especially the *Liber AL*, which became the foundation for his new religion, Thelema. Although the Golden Dawn, in its original form, was quite short-lived the structure, rituals, and textual canon it created exerted the same amount of influence as Rosicrucianism or Theosophy, dwarfed only by Freemasonry. The pop-culture of the nineteenth century had many obsessions, one of which was the interest in hidden and forgotten knowledge, often termed as the Occult Revival, and a fascination with all things Egyptian, be it architecture, culture, the newly available written sources, and an imagined version of a place of wisdom and mysticism, or Egyptomania in short. The Golden Dawn was a product of this two currents of interests, with great enthusiasm and less scientific accuracy,

---

<sup>1</sup> The story of this war is documented by David Griffin at his blog at <http://hermetic-golden-dawn.blogspot.com/2017/07/the-magickal-war-of-2017.html> (accessed 2020.05.09.) and in videos uploaded to Youtube.

as expected from dilettantes of the era. The fallacies and mistakes of attributions have been inspected most extensively by the works of Caroline Tully, and it is not the aim of this dissertation to subject the Egyptological claims of the Golden Dawn or Aleister Crowley to a proper scientific Egyptological scrutiny, as it would yield nothing new other than to further reinforce that neither were competent Egyptologists. Which is already evident if we take a glance at the education of some of the key figures. The focus is on the process of interpretation, appropriation, the underlying thought-processes and the method of combining distinct religious and esoteric traditions. My choice to focus on British esotericism is somewhat arbitrary, as the similar developments of Germany, France, and the United States would also each merit an examination on their own rights, but there are some key factors that played into this decision. First is the synthesizing work the Golden Dawn did on the preceding currents of esotericism, and the role of which the works of the Golden Dawn and Crowley played in the later development of esotericism and the imprint they left on the pop-culture, or with the phrase of Christopher Partridge occulture, of the - somewhat anglosphere-centered - Western world. The second is that although we can see similar developments in continental esoteric movements and in the United States, British esotericism was in a peculiar position due to the role that Britain held in colonialism. With the growth of the British Empire a large percent of the population came in contact with foreign cultures, either first-hand through the military, travel etc. or through second-hand via travelogues, exhibitions, news coverage etc. This availability of new information and a romantic interest in the foreign and different, along with a well-established middle class created a burgeoning intellectual milieu. From 1882 Egypt was under British protectorate which also facilitated the growth of Egyptomania that played a seemingly significant role in the developments of esotericism. This is a gross oversimplification of the topic but it will be discussed further later in the chapter about the so called occult revival. The third is the availability of sources, and on the personal side that my knowledge of English surpasses my proficiency in French or German. The Golden Dawn left behind a huge corpus of texts, rituals, correspondences, and lectures, and the same can be said about Crowley. A number of these sources have been published, some multiple times, and the unpublished sources are mostly available in public collection, with a few exceptions where we have to rely on publications, primarily from Ellic Howe, Darcy Kuntz, and Richard Kaczynski, as they had access to some parts of these private collections.

The role of esotericism in the nineteenth century have been examined by scholars from different angles. Alex Owen argued that the scientific inclinations of occultism played a pivotal

role in the development of the modern notion of subjectivity,<sup>2</sup> while Corinna Treitel and David Allen Harvey argued similarly in the cases of German occultism and French Martinism. The greater context of esotericism in Western thought and history have been laid out mostly through the foundational works of Antoine Faivre,<sup>3</sup> James Webb,<sup>4</sup> Ellic Howe, Christopher McIntosh, Nicholas Goodrick-Clare, Wouter Hanegraaff, and others whose efforts laid out the conceptual foundations on which the research on Western esotericism lays and who managed to present it in a light that made it evident that it is a valid field of academic inquiries and not some fringe location of Western thought where all works concerned are faint attempts at apologies.

As mentioned before the relationship between Egypt and various forms of nineteenth century esotericism has been explored to some degree before, both by Egyptologists, for example Erik Hornung's monograph on the legacy of Egypt on the Western world,<sup>5</sup> and students of Western esotericism, as Alison Butler's work on Victorian occultism, Caroline Tully's articles, and to some degree by every work that deals with the history of the Golden Dawn, but almost often relegated to the sides, noting the influence of Egyptian sources, or providing Egyptological counter-arguments to claims made by authors of occult inclinations, and never as the focus of investigations. This dissertation aims to rectify that and enumerate and catalogue the various Egyptian or Egyptianizing elements in the corpus of the Golden Dawn and in the *Liber AL*, and examine how these elements fit into the larger framework of their syncretic Hermeto-Kabbalistical ideology. Our aim is to analyze the reception of ancient Egypt in the two most influential actors of turn of the century British esotericism. The greatest achievements of the Golden Dawn was the creation of a unique system of magic, with instructions, structure and means of practice that was unavailable before in any other esoteric organization, supplanted by a complex hierarchy of members with differentiated access to information. This was supported by a construction of arbitrary relationships between different symbolical systems and traditions, inadvertently creating a new canon of esoteric literature. This organized structure of knowledge transfer in the words of Ellic Howe "represented the equivalent of a Hermetic University, with an exacting series of examinations leading to the

---

<sup>2</sup> Alex Owen. *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Antoine Faivre. *L'ésoterisme*. Paris: PUF. 1992.

<sup>4</sup> James Webb. *Flight from Reason*. London: MacDonald&Co. 1971. James Webb. *The Occult Establishment: The Dawn of the New Age and The Occult Establishment*. Peru, IL: Open Court Publishing. 1976.

<sup>5</sup> Erik Hornung. *The Secret Lore of Egypt*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2001.



equivalent of a post-graduate degree in the Theoricus Adeptus Minor grade.”<sup>6</sup> The bulk of the work was done by Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers who was a firm believer in the unity of the Western magical tradition, in the sense that all separate works, which are unrelated, all contain the essence of the same ancient wisdom, and are parts of a system that needs only to be uncovered, through correspondences and symbolism. The basis of this structure was in Hermeticism and Kabbala, particularly in Christian Kabbala, and the syncretism of the two by the Renaissance scholars of the Neoplatonic Florentine Academy. On this base he fit other, more practice oriented systems of magic, astrology, alchemy, skrying etc. and supplied it with the new goal of spiritual development. Mathers also contributed in the rediscovery and reintroduction of some mostly forgotten magical practices. He created a system out of the writings of John Dee and the Enochian language and writing<sup>7</sup> that remained “widely” used in Western esotericism since then. He translated and published *The Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage* a manual on a grand ritual to attain knowledge and conversation with one’s Holy Guardian Angel, and if successful the means of creating a series of talismans.<sup>8</sup> The concept evolved into the Genius or Higher Genius that is often mentioned in Golden Dawn rituals. He translated Christian Knorr von Rosenroth’s *Kabbala Denudata*, itself a partial translation of the *Zohar* expanded with Christian interpretations. Other translations by Mathers include Medieval and Early-Modern grimoires, *The Key of Solomon the King* and *The Lesser Key of Solomon the*

---

<sup>6</sup> Ellic Howe. *Magicians of the Golden Dawn. A Documentary History of a Magical Order, 1887-1923*. Newburyport, MA: Red Wheel Weiser 1978. 22.

<sup>7</sup> To summarize the Enochian language and the visions and magic of Dr. John Dee and his scryer Edward Kelley would require a few volume of books in itself, and I would make no attempts to try and explain it as I lack the necessary qualifications to do so. For those interested I highly suggest Egil Asprem. *Arguing with Angels: Enochian Magic and Modern Occulture*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. 2013. and György E. Szőnyi. *John Dee's Occultism. Magical Exaltation Through Powerful Signs*. New York, NY: SUNY. 2004.

<sup>8</sup> The ritual explained in the book is long, arduous, requires strict isolation, and takes at least a half-year to complete, in the German versions the ritual last at least 18 months. Mather’s translation was based on the least reliable source of the twelve manuscripts. After the lengthy preparations the magician can manifest the Holy Guardian Angel, who confers secrets on him, with which the magician can bind the twelve Kings and Dukes of Hell, removing their influence on him, and supplying the mage with familiar spirits in the forms of talismans, which help the mage in finding lost treasure, casting love spells, flying, invisibility and a number of lesser favors. The ritual also uses an oil and incense that is often used in unrelated magical practices since the book re-entered circulation after Mathers’ translation. The Abramelin ritual, mostly due to its elaborate and highly ceremonial nature, became one of the staple examples of magic in popular culture, even with some artistic renditions, for example the 2016 Irish independent film *A Dark Song*.

*King*, and the *Grimoire of Armadel*, and some works by Albertus Magnus. The most notorious student of Mathers was Aleister Crowley. The two were friends for a time, and the latter played a measurable role in Mathers' efforts to maintain control over the Golden Dawn, a plan which ultimately backfired, and caused Mathers and Crowley to break off from the order. The two became antagonistic around 1904. Crowley's work is a somewhat direct continuation of the ideas planted by Mathers, taken to the extreme in true Crowleyan fashion, expanded with his own ideas. When in 1904 Crowley contacted his own Secret Chief, and received the basis of his new religion, one that was supposed to be replace Christianity, a development that after more than a century seems just as unreal as in 1904, the wayward disciple of the Golden Dawn became a pseudo-messiah for a religion of his own making.

The core structure of this dissertation is historical. First some notes on method and general assumptions present in the work, followed by a short summary on the esoteric milieu of the late nineteenth century, and the various attitudes towards magic, Egypt, and other relevant fields. Then we will focus on the Golden Dawn, through its history, an investigation on the sources that defined the order, followed by the systemic examination of the rituals, lectures, and other textual sources left behind by members of the Golden Dawn, culminating in the conclusions that can be drawn in relation to the place taken by Egypt in the order's world-view. This will be followed by a short biography of Aleister Crowley and the similar examination of the *Liber AL*, followed by the general conclusions discerned from these investigations.

Some time constraints are required as well to focus the scope of investigation. In the case of the Golden Dawn it is easier to assign a beginning, as the order was formed in 1887-1888, and its original form disbanded in 1903. Of course when dealing with the possible influences on its development we have to look back further in time. This is necessary to properly contextualize the Golden Dawn in the broader history of western esotericism. But most of the exploration of the Golden Dawn, related currents, and to a lesser extent some of the successor organizations will focus on the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup>. In the case of Aleister Crowley we have to confine our exploration to his early years, his participation in the Golden Dawn, leaving the order and the events that lead to the creation of the *Liber AL*. This limits our scope to the period when Crowley was a little known figure in the esoteric milieu, mostly unknown to the press, before his experiments with sex magic, involvement in the Ordo Templi Orientis, and other grand acts of notoriety that he is known for today. As Crowley was a prolific author, with changing and often contradicting ideas throughout his life, a thorough investigation of all his writings would fill up volumes on its

own, and would require a slightly different methodical approach than the one employed in this dissertation.

### *Method, Sources, and Assumptions*

The methods employed in the dissertation are dual, historical and textual criticism. Historical as the Golden Dawn and Crowley were very much a product of late nineteenth century developments of a marginalized portion of European intellectual history, and the evolution of the ideas are discussed in the historical framework, and the developments of thoughts will be laid out in that frame. Textual criticism is necessary since all of our sources are written so to uncover the place, internal logic, reason for being of the Egyptian elements, and in cases their origins as well, it is required that we scrutinize these textual sources. The hypothesis is that the Golden Dawn and Crowley's early works employed a considerable amount of Egyptianizing symbolism in an internally consistent and logical manner. While the sources of these Egyptian motifs, and their variation was limited by a lack of knowledge and proper Egyptological training, they often fulfill crucial roles in the structure of their beliefs. Both of them employed an invented or invoked tradition to supply their teachings with legitimacy and a key aspect of this tradition was the purported connection and legacy of ancient Egypt. The aim of the authors was to provide valid truths about the ancient Egyptian religion, of which they saw themselves as successors and caretakers of tradition. An aim that from an objective perspective they failed, but they were successful in maintaining alternative ideas and conceptions about Egypt and in integrating these ideas into the larger frame of Western esotericism on a level that was previously impossible, which left a mark on later developments of the field. The question of reception history also merits some musings. Gauging the imprint that the Golden Dawn left on late nineteenth century popular culture is an easy enough endeavor if we were to enumerate all the artistic creations that to a lesser or a greater degree had some connections to the order's workings. These include literary works from W. B. Yeats, Arthur Llewellyn Jones, Arthur Bennet, Algernon Blackwood, and others; theatre plays, and other forms of art.

The sources available come in two variants, the published and unpublished ones. Golden Dawn rituals were first published by Aleister Crowley in *The Equinox*, and in a more complete manner by Israel Regardie in his *The Golden Dawn: An Account of the Teachings, Rites, and Ceremonies of the Order of the Golden Dawn*, which were published between 1937 and 1940. The rituals contained in it were however not the original Golden Dawn versions, but later variants, created by the Stella Matutina, one of the many offshoots of the original order, of which Regardie was a member. This book was revised and expanded with new material into a ten volume edition titled *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic* in 1984. This includes

the original ritual variants, taken from F. L. Gardner's collection, copied around 1894-1895 held as part of the Gerald Yorke collection, currently in the Warburg Institute, London. Other publications of Golden Dawn rituals include the many works of Charles and Sandra Tabatha Cicero, who together with Israel Regardie worked on resurrecting the Golden Dawn, abbreviated this time as H.O.G.D. in the early 1980s. Their work includes publications of Golden Dawn ritual, tarot, do-it-yourself style guide on building a Golden Dawn temple etc. but their sources are usually the same that were available for Regardie.

The Golden Dawn archives survived in seven collections, five major and two minor.<sup>9</sup> The two major public collections are the aforementioned Gerald Yorke collection, which contains the collection of F. L. Gardner, manuscript copies of rituals, essays, and letters, supplemented by Yorke's own collection of material relating to Aleister Crowley. The other is the so called *Yeats Occult Papers*, of which there are some excerpts published as well.<sup>10</sup> The three major private collections, referred to as Private Collection A, B, C are the following. Collection A contain the "official" records of the order and were kept by the Stella Matutina, and were given to a senior member and remained in the family's care since. Collection B and C contain materials from members of the Independent and Rectified Rite, A. E. Waite's successor organization, and are in the custody of the families of the original owners. The two minor collections are the collection of Carr P. Collins in Dallas, and the collection of R. A. Gilbert. Most of the papers from the early years of the Order, including the original Cypher Manuscripts, correspondence between Westcott and Anna Sprengel, official printed documents from 1888-1902, balance sheets of the Isis-Urania temple, and the turmoil of 1900 with all related manuscripts are contained in Private Collection A. The Collection B contains the address book, recording the name, motto, address, and reason of leaving, of the 332 members of the orders who joined and left between 1888-1897. It also has copies of Second Order rituals and papers on various topics. Private Collection C contains copies of both Inner and Outer Order rituals and Flying Rolls, as well as the parchment Roll of the Isis-Urania temple. The Yorke collection contains the most extensive record of rituals, lectures and related material, records of

---

<sup>9</sup> The catalogue of the collections is incomplete, as most of them are private collection. The categorization provided here are based on R. A. Gilbert. "Magical Manuscripts: An Introduction to the Archives of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn." in Warwick Gould (ed.). *Yeats Annual no. 5*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 1987. 163-177.

<sup>10</sup> Some in George M. Harper. *Yeats' Golden Dawn*. London: Macmillan. 1974. in Katleen Raine. *Yeats: The Tarot and the Golden Dawn*. Dublin: Dolmen. 1972. and in Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper, William M. Murphy (edd). *Letters to W. B. Yeats*. London: Macmillan. 1977.

personal and group magical experiments, a large number of correspondence and various Golden Dawn related memorabilia. This is supplanted by a large number of Crowley related material, including an obiter dicta for the *Liber AL*. The time constraints of the dissertation are visible from the sources presented here. As the earliest copies of the ritual are from 1895, and they remained the same until the changes brought on by the Stella Matutina that is the period that we will be focusing on. It can be assumed that the textbook of the initiation rituals was not changed by Mathers, nor were the original knowledge lectures since the order's inception. When the Second Order was created in 1892 the available corpus was expanded upon, but the texts were left unedited. The list of Flying Rolls was changed multiple times, and whenever possible we try to find the sources that were available during Mathers' leadership of the order.

Before beginning the work proper it is necessary to ascertain some conceptual boundaries and assumptions, as this dissertation deals with a small segment of Western history of thought, and the study of religions. The terms esotericism, Western esotericism, occultism, and magic will be often used throughout this work, so it is fitting that an explanation should be given for their meaning. Western esotericism in Wouter Hanegraaff's definition is "*from a strictly historical perspective, western esotericism is used as a container concept encompassing a complex of interrelated currents and traditions from the early modern period up to the present day, the historical origin and foundation which lies in the syncretistic phenomenon of Renaissance "hermeticism" (in the broad and inclusive sense of the word). Western esotericism thus understood includes the so-called "occult philosophy" of the Renaissance and its later developments; Alchemy, Paracelsianism and Rosicrucianism; Christian and post-Christian Kabbalah; Theosophical and Illuminist currents; and various occultist and related developments during the 19<sup>th</sup> and twentieth century.*"<sup>11</sup> This description clearly demarcates the boundaries of the field in question, as historical currents and traditions that can be studied regardless of how they are evaluated from a religious or philosophical perspective. One can label it as a history of mistakes, or contrary as a history of unjustly forgotten truths, in this methodical agnostic attitude it remains a history of a set of religious ideas that developed and evolved in the Western world.<sup>12</sup> Antoine Faivre categorized esotericism as a pattern of thought

---

<sup>11</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaff. "Some Remarks on the Study of Western Esotericism." *Theosophical History*. 7: 6 (1999): 223-232. 224.

<sup>12</sup> As a relatively new field in academia, the study of Western esotericism still faces some disputes over the exact nature of the topics researched. On the topic of what is esotericism a scientific consent have almost been reached. As of 2019 the debate is about whether it should be called Western or not, with strong arguments on both sides. For a concise collection on the current theoretical and methodological debates of the field see Kocku von Stuckrad.

that fit a set of four intrinsic characteristics, often complemented by two frequent characteristics that are not necessary. These intrinsic and complementary characteristics are the following. 1, Correspondences, that the various levels of existence are linked by symbolic correspondences and changes occur in parallel. 2, Living Nature, that the cosmos is understood as complex entity, permeated by the force of a living energy. 3, Imagination and meditations, which contains the idea that knowledge can be acquired through revelation. 4, The experience of transmutation, the concept of through the acquisition of knowledge and experience one reaches understanding of a higher knowledge that transforms the individual. 5, The practice of concordance, that a common denominator between various teachings can be found. 6, transmission or initiation through masters, as a social frame, where the validity of knowledge passed on is authorized by masters and initiation helps the individual experience the sense of transformation.<sup>13</sup> Although Faivre's definition has been criticized on the basis that it was derived from a very particular phase of development, namely the Renaissance, it excludes other forms of thought that can and should be categorized as esoteric, it is a sufficient description for our case as the late developments of the nineteenth century esotericism fit the constraints of this description.<sup>14</sup> While esotericism is used as a broader term, occultism is used to specifically refer to nineteenth century developments, and currents within the esoteric tradition.<sup>15</sup> This other related concept of tradition is also employed numerous time. In the vein of the history of cultural memory, tradition is the collection of a religion's literature and their reception. When this set of core literature is used in a historical context and in the process transformed then it is discourse.<sup>16</sup> In this work tradition and discourse are used almost interchangeably as it deals with a short period of time, when a lot of changes occurred in the interpretation of the core literature, or canon, of esotericism, and the discourse was influenced ever so slightly by each practitioner. As a

---

"Esotericism Disputed: Major Debates in the Field." in April DeConick (ed.). *Secret Religion (Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks: Religion)*. Farmington Hills: Macmillan. 2016. 171-181.

<sup>13</sup> Antoine Faivre. *Access to Western Esotericism*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. 1994. 1-19.

<sup>14</sup> More on the theoretic aspects of a definition of esotericism and the problems arising from it see Wouter J. Hanegraaff. *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Bloomsbury. 2013. especially chapter one.

<sup>15</sup> Although there is another definition of occultism, formulated by Henrik Bogdan and Gordan Djurdjevic as "*an orientation towards hidden aspects of reality, those that are held to be commonly inaccessible to ordinary senses*" and in this sense occultism would be the broader category of which esotericism would be the subset. Henrik Bogdan, Gordan Djurdjevic (edd.) *Occultism in Global Perspective*. New York: Routledge. 2014. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Kocku von Stuckrad. *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge*. London: Equinox Publishing. 2005. 6.

shorthand the simple form of esotericism will mostly be used in place of Western esotericism to prevent unnecessary bloat, and unless otherwise specified it is applied to the historical currents of thought outlined above. The adjective esoteric will be used to signify that a certain idea, action etc. is part of the greater framework of esotericism.

It could seem from these fundamental descriptions that the various forms of esotericism are theoretical, and are only beliefs. But as a subset of religious activity it involves practice as well, and especially in the case of the Golden Dawn one of their biggest difference compared to other organizations of esoteric persuasions was the focus on practice. The practical, or active application of esoteric ideas is often referred to as magic. A term that is still very much understood in the vein of early developers of anthropology and sociology as something fundamentally antithetical to both religion and science, a notion that is still ingrained in our thought. We aim to transcend this idea, as various practices of magic in their historical context can be perfectly categorized as either aspects of religious activities, however heretical they may be from the point of view of any organized religion, or scientific activities, however wrong they may be in hindsight of post-Enlightenment scientific method. So in this work the term magic simply refers to the practical application of esoteric concepts in a peculiar manner. That is the act of magic requires considerable effort on the side of the practitioner, a clear set of goals, execution of various techniques, in the context of occultism this commonly means rituals, and knowledge about the hidden mechanisms of the universe, as well as a postulated belief in the functionality of the whole act. The belief on the part of the participants can be assumed on the grounds of if they did not believe in it working they maybe would try it nevertheless, but certainly wouldn't write about it at length, testifying of the successes they experienced. The goals of magic according to Hanegraaff can be either control, knowledge, amplification, healing, progress, contact, unity, and pleasure.<sup>17</sup> Most of these categories are self-explanatory. Control is the aim to acquire influence or power over reality. This includes the use of talismans and amulets for protections, techniques to cause harm, in the case of our field of investigation this is also subservient to the notion of spiritual development, or of finding one's true Will. Knowledge aims at the acquisition of information through unconventional means, be it divination, astrology, skrying etc. Amplification is aimed at maximizing one's own innate abilities and capacities, whether they are physical or intellectual, a good example is the aim of becoming closer to Adam Kadmon, the perfect human of the Kabbala. Healing is the most obvious example of magic, and is a staple of magical acts world-wide since the earliest known

---

<sup>17</sup> Hanegraaf, Wouter J. (2013). 104.



sources of esoteric literature. The aim of Progress is to further one's spiritual development, to move from the darkness of ignorance to the light of spiritual development, as it is so evident from the initiation rituals of the Golden Dawn. Contact is aimed at establishing connection with entities that are believed to exist outside of normal sensory perception, a practice that is often related to the aim of Knowledge. Unity is aimed at overcoming separation, as in the separation of man and God. The experiences of these practices often border the experiences described by mystics, although there is a sharp divide between magicians and mystics based on their heterodoxy to their corresponding religion. The last category of Pleasure is the l'art pour l'art approach, when there are no clear aim other than practice and fun itself.<sup>18</sup> This categorization facilitates understanding to some degree, but ultimately I stand on the notion that magic is whatever the practitioner describes as magic, much like how the more common and accepted forms of religious activity can take many forms. The question arises as how does esotericism relate to religion, can it as a whole or the individual historical manifestations be considered as religions? This question is a point of debate among scholars of various related fields and I by no means aim to settle this debate. Providing a definition of religion in and of itself is a difficult topic, and even an enumeration of already existing definitions would far outgrow the scope of this dissertation. As a more practice-oriented approach I would categorize religion as a set of complex beliefs in the "holy"<sup>19</sup> - in the sense that it is the experience of the divine, the limited interacting with the limitless – structured via an internal logic, shared by a community of people and given outward manifestation through ritual. There are some key elements of the Golden Dawn that from one perspective qualify it as a religion: a community formed around a shared system of belief, specialized ritual professionals that lead communal rituals, a demarcation of the sacred from the non-sacred, a canon of texts, a holistic worldview that explains the various facets of life etc. But if we could somehow ask the members of the order itself whether their group is a religious organization or not, the answer most likely would be the latter, as most members still considered themselves to be Christian, and viewed occultism more as a vehicle of mysticism and not a religion in itself. The case of Crowley and Thelema is more interesting in this regard, as he himself proclaimed it to be a religion, a new one at that, believing that it was meant to become the widespread religion of the new eon, and it would replace Christianity. This obviously didn't pan out, but the dissertation is focused on the early career of Crowley and the developments of his self-proclaimed messianic work fall outside of it. The examination of

---

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 104-117.

<sup>19</sup> Otto, Rudolf. *The Idea of the Holy*. Trans. J.W. Warley. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 1970.

how new was his so called new religion and the later developments of Thelema are well-researched and there are works dedicated to the topic that are far better qualified at dissecting the topic than this dissertation<sup>20</sup> There is however a religion, that without a doubt is considered to be one, that plays an important role in the development of the Golden Dawn's esoteric system and Crowley's *Liber AL*, and that is the religion of ancient Egypt. Or more precisely a notion of it, as the late nineteenth century knowledge of the topic, especially in the case of practicing occultists is on many points false, misconstrued, and generally poorly understood, even from a contemporary scholarly point of view, not even mentioning our current understanding of Egyptian religion(s).<sup>21</sup> As we will see below this did not stop the Golden Dawn or Crowley and others to employ a wide range of Egyptian elements, reinterpreting and providing them with new, specialized layers of meaning, incorporating true and false ideas into their own heterodox thought systems. Through this method of reinterpretation the subjects of our investigation used, or one can say recycled the ancient Egyptian religion, as well as some Greek, Hellenistic, and eastern religions when creating and developing their own esoteric currents.

And finally a personal disclaimer, in the vein of Ellic Howe's seminal work's introduction. I am not an occultist or a mage, and this book does not aim to promulgate the practice of magic or other fringe methods of religious practices, or to prove or debunk the validity of the claims and theories of the authors discussed below. It is a scientific study aimed to broaden our understanding of late nineteenth century culture and history of thought, through a marginal, yet in some fields highly influential set of texts. In cases where the writing would seem to agree with certain claims or testimonies about supernatural events it is much more a case of stylistic failing than agreement or disagreement on my part. Throughout this work I aimed to remain as objective as possible and not judge, but study the sources with proper source criticism. With these methodical and theoretical assumptions defined we can now safely turn our attention to the main questions of the dissertation, and find the answers to how sources from and about ancient Egypt influenced the ideologies and developments of the turn of the century esotericism in Britain, through the examples of the Golden Dawn's numerous rituals, lectures, and other written works, and the early works of the wayward disciple Aleister Crowley.

---

<sup>20</sup> see further: Kaczinski, Richard, James Wasserman. *Weiser Concise Guide to Aleister Crowley*. York Beach, ME: Weiser. 2009.

<sup>21</sup> For an introduction see Kákósy László. *Az ókori Egyiptom története és kultúrája*. Budapest: Osiris. 1998. Assmann, Jan. *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*. London: Cornell University Press. 2001. David, Rosalie. *Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt*. London: Penguin 2002.

### ***The Occult Revival and History of the Golden Dawn***

There are numerous books and articles on the history of the Golden Dawn, concise monographs, like Ellic Howe's unavoidable standard *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, the works of Robert Gilbert, Darcy Kuntz, and Francis King or the various works that focus on smaller topics, members or periods of the order's history. Mary Greer's seminal work on the female membership, George Mills Harper's researches on Yeats, Christopher McIntosh's publications on the Cypher Manuscripts, Caroline Tully's research on some prominent member's attitudes toward Egypt, Alison Butler's research on the developments of the esoteric milieu of the nineteenth century; the list could be continued. I do not aim to exceed these works, but it is useful to provide a short historical overview of the Golden Dawn, its creation, rise and downfall, and legacy it left in the Western esoteric tradition, while trying to limit it only the most important events and processes. To position the Golden Dawn in the general framework of the nineteenth century there is another topic that needs discussion, the Victorian crisis of faith and the so called occult revival, and the tendencies and currents of the esoteric underground or occulture of era.

#### **Disenchantment and the decline of religion**

There was, and to some extent there still is, a pervasive conception about nineteenth century intellectual history, that it was a time of large scale conflict between science and religion, of which science emerged victorious, culminating in large scale abandonment of faith by the end of the century. The reasons behind the pervasiveness of this idea are well known since the last few decades, and although it is still a common element of popular understanding of the Victorian era,<sup>22</sup> after a proper examination of the era's history of thought it is evident that reality was more nuanced than popular perception would suggest. Below I do not aim to paint a meticulous picture about the religious tendencies of the long nineteenth century as that itself would outgrow the scope of this dissertation, but it is important to highlight the key historical developments of Christianity, unbelief and the search for alternative modes of religion that contributed to the burgeoning esoteric milieu that the Golden Dawn was a product of.

It would be a safe assumption to say that there were cases of both highly active religious participation, better documented and self-explained cases of faith lost, and an ever expanding

---

<sup>22</sup> For a concise picture on the historiography of Victorian era intellectual history see Chapter I. of Turner, Frank M. *Contesting Cultural Authority. Essays in Victorian Life*. 2008. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2008.

field of alternatives to socially accepted forms of Christianity. It is important to note that during the Victorian era, as before it was still the norm to be a member of an accepted Christian denomination, to actively practice religion and have faith, so the cases outlined below as well as that of those who turned towards occultism form only a small minority in a predominantly conformist society.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the French Revolution's clear anti-clerical and often anti-Christian policies, and Britain's involvements as a leader of the counterrevolutionary coalition brought religion to the forefront of political discourse.<sup>23</sup> Much of the religious history of the Victorian era concerns the conflict between the Church of England and the Nonconformists, centered around the various societal privileges wielded by the former. This caused the debate about taxation, marriage and baptism registration etc. to be understood by historians as purely political acts and not as efforts from both sides at securing their rights to religious expression.<sup>24</sup> These debates often involved civic legislature, and their solution was provided by the Parliament. In 1836 marriages could be held in any church as long as a civic registrar was present, and the duty of registration of births, marriages, and deaths were taken from parishes and given to local government offices. Nonconformist use of cemeteries was enabled in 1880, restrictions by universities that students need to conform to the Thirty-nine Articles were dropped by 1871, and local taxation that benefited the Church of England lost their mandatory status. These events mark a form of secularization in the sense that it separated church and state but it did not lead to large scale abandonment of faith, on the contrary it enabled followers of Nonconformist protestant denominations and Roman Catholics a higher degree of freedom in their religious activities, and with removal of the Test Act in 1829 opened the way in political participation to members of non-Anglican denominations. Aside from domestic political changes international conflicts also provided religious activity with ample munition. Running analogous with the above mentioned factor another key development occurred early in the century, the evangelical revival that promoted a more personal approach to Christianity and emphasized the subjective religious experience as well as increased lay activity.<sup>25</sup> From 1851 to 1881 the number of Anglican priests increased by 125%, and annually about seventy new parishes were organized.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Turner, Frank M. (2008): 76.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*: 30-34.

<sup>25</sup> Boyd Hilton, *The age of atonement: the influence of evangelicalism on social and economic thought, 1785-1865*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1988.

<sup>26</sup> Turner, Frank M. (2008): 192.

During the first half of the Victorian era these developments resulted in a more involved and personal religious activity from a large portion of Britain's population. But this increase of faith also facilitated that feelings of a loss or crisis of faith to be experienced in a more dramatic way than what could have been possibly in a religiously "colder" period. There are multiple accounts of this feeling of loss of faith in numerous autobiographies, a popular literary genre of the Victorian period, and novels, and from these we can draw some generalizations on the reasons behind it, and the methods with which it was handled. There were numerous instances where becoming an unbeliever was tied with a personal need to secure independence and autonomy from one's family. The spread of evangelical approaches in Christian denominations caused religion to become an important facet of family life, and for many religion and parental authority meshed together. As an effort in late adolescence – early adulthood to gain independence, especially while being in a new environment, university, this conflation of religion and family turned many to apostasy.<sup>27</sup> To flash some better known examples, this was the case with George John Romanes, Edmund Gosse, John Ruskin, George Eliot, and most relevant to our case Aleister Crowley. It is also interesting to note that Crowley and Edmund Gosse were both brought up as members of the Plymouth Brethren.

Aside from personal-psychological reasons there were cases when intellectual reasoning, contrasting faith (theology) and science, led some to denounce Christianity. Darwinism is often cited as a cause of mass irreligiousness although it was proven numerous time to have caused a lot smaller impact on faith than what is widely believed.<sup>28</sup> The failings of natural theology however are undeniable, as well as the importance of criticisms of the Bible. Criticism originated from two main factors, the developments in geology and archeology, and the slow but steady spread of German biblical scholarship, the so called "German rationalism and neology"<sup>29</sup>. The works of Schleiermacher and Strauss proved to be influential in the works of Unitarian scholars Charles Hennell, Francis Newman, W. R. Greg, and even Anglican scholars employed some methods from critical approaches. In the thirty years between 1850 and 1880 debates about authorship in the Bible, historical accuracy, the possibility of miracles, six day creation, and the purpose of life were raging with full force, complete with controversies, heresy trials, and eager participation from newspapers to cover them. The reason

---

<sup>27</sup> Turner, Frank M. (2008): 90-94.

<sup>28</sup> see further Bowler, Peter J. *Evolution: The History Of An Idea*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1989. 176-177. 194-196. Lightman, Bernard. *The Origins of Agnosticism: Victorian Unbelief and the Limits of Knowledge*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. 1987.

<sup>29</sup> Parsons, Gerald. (ed.) *Religion in Victorian Britain. Vol. II: Controversies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1988. 240.

behind the intensity of the debates surrounding criticism was mostly because by the 1850s there was a popular contemporary perception that due to findings of scientists and a weakening of faith led to crisis in the greater population. This perceived crisis strengthened the fears of the more orthodox-inclined members of the clergy who reacted more strongly. The period of intense debate calmed down from the 1880s and a middle ground were reached, where a mild critical approach was mostly employed by scholars. This was spearheaded by the “Cambridge Triumvirate” of B. F. Westcott, J. B. Lightfoot, and F. J. A. Hort.<sup>30</sup> As to what extent this changing approach to the Bible found its way to laymen and regular churchgoers is uncertain, but it is certain that the publications were available for the interested, and to some degree a tempered critical approach found its way into sermons as well. Books about “Lives of Jesus” that presented an emotionally appealing, human, and still orthodox Jesus became popular, as well as books about the Old Testament for example *History of the Jews* by Milman, or *History of the Jewish Church* by Stanley that kept up with recent findings of geography and archeology. The spread of such well-intended literature to an extent turned the biblical story to become more mundane, with more emphasis on historicity than on divine provenance. The “personality” and “example” of Christ was at the forefront of the teaching of non-doctrinal Protestant theologies,<sup>31</sup> and by the end of the century religious activity in Britain became either a “drift into unspecified belief and lukewarm allegiance” or an “assertion by the laity of the right to believe and worship in ways which made sense to the laity concerned”.<sup>32</sup>

We can’t say with certainty that there was a large, unstoppable decline of faith and religious activity in late Victorian Britain, but a crisis nevertheless took place in the sense that previously held key assumptions were questioned and debated, new forms of religious participations emerged, and a position of unbelief became a socially accepted form of attitude, all the while religious activity was shifting from a social engagement to a personal approach. This is not to say that before the late nineteenth century religion was never a personal experience merely that by forfeiting some of the societal pressure on required church adherence to fulfill certain positions, and the spread of evangelical ideas the personal elements of faith occupied a pivotal role in the religious literature of the time. The secularizing tendencies also led to churches having to compete with “the social party, the secular concert or the tennis club”,<sup>33</sup> and with the rising authority and prestige of scientists. James Maxwell noted in 1873 that the

---

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* 251.

<sup>31</sup> Gray, R. Q. “Religion, culture and social class in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Edinburgh.” in Crossick, G. (ed.) *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914*. London: Routledge. 2016. 149.

<sup>32</sup> Parsons, Gerald (1988): 254.

<sup>33</sup> Gilbert, A. D. *Religion and Society in Industrial England*. London: Longman. 1976. 181.

number of professional scientists greatly expanded and even more importantly the number of popular lectures and writers grew as well. This was a result of the professionalization of science in the second half of the century with the redefinitions of scientific associations, the formation of internal elite groups of practicing scientists, expansion of universities, the diminishing number of clergymen-scientists, and the gradual expansion of positivist epistemology.<sup>34</sup> The main driving force behind the conflict of science and religion was a conflict of interest. As in both the clergy and the newly forming professional scientific community vied for control over the nation's mind, to be the authority on interpreting nature and the world. Two greatest "victories" of science were the ability to permeate the educational system, after polemics on curriculum, especially against conservative Roman Catholicism in Ireland, and the general acceptance that the nation's welfare and economic potency is closely linked to the research and work done by scientists. By the end of the century Christianity in Britain shifted from a "biblically suffused, confessional culture into a more uneven world of diffusive Christianity in which strict denominational commitment and precise biblical dogma began to matter less and less."<sup>35</sup>

The intellectual processes of secularization in the late nineteenth century are often labeled by research as disenchantment, a great shift in peoples' epistemic attitudes to an explainable world, where knowledge of nature was attainable, thus valuable; but knowledge of value and metaphysics was not, thus devaluating it. Even the practice of religion required an intellectual sacrifice, and admittance of being irrational.<sup>36</sup> This theory was then challenged by those who believe that there was a process of re-enchantment as a form of counter-culture to disenchantment.<sup>37</sup> The idea that modernity stemmed for the "de-magic-ing" and secularization of the world is a thesis that I do not fully subscribe to. There have been some recent developments that argue that it is at least an oversimplification of the question if not a myth in and of itself.<sup>38</sup> Whatever be the case with the birth of modernity in our present case it is a distinctive historical fact that among late nineteenth century middle-class intellectuals there was a considerably large group that was searching for magic in day-to-day life instead of accepting

---

<sup>34</sup> Turner, Frank M. (2008): 179-182. A similar case of professionalization also occurred inside the various Christian denominations, as the number of theological colleges increased greatly.

<sup>35</sup> Gange, David. (2013): 32. and see further S. J. D. Green. *The Passing of Protestant England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Asprem, Egil. *The Problem of disenchantment. Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse 1900-1939*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. 2014. 1-2.

<sup>37</sup> Most notably to our case Partridge, Christopher. *The Re-Enchantment of the West*. T&T Clark: London. 2005.

<sup>38</sup> For the first see Asprem, Egil. *The Problem of disenchantment. Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse 1900-1939*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. 2014. For the latter see. Joseph-Storm, Jason A. *The Myth of Disenchantment. Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. 2017.

the model of a clockwork like mechanical universe without supernatural factors. To settle the debate of whether this was a product of reenchancement or the whole idea, or our understanding of disenchantment is false is outside my competencies. There is however a key element that the model of disenchantment gets right, that the nineteenth century was a period of great intellectual change, shifts of paradigms occurred, and these changes produced some interesting and long lasting results on the intellectual history of the Western world.

We have seen from the above that there were both positive and negative factors in Victorian British Christianity, and without doubt we can say that the nineteenth century was religiously active and prosperous. New forms of devotion were available and there was ample choice between denominations that promoted more active lay involvement and those that were colder in approach. Church attendance was high and questions of morality, belief, the historicity of the Bible, and theological debates were an important part of the popular culture of the era. Better known cases of apostasy signify an individual search for religious, moral and intellectual fulfillment, as those who have abandoned Christianity often found their creeds in secular moral systems. More relevant to our present field there were those that weren't fulfilled by available forms of Christianity and looked for alternatives either in different Christian approaches or entirely elsewhere. Among Christianity there were many available venues of differentiated religious practice: mysticism, Celtic Revival, Roman Catholicism outside of Ireland, Rosicrucianism, and other forms of occultism were "popular" forms to find a deeper religious experience. The other main strand of the search for alternative religion came from the expansion of the British Empire in the East and meeting with Eastern religions. In 1887 William Henry Quilliam, after returning from Tangiers under his adopted name of Abdullah established the first mosque of Britain that produced about 600 converts. Hinduism, although not practiced in England received considerable popular and scholarly attention as well. Buddhism was discovered, and enjoyed a positive image. This image however was very much a construct of the British mind and far from the reality of the various schools of Buddhism. Even though the London Quarterly Review for 1888 - 9 harshly asserted that "European admirers of Buddhism are as great an anachronism as an adherent of Egyptian or Chaldean astronomers"<sup>39</sup> this did not stop Alan Bennett from becoming the first British Theravada monk in 1901. Although his efforts to spread the religion were less successful than Quilliam's. The search for the other was not limited to different cultures in space but spread also to time. Pagan religions and esoteric currents enjoyed some revivalism and a growth in interest primarily through the availability of

---

<sup>39</sup> Almond, Philip C. *The British Discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988. 4.



new translated materials, which brings us to our next topic the historicity of the so called Occult Revival.

### **Was there an Occult Revival?**

The idea of an occult revival of the nineteenth century,<sup>40</sup> especially in England, seems to be deeply rooted among our concepts of the Victorian era. We imagine a sudden burst of interest towards esotericism, from the 1840s, starting with the spread of spiritualism. The case seems to be different, it seems there was no occult revival, at least not in the sense that would be understood first. First of all the concept of revival would assume a period of decline, which is certainly not the case of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>41</sup> Second if we take a look at membership numbers we can see that the pursuit of esoteric ideas was limited to a small minority. The Golden Dawn boasted a total of around 300 members from 1888 until 1903, and the SRIA had a similar number from its foundation in 1867 until the end of the century.<sup>42</sup> The largest organization was the Theosophical Society, with 1860 members in Britain, 3904 in Europe and 2637 in the United States in 1907.<sup>43</sup> Spiritualism enjoyed the largest interest with an average attendance of séances of 3000 in Britain alone in 1880, but this only increased for a short period after World War I. If the number of “occultists” was this small, then why did Rev. Charles Maurice Davies write that a “tidal wave of Supernaturalism”<sup>44</sup> swept throughout Britain? To answer this question let us take a look at the booming print industry of the century. At first glance the number of books and periodicals published in the century which can be considered

---

<sup>40</sup> Dating varies considerably, with no real starting point. Most scholars agree that it began with the spread of spiritualism and lasted until before WWII, with the period between the 1880s and 1930s to be the heyday of occultism.

<sup>41</sup> see further: Wouter J. Hanegraaff. *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2012. Jan Assmann. *Religio Duplex: How the Enlightenment Reinvented Egyptian Religion*. Cambridge: Polity. 2014.

<sup>42</sup> R. A. Gilbert. “Magus Incognito: Was Swedenborg responsible for the ‘Occult Revival’?” *Things Heard and Seen, the Newsletter of the Swedenborg Society, London*. 15. (2004): 44-51.

<sup>43</sup> R. A. Gilbert. “Magus Incognito: Was Swedenborg responsible for the ‘Occult Revival’?” *Things Heard and Seen, the Newsletter of the Swedenborg Society, London*. 15. (2004): 44-51. 46.

<sup>44</sup> Rev. C. M. Davies: *The Great Secret and its Unfoldment in Occultism. A Record of Forty Years Experience in the Modern Mystery, by A Church of England Clergyman*. London: George Redway. 1895. 209.

esoteric amounts to only around 2% of all publications.<sup>45</sup> This meagre sum proved to be one of the most influential aspects of nineteenth century esotericism because it changed the relationship between the initiated and the uninitiated.

During the century the larger organizations all produced journals, corresponded with readers and each other, discussed esoteric ideas, reviewed books and plays, published advertisements; but most importantly they did all this publicly. The longest running and most influential journals included the *Spiritual Magazine*, *Medium and Daybreak*, *Spiritualist Magazine*, *Light*, *Theosophical Quarterly*, *Quest*, *Irish Theosophist*, *Lucifer*, *Occult Review* and *The Equinox*. As to what these journals entailed we can see a prime example in the subtitle of *The Theosophist: A Monthly Journal Devoted to Oriental Philosophy, Art, Literature and Occultism: Embracing Mesmerism, Spiritualism, and Other Secret Sciences*. Thus by being publicly available, at an affordable price<sup>46</sup>, ideas that have been considered secret were available for anyone to learn about. Aside from the journals of various esoteric groups regular journals reported on occult matters, mainly the dealings of the more publicly oriented fractions, spiritualism and theosophy. The authors publishing in these journals ranged from writers through historians to psychical researchers as well as well-known occultists like A. E. Waite.<sup>47</sup> We can see the power of esoteric journals in the scandal around *The Equinox* where Aleister Crowley published the ritual materials of the Golden Dawn almost causing its total downfall by publishing secret material to the grand public. We also can't forget about the influence of esotericism on the popular culture of the century, ranging from literature through various forms of art, but detailing all of these influences would require the scope of another work. The real revival in the Occult Revival was not the increase of the number of those who were pursuing esoteric knowledge. The more and more esoteric organizations of the century were of course

---

<sup>45</sup> Simon Eliot: "Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing 1880-1919". *Bibliographical Society: Occasional papers*. 8. (1994): 22-25.

<sup>46</sup> The price for these journals varied but generally the cost was below the price range of similar monthly or quarterly journals. Ranging around 1s for a monthly editions as opposed to some other monthlies like *Fortnightly*, *Westminster or Blackwood's* which cost 2/6 the price was still lower. Some publications like the *Irish Theosophist*, with color plates boasted a price of 3-4d. *The Equinox* was available at 5s, and hard-cover copies at a price of 1 guinea, a price that was still below market value, indeed it never earned back the printing costs. see further: Mark S. Morrison. "The Periodical Culture of the Occult Revival: Esoteric Wisdom, Modernity and Counter-Public Spheres." *Journal of Modern Literature* 31. No.2. (2008): 1-22.

<sup>47</sup> Compiling a list of authors would be a large undertaking, but a fruitful one. Mapping out the various correspondences between authors and readers through the numerous pages of in-journal correspondences could certainly prove useful in discovering the dynamism of spreading ideas both in and outside of esoteric circles.

important but even more important was the fact that there were devoted authors who brought esotericism out from secrecy into the public sphere spreading further than before. The relationship between esoteric and exoteric changed. Occult groups, books and other services were advertised to the public propagating ideas of mesmerism, spiritualism, perennial philosophy, Kabbalah, astrology, divination, Hermetic ideas, Christian mysticism, Indian and Far-Eastern philosophies and religious concepts etc. that before were only available to smaller groups. With the Occult Revival came a great change within the relationship between the exoteric and the esoteric. During the previous centuries, aside from a limited number of publications, the bulk of esoteric literature was only available to the initiated, accessible through hand-copied manuscripts. With the spread and commercialization of the print industry and the eagerness of esoteric societies to participate in the public sphere led to a shift towards exotericism. Mark S. Morrison suggests that the occult periodicals aimed to accomplish three goals: to spread the “convictions of each journal’s particular corner of the occult world”, to support and defend the occult institutions against rivals and antagonists, to legitimate occult knowledge in “quasi-scientific” terms of validation.<sup>48</sup> It is evident that to accomplish these goals secrecy can only be applied with moderation. As William Q. Judge have put it in 1875 “As a society The Theosophical Society is exoteric. Its work is above board and open – namely to encourage its members in studying the ancient Doctrine and in ‘leading the life’. The esoteric work does not appear, and cannot appear, because it is between the individual member and a source which reaches him only through his own inner consciousness.”<sup>49</sup>

This poses a few remarkable points of insight into the inner workings of late-Victorian esoteric societies. First of all accessibility. Through periodicals and journal coverage and other venues of public appearances – theatre, art, public lectures etc. - esoteric societies “stepped out from the shadows”. Symbolism, general ideas and to some extent basic parts of the teachings of the respective factions were readily available in print, accessible to the curious. This of course does not mean that one could gain self-initiation into any order or get to know the rituals, passwords and other parts of the hidden knowledge. Second in rhyme with the proselytizing tendencies of the century esotericism began to evangelize much in the same way as the various denominations present in Great Britain and the USA. Thanks to this occult tropes became

---

<sup>48</sup> Mark S. Morrison. “The Periodical Culture of the Occult Revival: Esoteric Wisdom, Modernity and Counter-Public Spheres.” *Journal of Modern Literature* 31. No.2. (2008): 1-22. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Mark S. Morrison. *Ibid.* 4. Arthur L. Conger ed. *Practical Occultism: From the Private Letters of William Q. Judge*. Pasadena, CA: Theosophical UP 1951.

integrated into the popular culture of the era and through literature and art proved as a lasting influence up until contemporary occulture.

Esoteric groups also tried to prove the validity of various forms of occultism as a science. This led to a certain change in rhetoric with scientific terms being introduced into esoteric narratives, especially in the field of mesmerism and spiritism. Within the same field of Spiritualism and to some extent in Theosophy there was an initiative to broaden the social field of members. Information and membership was not exclusive to the upper classes, there were periodicals which targeted especially the lower classes and rural audiences.<sup>50</sup> There is another important aspect of esotericism in the broader nineteenth century society, which brings us to the supposed disenchantment of the West after the enlightenment and the re-enchantment that followed the general tendencies of secularization. It is of no interest to our present field to submerge deeply into the topic of the debate surrounding Weber's thesis, but there seems to be a general consent about certain assumptions. There was a period of secularization in many fields of life after the paradigm shifts brought on by the Enlightenment, as well as were trends of re-enchantment, and searches for alternatives, with varying degrees of intensity and affecting larger or smaller portions of the population. In his seminal work on the topic of the re-enchantment of modernity, through an analysis of alternative religions, Christopher Partridge coined the term occulture<sup>51</sup> to denote the alternative religious milieu, and the occult subculture.<sup>52</sup> He defines occultism on four principles: the interest in *Occult, The Importance of the Self, The Priority of Experience and a Hermeneutic of Suspicion, and Romanticizing the Premodern*.<sup>53</sup> The occult here means the Western esoteric tradition supplemented with Eastern spirituality, paganism, spiritualism, theosophy, alternative science and medicine, popular psychology, and interest in the paranormal. The importance of the self means that the individual and the personal religious practice is the central point of the various forms of practices and beliefs. This often postulates the belief that the absolute is not other than the self, only greater and the individual is a part of it and there are methods with which one can achieve a sense of unity with this absolute. The priority of experience and a hermeneutic of suspicion means the epistemological belief that only personal experience is the only legitimate way of acquiring true

---

<sup>50</sup> Mark. S. Morrisson. (2008): 10

<sup>51</sup> Christopher Partridge. *The Re-Enchantment of the West. Vol. 1. Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture*. London: T&T Clark International. 2004. 66.

<sup>52</sup> The term itself was borrowed from the industrial music scene, from occultist musician Genesis P-Orridge.

<sup>53</sup> Christopher Partridge. (2004): 68-78.

information. This brings with itself skepticism of authority, be it political, religious, or scientific. The romanticization of the premodern is the belief that humanity's progression in history was a regression from the freedom of "ancient wisdom" to the repression of dogma, rationalism, and authority of institutionalized religion and culture. He then examines the effect that this sub-culture means for popular culture, and in what ways the occult beliefs shape larger cultures. Although Partridge's examination is only concerned with contemporary occulture I would argue that his categorization can be applied to late-Victorian Britain, as we will see from the examples of the Golden Dawn and Crowley there is ample evidence to support this claim. The occult interests are evident in both cases, the focus of the magical workings was personal development, the quest for personal experience of the divine and the disregard of various authorities is especially evident in the life and works of Crowley, and the romanticization of Egypt is the core focus of this dissertation. If we look at them from the perspective of occulture it highlights the effect that these two had on popular culture and through the occult sub-culture on the later culture of the Western world. The Golden Dawn had among its members W. B. Yeats, whose literary work is ripe with esoteric ideas, Anne Horniman, theatre patron and manager, Florence Farr, actress and playwright, Arnold Bennett, novelist, Algernon Blackwood, writer, just to name a few of the many artists and authors, whose works had some influence on the pop-culture of the era.

From this brief overview we can see that the so called Occult Revival is not about the resurrection of esoteric ideas, but more about the accessibility of it. It was still a sub-culture of Victorian Britain but a quite numerous one at that. The ease with which numerous forms of esotericism could be approached brought with it some inescapable changes as well, both in social and in theoretical aspects as well. In the following chapter we will briefly examine the developments in the grander scheme of esotericism, and then focus on the history of the Golden Dawn.

## Esoteric trends of the late nineteenth century

One of the key concepts of Western Esotericism, and in particular of its nineteenth century developments, is synthesis: as in bringing together a variety of ideas, concepts and elements from various religious, magical and even scientific traditions to form a quasi-coherent and connected whole, a holistic worldview that provides answers to any kind of question. Although this effort has always been part of esoteric currents there are three main periods when synthesis took place on a larger scale. First during the Renaissance when Kabbala was introduced, through the works of Pico della Mirandola, Lodovico Lazzarelli, and Johannes Reuchlin, second during the nineteenth century and last during the later half of the twentieth century with the various New Age movements. Here we are obviously concerned with the nineteenth century developments. There were four major factors in play starting from the early 1800s: a growth of interest towards esoteric literature, the spread of Eastern ideas and a search for equally worthwhile elements in the western tradition. The latter two led to a synthesis of various sources from around the world, leading to a formation of new system of correspondences which became the ideological framework of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and twentieth century developments of Western Esotericism. The fourth factor was a perpetual quest for validation and legitimacy both in an externally, against the representatives of mainstream religions and science; and internally against other branches of esoteric thought. The examination of these factors can help in better understanding the developments that led to the organization of a multitude of esoteric societies and the general popularity of esotericism from the late 1800s through the early 1900s. It can also shed some light on the intellectual framework behind it all.

The first publication to supply the public with comprehensive and accessible material was Francis Barrett's *The Magus or Celestial Intelligencer*, published in 1801.<sup>54</sup> As evident from the book's original title it dealt with every topic relevant to any practitioner or interested party of magic at the turn of the century, from occult philosophy through astrology and alchemy, talismans, cabalistic and ceremonial magic, spirits and magnetism. Although certain Sanskrit texts were already circulating in translation by this point Eastern ideas were still considered to be a separate tradition, unable to mix with Western conceptions of magic. During the first half of the nineteenth century esotericism in institutionalized forms were limited to Freemasonry and its fringe derivatives and/or Christian Mysticism, to which later was added the more

---

<sup>54</sup> Francis Barrett. *The Magus or Celestial Intelligencer*. London: Lackington, Alley and Co. 1801. available digitally at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/grim/magus/ma100.htm> (retrieved at 2016.09.12.)

“scientifically”<sup>55</sup> inclined spiritualism and magnetism. Throughout the middle of the century we can see more and more individuals amassing libraries of esoteric nature.<sup>56</sup> In the field of magic the most important development of the mid-century was the working of Eliphas Lévi, who was the first to introduce the tarot as a form of divinatory foci and to mix it with Cabala.<sup>57</sup>

The true change came in the second half of the century, with the formation of Theosophy, which was an effect of interests towards Eastern ideas as well as a cause for further increase in it. Theosophy was the first to connect Indian religions and philosophies with Western esoteric practices. The basis was Helena Petrovna Blavatsky’s works *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. In the early years of the Theosophical Society focus was equally divided between East and West but later Blavatsky’s preference towards Eastern thought shaped the whole theosophical movement to deal more with Hinduism and Buddhism.<sup>58</sup> This in itself caused a reaction where those uninterested in Eastern traditions looked for similarly valuable sources from the Western hemisphere. It would be foolish to downplay the importance of the introduction of Eastern thought into the sphere of Western esotericism, but there were considerable efforts to prove that the Western tradition can hold its footing against the Eastern ideas and a renewed interest arose in it in the second half of the century.

With these developments to technique and concepts the aim of esoteric practices shifted as well. The aim of *knowing* esoteric knowledge is a constant factor throughout the history of esotericism, to know something hidden, not known and not available for everyone, to be a part of a select few in possession of this secret. This knowledge brings some form of reward as well, from spiritual, like in the case of mystery religions, or material. The focus of practical magic during preceding centuries was almost always focused on the material. The magus was able to command spirits to show the location of hidden treasure, to gain wealth, the alchemist was

---

<sup>55</sup> There was a considerable amount of effort to prove the scientific validity of spiritualism, which is evident in the naming of spiritist periodicals, ex. *Spiritual Telegraph*, *Spiritual Notes*, *Human Nature* etc. as well as in the case of animal magnetism and mesmerism where spiritual or magical concepts were connected with electromagnetism, a practice that saw a resurgence in late 20th century pseudo-scientific healing practices. See further: Mark S. Morrison (2008): 6-7.

<sup>56</sup> See for example the personal library of Frederick Hockley (1809-1885) whose collection was acquired and sold by George Redway in 1887 consisted of over one thousand books and manuscripts. Alison Butler. “Magical Beginnings: The Intellectual Origins of the Victorian Occult Revival” *Limina*. 9. (2003): 78-95.

<sup>57</sup> On the importance of Eliphas Lévi see further Christopher McIntosh. *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival* London: Rider. 1975.

<sup>58</sup> Alison Butler (2003): 90.

aiming to create gold and become immortal etc. In the nineteenth century the focus shifted to the spiritual and the aim of magicians was not material wealth, but spiritual, perhaps a sign of the general culture of the times, extraordinary experiences of the divine and achievement of unity between man and God.

In 1887, dr. William Wynn Westcott (1848-1925), Freemason, Rosicrucian and Theosophist, browsed the library of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia. There amongst the books he found a manuscript, written in a cipher, based on the *Polygraphiae libri sex* by the Abbot Trithemius. After he successfully deciphered the text, Westcott found an esoteric manual that dealt with rituals, Kabbalah, tarot, alchemy and astrology. Also on a small slip of a paper amongst the manuscript's pages a short note, to contact a certain Fräulein Sprengel in Germany. After he picked up correspondence with her, Westcott was authorized to create the English branch of Die Goldene Dämmerung<sup>59</sup>, the Golden Dawn, given in Hebrew in the Cypher Manuscript as Chabrath Zerek Aour Bokhr, Society of the Shining Light of Dawn.<sup>60</sup> Or at least that is how Westcott presented the new order.<sup>61</sup> However it is clear that the roots of the Golden Dawn should be searched in the Theosophical Society, where a debate arose in the London Lodge in 1883 between those who wished to study western esoteric traditions and those who were interested more in eastern religions. This debate led to the formation of the Hermetic Society, led by Anna Kingsford, which ceased its workings in 1888, with the death of Kingsford. Although the idea for the Golden Dawn was already discussed by Westcott and Mathers earlier, it was right time for the new order to start working and fill the void left by the Hermetic Society.<sup>62</sup>

Dr. Westcott was a coroner, working with the human body, but also deeply interested in the less concrete aspects of humanity, the spiritual. His pursuit for greater knowledge led him to join the ranks of the Freemasons, the Rosicrucian order and the philosophical branch of the Theosophical Society. Of these he preferred the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia the most, where he befriended the future co-founders of the Golden Dawn, William Robert Woodman and Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers. Together they were not fully satisfied with the

---

<sup>59</sup> Although Dämmerung means twilight in German.

<sup>60</sup> Darcy Kuntz. *The Golden Dawn Sourcebook*. Lynnwood, WA: Holmes Publishing Group. 1996. 48.

<sup>61</sup> There is an alternate version about the foundation of the Golden Dawn which disregards the cypher manuscripts and attributes Westcott as the sole mind behind the organization. Regardie, Israel (1983) 1.-12. Another version for the origin of the Cypher Manuscripts is available in Westcott's *Historic Lecture – Golden Dawn*. Yoke NS. 99. This is further expanded later in footnote 269.

<sup>62</sup> Hanegraaff, Wouter J. (2006): 323.



available materials of the orders they were members of, and planned to create a new order, based on a comparative study of ancient religions and philosophy.

Mathers can be considered to be the single greatest driving force behind the development of the Golden Dawn. Little is known of his life before and after his involvement with the Golden Dawn. He was born in 1854 in a middle-class family, he was introduced to Freemasonry in 1877, by a neighbor, Frederick Holland, high-grade Mason, member of the Soc. Ros. and later founder of the Brotherhood of Eight.<sup>63</sup> Mathers became a member of the Soc. Ros. in 1882, and in 1885 in the Hermetic Society. He never pursued formal education, and was instead self-educated, mostly in esotericism and to a certain degree in languages. He translated multiple works on magic, including the *Lesser Key of Solomon*, *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, *Almadel*, and *Abramelin*, which would all be instrumental in popularizing the themes and practices found in them. Another long lasting influence of Mathers' work was the systemization of John Dee's Enochian language and magic. His work was supported by the financial aid of Westcott, who employed Mathers as a full-time student of the occult.

Some elements of Westcott's tale suggest that only part of his story was true. The Cipher Manuscripts were really a part of the Rosicrucian library, passed on most likely from Kenneth Mackenzie, and they were in truth deciphered by Westcott.<sup>64</sup> He found the bare bones of the rituals of an initiatory order with five grades of initiation, and asked Mathers to help in the expansion of the manuscript into a coherent and useable system for an order. With the help of Woodman they created the rituals of the First Order, and Mathers created the rituals and the curriculum for the Second Order, that he dubbed *Rosae Rubae et Aureae Crucis*. After the initial workings were done, Westcott claimed that he made contact to Anna Sprengel, who was in turn in direct contact with the Secret Chiefs a body of transcendent beings, with authority over the operation of the cosmos and magic. Due to the large number of grammatical and syntactical errors in the German letters it seems quite likely that the letters were a forgery created by Westcott to legitimize the Golden Dawn.<sup>65</sup> Whether real or not, the story was accepted by Mathers and Woodman, and by the future members of the order, and in 1888 the Isis-Urania Temple of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was founded in London, and others were to follow throughout Britain.<sup>66</sup> The order employed a narrative similar to other contemporary

---

<sup>63</sup> Rosemary Guiley. *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Alchemy*. New York, NY: Infobase Publishing. 136.

<sup>64</sup> Regardie, Israel (1983): 10.

<sup>65</sup> McIntosh, Christopher (2011): 250-253.

<sup>66</sup> Regardie, Israel (1983): 11.

mystical lodges, progressive ranks of initiation, complex rituals and esoteric knowledge that was unobtainable through conventional methods of reason and was only available through revelations. These elements shaped the attitude of the Golden Dawn towards the religion of Ancient Egypt. The Golden Dawn was made up of two greater levels of initiations; the first was the First or Outer Order, which consisted of five ranks. Above the Outer Order stood the Inner or Second Order, created in 1891, which required personal invitation. It was in the Second Order where much of the actual magic took place.

The aesthetics of the newly founded Golden Dawn drew a lot from Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, Hellenistic mystery cults and also from a mythologized view of Egypt. The outfits, items and ceremonial elements of the rituals employed an Egyptianized iconography. As we have discussed it previously, the Golden Dawn sided with the mystical Egypt over the scholarly, although most of the members were aware of the latter. Westcott for example had a copy of *Essay on Young and Champollion's system of Hieroglyphs*, by H. Salt (1825), in his library.<sup>67</sup> The founders of the order also frequented the Egyptian collection and the Reading Room of the British Museum. Instead of trying to cope with the scholarly view of Egypt the Golden Dawn were more interested in the Hermetic traditions and the mystical Egypt, and their rituals created a syncretism between the mystical, hermetic and scholarly Egypt, Kabbalah and medieval Western esotericism. For example the initiation of a new member, called the Neophyte Ceremony included a rite where the initiate was taken through the room stopping by members of the order, called officiants who helped him in the transition from the darkness of ignorance to the light of understanding.<sup>68</sup> These officiants bore names from the Eleusinian Mysteries, for example Hierophant, Kerux, Dadouchos etc. and represented the gods of Egypt. In the eastern part of the temple two Freemasonic pillars were erected, decorated with spells from the *Book of the Dead*.<sup>69</sup> The ritual also borrowed some parts, concerning the four elements, from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. In a higher degree rite the member was required to learn a set of gestures to be able to see through the Veil of Isis, enter the Tomb of Osiris, symbolically die and be reborn in a variant of the Opening of the Mouth ritual. Also the ritual outfits of the members employed elements of Egyptian iconography. They wore the nemyss headdress of the pharaohs and wielded the crook and scourge in their hands.

---

<sup>67</sup> Tully, Caroline (2010): 27.

<sup>68</sup> Tully, Caroline (2010): 29-30.

<sup>69</sup> Tully, Caroline (2010): 29.

Mathers the creator of most of the rituals of the Golden Dawn spent a considerable time in the British Museum, he even met his wife, Mina Bergson in the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery. He read books on Egyptology, available at the time but in the aspect of religion rejected the scientific viewpoint entirely. As he stated in Paris, it involved “*beautiful truths... dead to the Egyptologists, but so living and so full of vital force to us.*”<sup>70</sup> Another Golden Dawn member also shared a special relationship with the British Museum, the future Praemonstrix Florence Farr became fascinated with Egypt after joining the ranks of the order. So much that she created rituals to the Egyptian gods and after she resigned from the Golden Dawn she held “Egyptian initiations”. In the British Museum she made contact with the spirit of Mutemmenu, a Chantress of Amun from the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty, whose coffined mummy was exhibited. According to Farr, in one of her previous lives she was Mutemmenu, so she was actually conversing with her former self, an idea that was not foreign from the thinking of the esoteric societies of the time.

The Golden Dawn quickly became the most prominent occult order in England. It bolstered among its rank W. B. Yeats, Maud Gonne, Arthur Machen, Evely Underhill and other members of the English intellectual elite, writers, chemists, engineers. In 1897 Woodman died and Westcott succeeded him as supreme magus of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, and had little inspiration to carry on as the leader of the Golden Dawn. With this Mathers became the de facto leader of the group by claiming to maintain direct contact with the Secret Chiefs. By the time Mathers achieved supreme authority over the Golden Dawn, it had around 323 members.<sup>71</sup> Mathers also made it impossible for Westcott to remain in the Order, with a trick. Presumably he himself placed some Golden Dawn instructional papers in a carriage, accompanied by Westcott’s name and address. When this came to light his superiors gave him a choice, he either gave up ceremonial magic or being a coroner. Westcott chose his work and withdrawn entirely from the Golden Dawn in 1897, leaving it in the hands of Mathers.<sup>72</sup> However Mathers’ rule didn’t last long. By 1899 dissent was growing in the Second Order of the London temple. They became dissatisfied with the way Mathers was leading the Order, he was already living in Paris by this time and only conducted his rule via letters. The Second Order also regarded Crowley, whose friendship with Mathers was growing rapidly, as a threat and wanted to dispose Mathers from leadership. As Mathers founded the Second Order on the

---

<sup>70</sup> Frederic Lees. “Isis Worship in Paris: Conversations with the Hierophant Rameses and the High Priestess Anari” *The Humanitarian*. 16. 2. (1900): 83.

<sup>71</sup> Kaczynski, Richard (2002): 47-50.

<sup>72</sup> Regardie, Israel (1983): 14.

premise of his direct communication with the Secret Chiefs, instead of relying on the mediation of Anna Sprengel some adepts also claimed to have made contact with them on their own. On 3 March 1900 a committee was formed, after Farr gave in her resignation from being the representative of Mathers, after he initiated Crowley into the Second Order, against their wish. On March 29 the Second Order removed Mathers from his leadership and expelled him from the order. This culminated in a scandalous court case bolstered by Crowley's performance of demanding entrance into the temple, dressed in Scottish costume. Three years after Mathers' removal the order split into further factions. In 1901 the Horos couple, befriended Mathers and stole a set of documents, but were later arrested on account of immoral activities. During the trial the Golden Dawn became associated with these immoral acts, and even the full Neophyte ritual was read out in court.<sup>73</sup> This of course garnered some unwanted publicity. Robert Felkin renamed the remainder of the order to Stella Matutina, a faction where W. B. Yeats remained a member after his withdrawal from the Isis-Urania temple, and Mathers gathered the remaining loyal temples and renamed the order to Alpha et Omega. Under Felkin's leadership the Stella Matutina distanced itself from the Golden Dawn roots, rituals were modified and a stronger focus on Eastern ideas was introduced, mainly the Tattwas and the Akasic Records. Felkin and his family moved to New Zealand 1916, but temples around England remained operational, with smaller membership than in the height of the order. Other splinter groups emerged as well, like the Cromlech Temple, a strange amalgam of Anglican piety and some ceremonial magic, Dion Fortune's Fraternity of the Inner Light, A. E. Waite's Fellowship of the Rosy Cross. After Mather's death in 1918 the Alpha et Omega also splintered under Mrs. Mathers' leadership. Students formed new groups, like the School of Ageless Wisdom, and in America new temples were founded after receiving mail-order initiation. These splinter group often fought each other, mostly in letters and on the astral plane. The order of succession became murky between the two World Wars, and when Israel Regardie in his quest to save the knowledge of the Golden Dawn published the available rituals and lectures both the Stella Matutina and the AO stopped accepting new members. The ideas formed by the original order have been resurrected by numerous smaller groups and organizations, both physical and virtual, and the Golden Dawn system remains in circulation in contemporary esoteric currents.

---

<sup>73</sup> Susan Johnston Graf. *W. B. Yeats: Twentieth Century Magus*. York Beach, ME: Weiser. 2000. 15.

Some notes on the sociology of the Golden Dawn can be drawn from the available sources. Of the known 337 members,<sup>74</sup> 199 were men and 138 women, a significant number of them were related either by blood or marriage, and most of them members of other esoteric organizations, Freemasonry and Theosophy being the two most popular.<sup>75</sup> Most members were in their thirties at the time of joining the order with some with smaller but similar number of older and younger initiates. Even more interesting is the social standing of the members. The largest portion came from a background of middle-class city dwellers from multiple walks of life. Clerks, lawyers, doctors, a considerable number of artists and creative professionals, teachers, even some scientists just to name a few. There were no rural members at all, and the number of upper-class members was also small. The three members with titles of nobility were all women, and the three other noble members were foreigners, two of whom were also wives of barons. There were no members from politics or other professions where membership in a secret magical order could have been harmful if disclosed. Maud Gonne described the order's membership as "*the very essence of British middle class dullness.*"<sup>76</sup> A glance at the membership of the more accepted Masonic lodges would yield a set of starkly different sociological background. This middle-class majority is of little surprise. On one hand it shows similarities with earlier developments of esotericism, when times of cultural change, undoubtedly present in the Victorian era in all aspects of life, almost always bring with it an increase in interest towards esoteric literature and organizations.<sup>77</sup> This was the case during the 18<sup>th</sup> century esoteric revival in France, and during the Reformation in the German provinces. On the other hand it was the middle-class that had access to sufficient education to provide a basis of interest in later self-education. This preoccupation with self-education and personal development is visible in the popular philosophical movement of British idealism, promulgated

---

<sup>74</sup> Based on the available lists of members and initiations, the full list of members is compiled by Sally Davis, who also written short biographies and biographic notes to most of the known members. As of 2019 her research is not yet complete and is unpublished, but her notes are available online at: <http://wrightanddavis.co.uk/GD/index.html> (accessed: 2019.09.15.)

<sup>75</sup> Graham John Wheeler. "A note on the social demographics of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn." unpublished, available on academia.edu at [https://www.academia.edu/37494992/A\\_note\\_on\\_the\\_social\\_demographics\\_of\\_the\\_Hermetic\\_Order\\_of\\_the\\_Golden\\_Dawn](https://www.academia.edu/37494992/A_note_on_the_social_demographics_of_the_Hermetic_Order_of_the_Golden_Dawn) (accessed: 2019.09.15.)

<sup>76</sup> Maud Gonne MacBride. *A Servant of the Queen, her own story*. Dublin: Standard House. 1950. 248.

<sup>77</sup> Alison Butler. *Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic: Invoking Tradition*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan. 2011. 175.

by authors like T. H. Green, F. H. Bradley, and Bernard Bosanquet. The ideas found in the works of these authors and the goals of personal development share many similarities with the Golden Dawn's goals and ideas, unsurprising concerning the popularity of the philosophic ideas of idealism. The themes of the workings, the topics of concerns of the Golden Dawn were answers to the interests and problems of the middle-class of the late Victorian era, wrapped in a coat made of the fancies of that same demographic. These were most predominantly Egyptology, classical and folk mythology, personal forms of religious expression, fascination with the unknown, ancient, macabre, forbidden, and secret, with a peculiar focus on the practice of magic, that was a logical and natural development of middle-class intellectual developments of the Victorian era.<sup>78</sup>

### **An occult genealogy**

Talking about the history of esotericism, of a lineage of esoteric traditions, or of a genealogy of esoteric societies is an interesting question, as it postulates some theoretical assertions. First of all it requires us to recognize that there is a historical current of ideas, of rejected knowledge, that in its numerous appearances and deviations from the “core set of ideas” can still be recognized as part of the same tradition. Second that the individual historical forms of esotericism were not independent of each other, there was interaction between individuals, groups, and ideas throughout history. Third we postulate that these interactions and references between ideas and people can be mapped and one can create a simplified family tree of the history of esotericism. Due to the large number of individual manifestations of esoteric ideas mapping out the full history of the various strands of esotericism is a large undertaking,<sup>79</sup> and here I will only try to provide some directions to contextualize the Golden Dawn and Crowley among other appearances of esoteric thought, the relationship between esoteric groups present in the late nineteenth century and a short outlook on their legacy. But first the question of constructed tradition needs to be addressed as it is highly relevant to the Golden Dawn's and Crowley's approach towards Egypt. Tradition plays a key role in almost all instances of esotericism as their paradigms are almost always based on them being bearers of primordial

---

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* 179.

<sup>79</sup> There are no real concise histories of Western esotericism. The one that comes close to it is R. van der Broek, Wouter J. Hanegraaff. (edd.) *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to the Modern Times*. New York, NY: SUNY. 1998.

knowledge, transmitted through special means.<sup>80</sup> The legitimacy of the ideas presented by individual authors or groups in the esoteric context is based on the heritage they can claim to themselves, the more antique this heritage the better. These claims are of course far from the history of the real tradition and transmission of esoteric ideas.<sup>81</sup> In the next chapter we will deal with the ideological influences of other esoteric organization on the Golden Dawn, so in the following we will limit ourselves to some exoteric observations.

The basic form of organization of esotericism in the late nineteenth century was the initiatory society. There were two main approaches to esotericism, the theoretical and the practical. The former contains the various masonic societies, Theosophy, and other smaller groups interested in esoteric knowledge but were not enacting rituals or practiced magic in any form; while the latter organizations did. Older groups like Freemasonry were still relevant; although the main forms of British masonry distanced themselves from esotericism in favor humanism and rationalism in the late 18<sup>th</sup> - early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries;<sup>82</sup> and its esoteric offshoots like the SRIA played an important role in the collection, organization, and dissemination of esoteric knowledge. Founded in 1867 by Robert Wentworth Little the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia drew adherents mostly from the masonic circles, published a journal titled *The Rosicrucian*. Together with the Theosophical Society it was the meeting place of the esoterically inclined and the alma mater of other societies. Little is also credited with another order, the Ancient and Archeological Order of Druids<sup>83</sup>, a society that Gerald Gardner the founder of Wicca was a member of. The revival of druidism is an important aspect of the history of esotericism in Britain, that due to its entirely different focal points falls outside the scope of this dissertation. There were also non-organized strands of esotericism: mesmerism and spiritualism was widespread, the 1877 publication of the *Cloud of Unknowing* helped mysticism etc. The most important structural development was the creation of “esoteric schools”, where knowledge was transmitted in an organized, systemic way. This mirrors the professionalization of the scientific field, with which esotericism also had to contend, even while efforts have been made to reconcile the two at least since Swedenborg. And *the* esoteric school of the nineteenth century was undoubtedly the Theosophical Society. Many books have been written about the history of the organization and the developments of H. P. Blavatsky’s ideas and the influence it had on

---

<sup>80</sup> Andreas B. Kilcher. (ed.) *Constructing Tradition. Means and Myths of Transmission in Western Esotericism*. Leiden: Brill. 2010. ix.

<sup>81</sup> For a bibliographic summary on the history of esotericism see Wouter J. Hanegraaff (2013): Chapter 9. 159-180.

<sup>82</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaf. (2013): 34-35.

<sup>83</sup> Hutton, Ronald. *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of Druids in Britain*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 2009. 343.

contemporary and following esotericism as well. The introduction of Eastern ideas stirred the esoteric milieu, and in a way the creation of the Golden Dawn; itself an offshoot of the SRIA, an offshoot of Freemasonry; was a reaction against the Eastern bias. This however doesn't mean that there was antagonism between the two groups as multiple people were members of both, and held lectures at events organized by both organizations. Before the inception of the Golden Dawn the only society that taught esotericism in practice, as in practiced magic, was the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor that possibly started working in 1870.<sup>84</sup> Their relationship with the Theosophical Society was at first good, but by the early 1880s they had turned on each other over debates on the inferiority of Eastern ideas and questions of immorality. This latter was based on the fact that the Brotherhood's teachings were based largely on the works of Paschal Beverly Randolph, who introduced sex into his system of magic. It is uncertain if the Golden Dawn had any relation with the Brotherhood of Luxor, whether there were members who were part of both organizations but Randolph's ideas are clearly missing from the Golden Dawn system. They however reached Theodor Reuss, a co-founder of the Ordo Templi Orientis in Germany, through the English Freemason John Yarker.<sup>85</sup> It is safe to assume that Crowley did not encounter Randolph's writings at least until 1910, when he was initiated into the O.T.O. He became its leader in 1925, but by then he was already working on incorporating Thelema into it. Today the O.T.O is the "official" organization of Thelema, although there are other groups that practice it, with or without claiming lineage to Crowley. The other major Thelemic society, the A·A·A· formed in 1907 allied with the O.T.O in 1919<sup>86</sup> but fragmented after Crowley's death. As we have seen although the popular perception of the time was that there was an occult revival by the late nineteenth century there were only two major societies dedicated to magic in England, and two major groups interested in theory. Mostly due to internal strife and splintering this changed in the early 1900s, when multiple new, but mostly small societies were founded, continuing the tradition of school-like organized dissemination of esoteric ideas and practices. Most of these societies survived the two World Wars with dwindling numbers and saw a growing increase in the 60s and 70s with the rising popularity of New Age religions and new forms of esotericism.

---

<sup>84</sup> Godwin, Joscelyn, Christian Chanel, John Patrick. *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor: Initiatic and Historical Documents of an Order of Practical Occultism*. New York, NY: Samuel Weiser. 1995. 92-97.

Besides the Brotherhood of Luxor and the Golden Dawn there were no other major groups interested in practical magic in Britain. One society the Ordo Aurum Solis claims that it was founded in 1897 by George Stanton and Charles Kingold. However I haven't found any credible source that supports this claim and any book that mentions them seems to have copied the same paragraph almost verbatim which raises some doubts. Researching this question further could yield some interesting results.

<sup>85</sup> Pasi, Marco. "Ordo Templi Orientis" *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*.

<sup>86</sup> *The Equinox* 3. 198.





## The Reception of Egypt

Although the scientific discovery of ancient Egypt happened nearly two centuries ago, in the popular culture Egypt still holds the place of a mystical and ancient land that it held in the minds of ancient Greek historians. Even for them, who were in a world thousand years younger than the Great Pyramids, Egypt was a mysterious and magical land, a place of great wisdom, and the oldest civilization to flourish.<sup>87</sup> This image of the mysterious Egypt is still vivid today from internet-sold “ancient Egyptian” remedies, medicines and magical practices to literary works, like John Crowley’s highly successful *Aegypt* tetralogy of novels. Evidently ever since the Greeks, Egypt holds an authority that can legitimize anything, that claims its origin there, with great wisdom and efficiency. The fascination of the Western civilization with Egypt, and the expressions of this fascination are called Egyptomania.<sup>88</sup> There were certain periods when Egyptomania was more popular than in other times. The late-Roman period, the Renaissance, Enlightenment and especially the long nineteenth century were such periods, when the acquiring of anything Egyptian, be it real artifacts or manufactured Egyptianized objects were cultural trends of the time. In fin de siècle British thought ancient Egypt and its people were in high regard, elevated to the position of “*the grand ancestor of us*” filled with “*the finest people ever seen*”.<sup>89</sup> Since the decipherment of the hieroglyphs in 1822 there are two conflicting views of Egypt, the mystical and the scientific, and although the scientific study of Egypt is stronger today than it was before, the image of the mystical land of the pharaohs is still deeply rooted in Western thinking and, even if possible, it would require a few more centuries to be completely eradicated from popular culture.

After Napoleon’s campaign in Egypt in 1798 the interest towards all things Egyptian once again rose throughout Europe. Although at first some writers made fun of the craze that followed they could not stop the obsession with all things Egyptian.<sup>90</sup> The demand for Egyptian artifacts was already present in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but after the campaign it soared into unprecedented heights. Britain and France engaged in an “artifact war”<sup>91</sup> to acquire more and more ancient Egyptian relics, paintings, sculptures, papyri, mummies etc. with no differentiation between authentic antiquities and fakes. These acquisitions formed the basis of

---

<sup>87</sup> Hornung, Erik (2001): 19-26.

<sup>88</sup> Fazzini, Richard A, Mary E. Mckercher. “Egyptomania” in Redford, Donald B, ed. (2001): 458-460.

<sup>89</sup> W. M. Flinders Petrie. “Archeology in Egypt.” *Archeological Review*. 1888. 413.

<sup>90</sup> For example Tomas Rowlandson’s *The Antiquarians* and *Modern Antiquities*, or James Gillray’s caricatures.

<sup>91</sup> see further: Hooek, Holger(2007): 49-72.

the Egyptian exhibits of museums throughout Europe. Egypt entered the artistic scene of the Romanticism, mixed with elements from the *Arabian Nights*, drawing heavily from the image of the mystical Egypt of wisdom and magic and created a new style of aesthetics, that showed up in literature, paintings, sculptures, music, architecture and even furniture.<sup>92</sup> A variety of newspapers, and periodicals with varying degree of seriousness reported the news of archeological finds, and Egyptian discoveries. Candelabra, statuettes, clocks and jewelry all bore elements of Egyptian art, as well as did ceramic and porcelain industry produced numerous instances of Egyptianized tea and coffee sets. Egypt became part of the everyday life of the middle and upper classes, but the lively state of Egypt was most often far from historical accuracy. Rather it was a re-imagination, shaped in a form parallel to Victorian era Britain. Egypt was presented as a stable state, ruled by a monarch, with cultural dominance over the Near-Eastern region, military superiority, with all the sources about victorious battles taken at face value. This image of stability was used in the Industrial Revolution as a way to ease public fear of new technologies. Obelisks and battered walls were used in bridges, reservoirs, factories and railway stations.<sup>93</sup> But more importantly for our field of research the religion of ancient Egypt could be used as a basis for spiritual path finding. As we will see later the most important places in propagating the scholarly view of Egypt were the museums, but failed in some cases, while the materials were used by individuals who disregarded scientific accuracy. The British Museum especially served as a meeting place of interested artists and occultists, with visible artifacts, easily available reading room and curators that would gladly help aspiring magicians with the production of translations of religious texts.

The image of mystical Egypt was born when the meaning of the hieroglyphs was lost. The Greeks and Romans were not interested in learning the signs, while the Egyptians guarded their secrets well, restraining foreigners from learning their writing and language. This led to the concept that the hieroglyphic writing was not a profane system like the Greek or Latin alphabet, but instead they were used to share hidden knowledge. The historians who were interested in Egyptian philosophy, culture and religion, like Herodotus, Plato, Diodorus, Plutarch, Strabo, Pliny and Juvenal, as well as some passages in the Bible all conveyed an increasingly false account of Egypt.<sup>94</sup> Apart from the account of these writers there is another

---

<sup>92</sup> Esposito, Donato (2003): 81. see further Patrick Conner. *The Inspiration of Egypt: Its Influence on British Artists, Travellers, and Designers, 1700-1900*. Manchester: Brighton Borough Council. 1983.

<sup>93</sup> Jeffreys, David (2003): 12. Hassan, Fekri A. (2003): 19-21.

<sup>94</sup> Hornung, Erik (2001): 1-4.

corpus of texts that greatly aided the association of Egypt with the arcane. The so called Hermetic texts, which were written sometimes in the first to fourth century AD, a collection of pseudepigraphs attributed to Hermes Trismegistos, Thrice Great Hermes, the syncretistic equivalent of Hermes and Thot. During the Renaissance, when it was rediscovered in a Greek “translation”, it was believed that the corpus was written in the time of Moses.<sup>95</sup> The texts of the Hermetic corpus ponder on a variety of subjects, the creator Demiurge, God, alchemy, astrology, reincarnation etc. One of the most well known and used passage comes from the Tabula Smaragdina, which was said to be found on emerald tablets in the crypt of Hermes by Alexander the Great.<sup>96</sup> This passage deals with magic and serves as the basis for sympathetic magic. “*That which is Below corresponds to that which is Above, and that which is Above corresponds to that which is Below, to accomplish the miracle of the One Thing*”<sup>97</sup> or in the short form “*As above, so below*” was regarded a basic principle by western alchemists and magicians, and is still used today in esoteric writings. With the centuries long idea of Egypt as the source of arcane knowledge, or gnosis, it is not surprising that the first popular secret society, Freemasonry employed numerous Egyptian motifs in the decorations of lodges and the rituals. The filters of the classical authors, the Hermetic tradition, the artifacts and mummies all aided the formation of the concept of the mystic Egypt as the origin of all magic and arcane knowledge. Legitimizing magical practices with claims of Egyptian origin was already a valid method of reasoning by the time the hieroglyphs were deciphered. When the Romani ethnic traveled throughout Europe in the late Middle Ages, their aptitude for divination, sleights of hand and magic were explained with their supposed Egyptian origin, hence the name gypsy is a worn down form of Egyptian, according to the Webster’s dictionary.

During the time from Hellenism until the nineteenth century there were multiple attempts to decipher the hieroglyphs. Some of these trials were partially successful in grasping the fundamental attributes of Egyptian writing and language but ultimate were unsuccessful in translating, for example Athanasius Kircher, who proposed a largely symbolic and allegoric interpretation of the signs but was the first to propose a relation between ancient Egyptian and Coptic. Horapollo’s *Hieroglyphica*; a late antique text, discovered, translated from Greek to Latin, and published in the 15<sup>th</sup> century;<sup>98</sup> explained the hieroglyphs as a fully symbolic system that could link Christianity to Egypt, thus linking it to the source of the most ancient source of

---

<sup>95</sup> Ebeling, Florian (2007): 8-9.

<sup>96</sup> Ebeling, Florian (2007): 48. 51.

<sup>97</sup> Holmyard, Eric John (1923): 525.

<sup>98</sup> Fritze, Ronald H. (2016): 140.

knowledge. Other authors also regarded the hieroglyphs as symbolic and a perfect language to convey ideas in the Neoplatonic sense, like Piero Valeriano, Erasmus, Leon Battista Alberti etc. Most of the trials to decipher the hieroglyphs were rooted in a mystical view of Egypt, and so it was believed that the hieroglyphs were symbolic in nature, and could be read with the help of astrology, numerology and other esoteric sciences, until finally in 1822 Jean-Francois Champollion succeeded in deciphering the hieroglyphs and thus unlocking the mysteries of Egypt.<sup>99</sup> The effect was demoralizing. The translations made with Champollion's method seemed less interesting, more mundane and not mystical enough to satisfy the needs of the general public who searched for the arcane knowledge hidden in the hieroglyphs. Thus began the split between scholarly and mystical Egypt. On one side the scientific, philological study of Egyptian texts could begin, while on the other hand those who were more interested in esoteric knowledge could use the translations differently than the Egyptologists and historians. It is important to note that some of the historical and archeological discoveries that occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century were not motivated by scientific reasons, but instead by the faith. The Christian audience of Britain saw an opportunity to take up arms against the claims of Darwin and his followers and those doubting the truth of the Bible, with the historical verifications they hoped to find in Egypt.<sup>100</sup> This shows that Egypt possessed such authority that could be used to further augment the verity of the Bible. This credibility stems from the belief that Egypt is the oldest civilization, so ancient that even the ancient Greeks regarded it as old and mystical, and the philosophers and various religions of the Hellenism argued that Egypt was *the* repository of wisdom.<sup>101</sup> The early archeological discoveries, both in Egypt and in Mesopotamia, were often in conjunction with biblical studies, and often the discoveries were used as arguments that as an outside source verify the Bible. Denominations and Churches supported excavations,<sup>102</sup> and the scientific discoveries were used in the polemics between the religious and the irreligious. It was a commonly held conception that by the 1880's Egyptology as an academic field abandoned the mystical, and religious approaches, but as David Gange argued "*there has been no moment in history of British Egyptology when the Bible and Herodotus have played a more powerful and prominent role than they did in 1880s. As the*

---

<sup>99</sup> Parkinson, Richard (1999): 14-18. also on Champolion see Adkins, Lesley (2000)

<sup>100</sup> For example Akhenaten's henotheism was regarded as a verification of an antediluvian religion that was in accordance with the Bible. Gange, David (2006): 1084-1086.

<sup>101</sup> Tully, Caroline (2010): 24-25.

<sup>102</sup> David Gange. *Dialogues with the Dead. Egyptology in British Culture and religion. 1822-1922*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013. 161-163.

*closest comprehensible sources of baffling texts like the Book of the Dead, these familiar traditions became crucial bridges from the modern world into the seemingly incomprehensible chaos of primeval mythologies.*"<sup>103</sup> The familiar helped understand, or at least to order, the new information available through philological and archeological works, but often lead to some stark misconceptions. Even the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 was seen by some commentators as a fulfillment of Ezekiel 30. The sensationalized discovery of the mummy of Ramesses II, and the following media coverage also popularized the concept that he was the "Pharaoh" of the Bible giving further arguments to those that tried to prove the validity of the Bible on scientific discoveries. The sponsorship and funding from Christian denominations is most starkly visible in the case of the Egyptian Exploration Fund, that focused its work on the Delta region, with the claim that they are not doing Egyptian archeology, but Hebrew, as it was the Hebrews that lived and worked on the Eastern Delta, and is the place where the stories of Jacob, Joseph and Moses took place. The fund excavated Pithom and Ramses, and their discoveries and purported connection to Biblical events were popularized most by M. L. Herbert McClure, and his rhetorical question illustrates the attitude of biblical studies focused Egyptologist approach: *"How does this city practically affect our individual thought or action at the present day? These historical discoveries are of the most vital importance in establishing beyond the power of question the truth and authenticity of the statements of Holy Scripture, and at a time like the present, contemporary confirmation is doubly valuable."*<sup>104</sup> There were attempts to find similarities between Bible verses and passages from the *Book of the Dead*, to show that although the Egyptians were pagan, their religion was almost inspired, and much closer to the truth. The idea that the Egyptian religion was highly abstract, and that they worshipped a single almighty and unknowable god, and held eerily similar conceptions on eternal life and resurrection was still widespread as well. These are just some examples of how Christianity shaped the reception of Egypt, but it is noteworthy that these ideas were part of common knowledge in the educated middle class, and the objects of our study reflected on these either directly or indirectly. Although scientific criticism showed that this was far from reality, it did not stop evangelists and occult writers from using Egyptian elements or even Egyptian texts as sources for legitimacy, and we can see even today how this idea can be used as a successful business model. Thus the scholarly and mystical views lived side by side; esoteric factions used translations made by proper scholars, but explained the contents through a

---

<sup>103</sup> Gange, David. (2013): 164.

<sup>104</sup> Gange, David. (2013): 189-190.

different lens, and scholars were not shying away from helping the interested laymen with translations and lectures. It was rumored that Sir Ernest Wallis Budge, the Assistant Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities between 1893 and 1924, was so helpful to the Golden Dawn, that he even permitted a temple to function in the British Museum itself.<sup>105</sup>

Museums and exhibitions, artworks of various kinds played a large role in shaping the reception of Egypt. In 1812 William Bullock opened his Piccadilly Egyptian Hall to large success and a flock of visitors, and it was here that Belzoni exhibited a recreation of the tomb of Seti I in 1821.<sup>106</sup> In the early nineteenth century Egypt was most often depicted with a focus on its monumentality, both in museums and in art as well. Temples, columns, large panorama pictures played the leading role in the depictions of Egypt. Especially successful was the moving “Panorama of the Nile”, a spectacle opened in 1849, and where visitors of the British Museum received a free ticket for two, as it was the idea of the Museum to show the larger environment of the displayed pieces. The British Museum also supported other spectacle-education events and places, like the Egyptian Court at the Chrystal Palace, while in-museum it stuck to exhibitions in a non-theatricalized manner. The way Egypt was put on spectacle through sensationalistic exhibitions, art and performances solidified the notion of it being a place of wonders that can be explored by anyone for amusement and education for the low price of 1-2 shillings.<sup>107</sup>

The other highly important topic that was mentioned before, but only passingly is the role of journals. Periodicals of all agendas and reputations featured articles on Egypt. In more scientifically inclined journals like *The Academy*, *Nature*, or *Knowledge* one can find Egyptological articles under any heading, be it sciences, literature, fine art, geology, or other. This wide range of coverage helped popularize (mis)conceptions about Egypt, and most interesting to us about the religion of it. Ideas about the prominence of astronomy in Egyptian religion, the antiquity of the Pyramids and their building techniques, the relationship between science and religion, Egyptian engineering etc. In the 52<sup>nd</sup> volume of *Archeologia* 216 pages are devoted to Budge’s writing on the papyrus of Nesi-Amsu and the Ptolemaic era religious texts contained in it.<sup>108</sup> But it were not just periodicals addressed to the learned that featured

---

<sup>105</sup> Greer, Mary Katherine (1995): 155.

<sup>106</sup> Sophie Thomas. “Displaying Egypt: Archeology, Spectacle, and the Museum in the Early Nineteenth Century.” *Journal of Literature and Science*. Vol 5. No. 1. (2012): 6-22. 10.

<sup>107</sup> Thomas, Sophie. (2012). 18.

<sup>108</sup> Gange, David. (2013). 213.

Egyptological articles, but regular newspapers and journals as well, like *The Graphic*, *Daily News*, *British Critic*, or *Nineteenth Century*. In some fields the occultists were moving before the trends, as the general public's interest in the *Book of the Dead* was only rising after 1895, when the Golden Dawn already used it for a few years. One of the most popular esoteric periodical of the early twentieth century was the *Occult Review*, which ran from 1905 to 1951. As expected the early volumes contained articles on Egypt, from M. W. Blackden, Florence Farr, and others, with articles like “Does Egyptian Magic Still Exist?” (1915, May), “A Comparison of the Hebrew Sephiroth with the Paut Neteru” (1912, December), “Black Magic in Ancient and Modern Egypt” (1916, March) just to name a few. At first Egyptologists were accepting of the occult associations of the field, as it was seen as a way to promote and popularize Egyptology. They often received queries to translate hieroglyphics, like the letter that Peter le Page Renouf received in 1889: “*Dear Sir, I have two certificates from Cairo belonging to the Ancient Rites Society. I can make out all except the Egyptian. It is secret Rites, and I have lost my translator and key. Would you kindly give me a translation if I send my certificate for your perusal.*”<sup>109</sup> But after the turn of the century with the progressions made by Egyptology, and a shift in attitude in how to popularize a subject and a waning of interest in Egypt esotericism was left standing with ideas outpaced by modern science. The method of selection for the esoteric societies was eclectic. Even if they accepted Champollion's decipherment, the translations and the proper visual representations of the deities as historical facts, they did not bother much with authentically incorporating these elements into their religious systems. The basis for the ritual workings remained to be Hermetic in nature, and when a new text or discovery could fit in with the pre-existent system it was incorporated into the tradition. The main principle was that if two or more alternatives existed, accept and use both of them, which the occult societies did with success, combining elements from a wide variety of religious, philosophical and mystical traditions.

The esoteric interest towards the developments of Egyptology was a short lived tendency. As we will see later the approach to ingest scientific literature was never methodical, and never tried to be all-encompassing, but were led by the whims of individuals, as with the case of Crowley's fascination with the “Stele of Revealing”, or Farr's interaction with a mummy etc. As an interesting side effect esoteric Egyptomania did not keep up with scientific developments, rarely incorporated new discoveries, and most often returned to the same sources and translation, inadvertently creating a separate tradition of interpretation of Egyptian religion,

---

<sup>109</sup> Gange, Davis. (2013). 266.



which interpretations were influential in later developments of esoteric currents, which paid even less attention to newer achievements of Egyptology.

### Which Egypt it is?

At the heyday of the Golden Dawn in the 1890s Egyptology was becoming a respected and popular discipline. It took almost fifty years since the decipherment of the hieroglyphs that scholars could reach the public with interesting topics of debate, new archeological discoveries “of the order of the Rosetta Stone”<sup>110</sup>, and ideas about the connection between the Bible and Egyptian history that a few decades earlier conjured little interest.<sup>111</sup> There was already a historicizing tendency in British thought in which the importance of the past was appreciated as the factor that validates the present,<sup>112</sup> and the Augustinian distinction between a *historia sacra* and *historia profana*<sup>113</sup> were left behind so that pre-Christian cultures could be regarded as more than forlorn cultures without divine provenance, left to an unproductive cycle through time.<sup>114</sup> In a way, through evidence that supported the historicity of the Bible and even more through the polemics around it, Egyptology affected the religious developments of late-Victorian Britain. Egypt, and to some extent the whole ancient Near-East was everywhere in nineteenth century British thought. From newspapers, museums, and theatres to pulpits, Sunday Schools, and novels about women’s rights. The road to this kind of prominence was a rocky one. After Champollion’s decipherment interest in Egypt was lackluster, understanding of some available texts dispelled the mysticism associated with Egypt in earlier periods. In the 1840-1850s Egyptology through the works of Bunsen, Wilkinson, Colenso, Osburn, Kenrick and others was entangled with Biblical criticism and counter-criticism. But general interest in Egyptology was still small and publishers often turned down manuscripts on account of Egypt not being a profitable topic. The still waters were disturbed by two discoveries in the 1870s, neither of them from Egypt. The translation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* with a separate account of the Biblical flood and Schliemann’s discovery on Troy based on the previously skeptically dismissed description in the Iliad. This started a comparative approach to the study of ancient

---

<sup>110</sup> David Gange. 2013. 2.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Taylor’s *Diegesis* in 1830 garnered surprisingly little attention even though it argued that Christianity is ultimately rooted in Egypt.

<sup>112</sup> David Lowenthal. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1985. 16.

<sup>113</sup> Although Augustine did not distinguish clearly between a sacred and profane history, the parallel histories of the heavenly and earthly cities in Book XV of the *De Civitate Dei* were interpreted to refer to a separate sacred and profane history, and this interpretation remained in use in historiography. R. A. Markus. *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2007. 14.

<sup>114</sup> David Gange. (2013): 18.

history and by the 1880s the highly publicized excavation of Troy garnered enough public interest in Near-Eastern archeology to make it a profitable and well-received endeavor, with ample funding for excavations. This meshed with the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, and the scholarly work of the last two decades was still close to biblical Egyptology, it was only the early twentieth century that distanced Egyptology from the churches. It is important to note however that what is regarded by present day historiography as the highest achievements of nineteenth century Egyptology, the professional disciplinary foundations both in philology and in archeology were not the most popular or permeating ideas of the time. Popular understanding of Egyptian history was always lagging behind current research. Even working-class citizens had a considerable familiarity with the ancient Near-East<sup>115</sup> but their knowledge was often far from the “cutting edge” publications of Flinders Petrie. The image of Egypt was molded by contemporary commentators. Certain aspects of spirituality, strong morality, wisdom were emphasized more and this created a living image of the mighty Egypt that shared many similarities with the British Empire. I would argue that in fin de siècle Britain at least three images of Egypt coexisted in popular culture, often mixing with each other, and to the interested citizen any of them were just as real as their contemporary world. Before examining these images let us depart for a moment from the nineteenth century to our contemporary popular culture to further illustrate this point. In our modern western world almost everyone has a concept, an image about voodoo, from film, books, and other forms of media. This image almost always entails dark Louisiana swamps, priestesses with headscarves, blood sacrifice to summon spirits and raise zombies, bones and a general dark and foreboding atmosphere. Although we are certain that these are the key elements of voodoo in reality, outside of our imagination there is no such thing as voodoo. There is Vodou – the highly syncretic and complex religion of Haiti – hoodoo, the folk magic of the deep south, but voodoo is an imaginary construct of popular misconceptions and depictions of these two and some other cultural factors.<sup>116</sup> For some even a nonexistent religion can exist that they self-identify as voodoo practitioners, but this phenomenon would be a topic for an entirely different research. The take away from this example is that the understanding of popular culture and academic research can differ considerably. Even in the case of late-Victorian Egyptology when the approach of the majority

---

<sup>115</sup> Jonathan Rose. *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Class*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2001. 341.

<sup>116</sup> Adam M. McGee. “Haitian Vodou and Voodoo: Imagined Religion and Popular Culture.” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*. 2012. 41:231. 231-256.

of Egyptologists was rooted in a biblical understanding of Egypt, as well as time and history as a whole.

Let us now turn back to the fin de siècle images living in British popular thought. The most prominent was the Familiar concept, centered around the antiquity, majesty, and timelessness of Egypt, with elements like emphasis on morality at ethics, outward dominance in the Near-East, and scientific achievements provided an analogous image for the British Empire. The second image was the Exotic that presented ancient Egypt as ultimately foreign, a place of adventure, wonders, sensuality, and sexuality. A strange land of harsh desert winds blowing among ancient structures, filled with beautiful priestesses and dancers, mighty pharaohs, and exotic animals. The third image was the Mystical that painted a picture of a civilization of magic, closeness to the gods – or god as the debate on Egyptian monotheism was still very much ongoing, especially after the 1881-1882 excavations in Amarna – and the wisdom of the perennial philosophy not yet forgotten. These images formed the basis of the preconceptions about ancient Egypt and shaped how the scholarly literature was received by the public. And above these three stood the general Bible oriented worldview of the nineteenth century, where new discoveries were cross-examined with biblical accounts and interpreted in a shared thought-frame, and Egypt was a “divine tool to rebuke the rampant infidelity of the time”.<sup>117</sup> The first two images intensely shaped the approach of early Egyptology as well, determining how scholars construed the available data, and there are a handful of examples when the Mystical image was important for individual Egyptologists. Bernard Grenfell spoke about spirits and curses encountered on excavations, M. W. Blackden was a member of the Isis-Urania Temple, Battiscombe Gunn was for a short time a member of A. E. Waite’s Independent and Rectified Rite, and Margaret Murray became the “Grandmother of Wicca”. But these are rare cases, and there seems to be little to no direct reaction on the part of Egyptology to ideas presented by occultists. In cases of pleas for help in translating certain texts, Egyptologists were helpful, but this was not limited to esoteric oriented questions. In relation to the material discussed below Florence Farr’s book on Egyptian magic was dismissed as ahistorical, the rituals of the Golden Dawn, or Mathers’ Isis rites were not publicly addressed. In the case of the Golden Dawn this was due to the secrecy as the ritual were unknown outside of the initiates, and by the time the secrecy was broken Egyptology underwent a series of secularization and professionalization and was uninterested in fringe ideas. Crowley’s *Rites of Eleusis*, a series of performances in 1910 garnered some public attention from the press that warned women from

---

<sup>117</sup> Andrew Archibald. *The Bible Verified*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board. 1890. 234.

seeing the play on account of it being “immoral under the guise of a new religion”<sup>118</sup> but there was no professional interest to speak of.

### *Sources, Influences, Beliefs and Ideas*

In order to understand the thought processes and ideology of the Golden Dawn and its various offshoot organizations it is important to understand the highly syncretic worldview of the order, and the underlying concepts about the structure and working of the universe, God, humans and their souls and the operation of magic as it was envisioned by the Golden Dawn. This does not mean that every member held the same concepts or believed in a same way, but there was a unifying web of ideas that was taught to each member, that was flexible enough to fit the various personal interests and faiths of initiates. Our primary sources in uncovering the metaphysics of the Golden Dawn are the writings of the founding and high ranking members of the order, the Knowledge Lectures and Flying Rolls and other essays available as separate manuscripts for members of sufficient grade to study and copy.

The thought system of the Golden Dawn stands on the syncretism of two major currents of Western esoteric thought, Hermetism and Kabbalah, referred to as Hermetic Kabbalah, which incorporates elements of Hermetic thought, Christian Kabbalah, astrology, alchemy, perceived traditions of Greek, Egyptian, and Roman mystery cults, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, John Dee’s Enochian magic, tarot etc. and even some Eastern ideas particularly in the concept of Tattwas. It is important to stress that as common in late nineteenth century Britain, all members came from some form of Christian background, from Catholicism to various Protestant denominations, with varying degree of involvement in accepted forms of religious activities. The foundation of Golden Dawn thought was thus Christian in nature, albeit mostly heretical from the viewpoint of most denominations, and the involvement with magic by a large number of members can be seen as a personal search for greater spiritual involvement in Christian mysteries than what was possible through organized religion, or even as an alternative, a shortcut so to say, towards redemption and a closer experience of the divine.<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> “Rites of Eleusis” *Looking Glass*. 12 November 1910. 6.

<sup>119</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaff (2013): 87-89.

## Freemasonry

The effects of different form of Freemasonry on Western esotericism could, and did, fill volumes of books. Here we will limit ourselves to a more focused summary, and won't delve into the details above what is necessary. As all of the founders and most of the members were also Freemasons its effects on the structure of the Golden Dawn and the rituals are unmistakable. The secret handshakes and grade signs, although the latter was used more in communication with spiritual entities, the sash, signifying the grade of the member, the black and white checkered floor, even the style and mood of the rituals all had their origin in the Masonic tradition. In the nineteenth century Freemasonry still held up the practice of Grade Lectures and oral examinations before a member was allowed to progress to the next rank.<sup>120</sup> Of particular interest to us is the notion that Freemasonry was a direct successor to Egyptian traditions. In Masonic publications for example the *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences* by Albert G. Mackey Masonry is presented as the preserver of Egyptian mysteries and initiations, and the stages of the grades are derived from the concepts of the cycle of birth, life, death, and regeneration of Egyptian mythology.<sup>121</sup> Parallels were often drawn between the priesthood of Egypt and Masonry, often with the developments of Egyptological research. Masonic symbols were also often linked with hieroglyphs and especially with those found in pyramids.<sup>122</sup> In a similar manner to what we will find in the case of the Golden Dawn the Masonic rhetoric was that they knew the truth about ancient Egypt, truths that Egyptology was only starting to grasp, and that the academic debates around certain questions was below Freemasonry to shed light on them for the uninitiated. A frequent criticism of Egyptian philology was that the academics disregard the deeper symbolic meanings of the hieroglyphs. We will see these same motifs in the writings of Golden Dawn members.

---

<sup>120</sup> The Masonic grades can be found at [https://www.brad.ac.uk/webofhiram/?section=lectures\\_craft](https://www.brad.ac.uk/webofhiram/?section=lectures_craft) (accessed 2019.09.19.)

<sup>121</sup> Albert Mackey. *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences*. Philadelphia, PA: L. H. Everts&Co. 1884. 242-243.

<sup>122</sup> T. Hayter Lewis. "Masonry and Masons' Mark." *Ars Quatour Coronatorum*. 3. 69. (1890): 69.

## Theosophy

One of the strangest religious movements of the nineteenth century Western esoteric milieu, that claimed to be not a religion, but a transmission of a “once universal religion”<sup>123</sup>, whose de facto distributor’s, the Theosophical Society’s<sup>124</sup> logo incorporated symbols from India, alchemy, Egypt, and the Star of David, and the motto of “There is no religion higher than truth”. As Christopher Partridge noted “*Theosophy is fundamentally Western. That is to say, Theosophy is not Eastern thought in the West, but Western thought with an Eastern flavor.*”<sup>125</sup> Due to the limits of this dissertation we will limit ourselves to the bare-bones of the history and beliefs of Theosophy, and focus on the basics and what is important in relation to ancient Egypt. Theosophy started with the friendship Helena P. Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott, and their small group the Miracle Club in New York in the 1870s. There they met with William Quan Judge and at one of the Club’s meetings the three decided to found an organization, and taking the suggestion of Charles Sothran named it the Theosophical Society.<sup>126</sup> The foundational ideas of the group were published in Blavatsky’s book *Isis Unveiled*, in 1877 and proved to be a milestone in the development of Western esotericism.<sup>127</sup> The core idea of the book was the concept of *prisca theologia*, that once existed a true religion, which Blavatsky termed as the wisdom-religion, that is Hermetic religion, that was still known to Plato and the Hindu sages, and urged to a return to this religion as it is the only way to synthesize science, philosophy, and religion, that can lead man closer to the Absolute.<sup>128</sup> She later revealed that her ideas were taught to her by a group called Masters of Ancient Wisdom, or Adepts that lived in the Himalayas in Tibet, great sages who achieved near-immortality and enlightenment. This

---

<sup>123</sup> Franklin J. Jeffrey. *Spirit Matters: Occult Beliefs, Alternative Religions, and the Crisis of Faith in Victorian Britain*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2018. 193.

<sup>124</sup> The term Theosophy with a capital letter refers to Blavatsky’s Theosophy, or as Wouter Hanegraaff termed it “modern Theosophy”, to differentiate it from the early church father’s use of the word, the alchemist George Starkey – better known as Eirenaeus Philalethes, and the theosophy of Jakob Böhme.

<sup>125</sup> Christopher Partridge (2004): 90-91.

<sup>126</sup> Bruce F. Campbell. *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 1980. 27-28.

<sup>127</sup> Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke. *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2008. 215-217. Mark Bevir. “*The West Turns Eastward: Madame Blavatsky and the Transformation of the Occult Tradition.*” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 62.3 (1994): 747-767.

<sup>128</sup> H. P. Blavatsky. *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Technology*. New York, NY: J. W. Bouton. 1877.

purported connection to direct caretakers of ancient wisdom who reveal their knowledge to a suitable group is a direct antecedent of the Secret Chiefs of the Golden Dawn. The core beliefs of Theosophy is that the world is an emanation of the Absolute, and human perception of it is an illusion. This was common knowledge in ancient times, and was preserved by a succession of Masters, amongst them Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Jesus, Buddha, Confucius, Laozi, Böhme, Cagliostro, Mesmer, and the two with whom Blavatsky were in contact with, Koot Hoomi and Morya. Blavatsky placed a large emphasis on Indian elements, introducing the concepts of reincarnation, karma, chakras etc.<sup>129</sup> Besides the Indian elements Blavatsky leans heavily on Hermeticism, and claimed that through the knowledge of this ancient wisdom humanity could once again synthesize the scientific and spiritual developments, technology and religion, and enter a new golden age.

The London Lodge was founded in 1878 by Charles Carleton Massey, and it was the first official lodge since the foundation of the Theosophical Society. The Lodge's first separation came in 1883, when the followers of Anna Kingsford, the current leader of the group and Alfred P. Sinnett quarreled over authority, as Sinnett was in contact with the Masters through letters.<sup>130</sup> By this time Kingsford had already founded the Hermetic Society, and seceded from the Lodge. A lot of the later members of the Golden Dawn were members in the Theosophical Society, among them Westcott who also held lectures on occasions.<sup>131</sup> The involvement in Theosophy however was merely theoretical, as there were no rituals, ceremonies, or any form of worship, initiations, and membership was not a secret. The dissemination of ideas was fruitful for the would be Golden Dawn, as was the notion that Theosophy was too much preoccupied with Eastern wisdom, and focused little on Western esoteric traditions. Kingsford's short lived Hermetic Society was supposed to rectify this, but in the end failed to provide, and the Golden Dawn managed to fulfill the need for both Western basis of ideas, and for practicality.

The reception of Egypt in Theosophy shows all the expected ideas, the antiquity of the land, it being a repository of wisdom etc. but are complemented by some original ideas as well. In *Isis Unveiled* Blavatsky draws parallels between the cultures of Egypt and India, and spends considerable time praising the achievements of ancient Egypt. In this process her sources are

---

<sup>129</sup> Much of Blavatsky's ideas were refined and expanded in her 1888 book *The Secret Doctrine*, which contains Blavatsky's ideas on cosmology, and anthropogenesis.

<sup>130</sup> Alfred P. Sinnett. *The Early Days of Theosophy in Europe*. London: Theosophical Publishing House. 1922. 23.

<sup>131</sup> Some of Westcott's lectures were published in the *Theosophical Siftings* periodical.

varied as she makes frequent use of classical authors, especially Herodotus,<sup>132</sup> but also of recent works of Egyptologists. Much of the Egypt oriented content in *Isis Unveiled* is an apologetic defense on the technical capabilities of Egypt. This is even furthered in *The Secret Doctrine*, where Blavatsky presented her ideas on the precursor races of humanity, and claims that the apparent development of Egypt is due to it being the successor of Atlantis and Lemuria.<sup>133</sup> She also draws parallels between the Sephiroth and the Egyptian division of the soul,<sup>134</sup> and as reincarnation is a central belief in Theosophy, tries to find traces in Egyptian sources, especially in the *Book of the Dead*. It would be futile to enumerate all the Egyptian elements present in Blavatsky's writing as it could in itself fill a volume, and would take us too far from our original topic. Let it suffice that as was illustrated above with these small examples, Egypt played an important role in the Theosophical concepts of the distribution and succession of knowledge and wisdom, was an important source of authority, and Theosophy as other esoteric groups relied both on classical sources and on the contemporary academic sources of Egyptology.<sup>135</sup> We will see a number of similar thought patterns on antiquity, authenticity, and religion emerging in the Golden Dawn material.

## **Kabbala**

The underlying symbolism of the Golden Dawn's ritual workings was drawn from Kabbalah and especially a particular understanding of the symbol of the Tree of Life. The roots of this understanding of Kabbalah lead back to the works of Renaissance philosophers, Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, who combined elements of Jewish Kabbalah, the Corpus Hermeticum, Pseudo-Dionysius and his *Celestial Hierarchy*, and Neoplatonic philosophers, Plotinus, Proclus, and especially Iamblichus and his *De Mysteriis*.<sup>136</sup> This created a coherent system of magic, merging Christian and non-Christian esoteric thought, that was synthesized by Cornelius Agrippa in 1533, with the publication of his encyclopedic work, *De Occulta*

---

<sup>132</sup> H. P. Blavatsky (1877): 522-565.

<sup>133</sup> H. P. Blavatsky. *The Secret Doctrine*. London: Theosophical Publishing House. 1888.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* 633.

<sup>135</sup> See further Erik Hornung (2001): 141-155.

<sup>136</sup> Francis Yates. *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. 1964. 56-57. 65-68. 84-86.



*Philosophia*.<sup>137</sup> Mathers and Westcott were familiar with these works, and these shaped their beliefs and practices.

Traditional Jewish Kabbalah is focused on the analysis of sacred texts, the Torah and *The Zohar*, itself a commentary on the mystical aspects of the Torah.<sup>138</sup> Mathers published a translation of Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbalah Denudata*, an incomplete Latin translation of *The Zohar*, together with the *Sefer Yetzirah*, of which Westcott published a translation in 1887<sup>139</sup>, became the basis of the order's understanding of Kabbalah. The Golden Dawn's focus in Kabbalah was not textual analysis but the symbolism of the Tree of Life, a diagram representing the whole of creation. Traditionally it is composed of ten spheres, called the Sephiroth, each a manifestation or radiation of God's creative nature, in essence one in God but individually revealing different aspects of God's creative activity.<sup>140</sup> In the Golden Dawn interpretation each sephira is associated with a number, a divine name, an order of angels and an archangel, an element and a color. They are connected by twenty-two paths, also numbered and associated with a divine name, a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, a Major Arcana of the tarot, and an element.<sup>141</sup> On the Tree of Life God's emanation proceeds from top to bottom, while aspiring magician works from the bottom up, with the goal of advancing closer to God with each step, culminating in a mystical union with the Godhead.<sup>142</sup> This process is reflected in the numbering of the Golden Dawn grades. Each grade is signaled by two numbers, the first signifying the number of the grade and the second the corresponding sephira, which are numbered in order from top to bottom. Thus for example the Zelator grade's numbers are 1°=10°, showing that the Zelator is the first step on the Tree, corresponding to the 10<sup>th</sup> sephira, Malkuth. The Neophyte grade is numbered 0°=0° to show that it is only the gate where the initiate has to pass through to begin the mystical journey.

---

<sup>137</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaff. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. 1998. 393.

<sup>138</sup> Arthur Green. *A Guide to the Zohar*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 2004. 4-5.

<sup>139</sup> S. L. MacGregor Mathers. *The Kabbalah Unveiled*. Seattle, WA: Pacific Publishing Studio. 2011.

<sup>140</sup> Gershom Scholem. *Kabbalah: A Definitive History of the Evolution, Ideas, Leading Figures and Extraordinary Influence of Jewish Mysticism*. New York, NY: Penguin Books. 1978. 60.

<sup>141</sup> Israel Regardia. *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic*. Tempe, AZ: Falcon Press. 1984. Henceforth abbreviated as GD.

GD III. 65- 67. 77-80.

<sup>142</sup> The essence of God, introduced in godhede form in the Bible translation of John Wycliffe.

## Hermeticism

The importance of Hermeticism is evident from the order's complete name, The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Hermetism, a separate religion that formed the basis of Hermeticism originated in Greco-Roman Egypt, in a number of Greek treatises attributed to Hermes Trismegistus,<sup>143</sup> survived mostly through Arabic mediation, which became an integral part of Western esoteric thought during the Renaissance. Around 1460 a Greek manuscript of the *Corpus Hermeticum* was brought to Florence from Macedonia by Leonardo da Pistoia, and with the founding of Cosimo di Medici were translated and published by Marsilio Ficino in 1462, under the title of *Pimander*.<sup>144</sup> It was largely believed until 1614 that it was written by Hermes Trismegistus, a contemporary of Moses, as an expression of the primordial wisdom of *prisca theologia*, later reconceptualized as *philosophia perennis*<sup>145</sup>. In that year Isac Casaubon published *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes XVI*<sup>146</sup>, which questioned the authorship and age of the *Corpus Hermeticum* based on internal and stylistic evidences, and placed it's creation after the advent of Christianity.<sup>147</sup> The age and origin of the Hermetic texts was debated after this point, Ralph Cudwort argued that the written texts are a codification of a pre-existing oral tradition, Walter Scott dated them around 200 AD, while W. Flinders Petrie argued that they originate between 500 and 200 BC.<sup>148</sup> Not just the exact age of the Hermetic corpus was debated, but another part of their origin as well, whether the author or authors were Greek or Egyptian, thus the teaching contained within a particular segment of Greek philosophy or a collection of ancient Egyptian wisdom.<sup>149</sup> John David Chamber's translation in 1882, titled *The Theological and Philosophical Works of Hermes Trismegistus, Christian Neoplatonist*<sup>150</sup> argues that there were more than one Hermes, and that the author of the *Poimandres* was at

---

<sup>143</sup> Christian H. Bull. *The Tradition of Hermes Trismegistus: The Egyptian Priestly Figure as a Teacher of Hellenized Wisdom*. Boston, MA: Brill. 2018. 1.

<sup>144</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaf (1998): 389.

<sup>145</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaf (2012): 6.

<sup>146</sup> Isaac Casaubon. *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes XVI*. London: John Brill. 1614. Wouter J. Hanegraaf (2013): 120.

<sup>147</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaf (1998): 390.

<sup>148</sup> Christopher R. Abel, William O. Hare. *Hermes Trismegistus: An Investigation of the Origin of the Hermetic Writings*. Sequim: Holmes Publishing Group. 1997. 7.

<sup>149</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaf (2013): 120-121.

<sup>150</sup> John David Chambers. *The Theological and Philosophical Works of Hermes Trismegistus, Christian Neoplatonist*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. 1882. 12-13.

least partially Christian and the other texts were falsely attributed to the same author.<sup>151</sup> Richard Reitzenstein argued that the texts originate from a community devoted to the god Poimandres, formed by a priest of Ptah in Memphis.<sup>152</sup> Theodor Zielinski argued that this was a case of “Ägyptomanie” and that “higher Hermetism” were entirely Greek in origin.<sup>153</sup> Despite the disputes about the age and authorship of the *Corpus Hermeticum* the Golden Dawn accepted that it was written by Hermes Trismegistus, long before the time of Jesus, and that it contained the ancient Egyptian wisdom of a long past golden age. In the *Collectanea Hermetica*, a series edited by Westcott, John Everard’s translation of 1650 was published. Everard’s preface argues that the author was a king of Egypt, and that the reason for him being called thrice great was not because he was a philosopher-priest-king, but because he divided the world into three orders of mineral-vegetable-animal, all of which he was a master of and because he held the Elixir of Philosophers, invented writing – presented as a proof that Hermes anteceded Moses – and that this book was the only other required reading besides the Bible to learn about God and his creation.<sup>154</sup> Traditionally the Hermetic texts are divided in two groups - although the border dividing them is mostly arbitrary and not convincing<sup>155</sup> - one consisting of astrological, medico-botanical, alchemical, and magical treatises called technical Hermetica, while the other the philosophical Hermetica contains dialogues between Hermes and his disciples Tat, Asclepius, and Ammon. The core concepts of Hermeticism is the belief in the existence of a *prisca theologia*, a perfect theology given to mankind by God, existing in all religions. The famous idea of the *Emerald Tablets of Hermes Trismegistus*, the “as above so below”, the concept of correspondences, especially in relation between the microcosm and the macrocosm.<sup>156</sup> The existence of functional alchemy, astrology, and magic. The latter especially important to Renaissance scholars of the Hermetic texts as evident from Pico della Mirandola’s *Apology*<sup>157</sup>

---

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* 14.

<sup>152</sup> Richard Reitzenstein. *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur*. Leipzig: Teubner. 1904.

Christian H. Bull (2018): 4.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

<sup>154</sup> John Everard, trans. *The Divine Pymander by Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus*. Mecosta MI: Wizards Bookshelf. 2000. Preface.

<sup>155</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaf. (1998): 392.

<sup>156</sup> E. J. Holmyard. “The Emerald Table” *Nature*. 2814. Vol. 12. (1923): 525-526.

<sup>157</sup> see further Brian Copenhaver. *Magic and the Dignity of Man: Pico della Mirandola and his Oration in Modern Memory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2019.

could be classified into Goëtia or black magic and Theurgia, or white magic. The latter which relied on the help and alliance of divine beings, angels, archangels, was the form of magic that was practiced by the Golden Dawn, as the Neophyte oath strictly forbade the use of magical knowledge for evil. The Hermetic corpus narrates two versions of cosmology, the fall of man, but they all agree on the fundamental structure of the world. That is the world was created by God, who created matter, then separated it into the four elements, ordered them into the seven Heavens. From the four elements Nous leapt forth and made the Heavens move, separated Earth from water and created the creatures and finally the androgynous man. Man fell because he fell in love with Nature, becoming mortal in body and immortal in soul. In the alternate account of the *Discourses of Isis to Horus*, man was imprisoned in body for their hybris and punished with reincarnation but promised salvation. The Hermetic texts focus on the importance of knowledge, attained mostly in a revelatory manner, similar to the gnostic ideas popular in around the same time period, but to call Hermeticism a gnostic sect would lead to fallacies.<sup>158</sup> The world of the *Corpus Hermeticum* is not a stronghold of evil, and is not evil or flawed by nature, rather a thing of organized beauty, and the dualism presented in the texts is not antagonistic but complementary, where seemingly antithetical factors are different aspects of a single world.<sup>159</sup> The aim of receiving the secret knowledge – passed on from master to disciple – presented in the texts is to learn the true essence of the cosmos, man's connection and unity with God, the divine origin of humanity and its distinguished place in creation and through this knowledge ascend back to the Heavens, and merge with God.<sup>160</sup> This approach was instrumental in the formation of the Golden Dawn's ideology and elements from the technical and philosophical Hermetica were incorporated in theory and in practice as well. Certainly a number of the order's members read the translations of the *Corpus Hermeticum* but the synthesis of Renaissance authors, such as Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and most importantly Agrippa were more influential than the primary sources. A more recent antecedent of the Golden Dawn was The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, founded in 1884 by Peter Davidson,<sup>161</sup> a mail-order society, as it enabled self-initiation through the use of drugs, a canon of esoteric texts and a strong emphasis on sex and sex-magic, influenced by the writings of Paschal Beverly Randolph. A scandal in 1886 shook the order and most of the respectable

---

<sup>158</sup> Florian Ebeling (2007): 36.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* 36.

<sup>161</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 85.

members left, only to find themselves in the Golden Dawn a few years later.<sup>162</sup> The other short lived organization that was a direct precursor of the Golden Dawn was the Hermetic Lodge, organized by Anna Kingsford in 1884, as a splinter group of the Theosophical Society, and in a month renamed to the Hermetic Society.<sup>163</sup> Mathers and Westcott held lectures among others, but the Society never could take off in numbers. Following Kingsford's death in 1888 the Society dissolved, and the vacuum left behind it for those that wanted to learn and work with the Western esoteric tradition was filled by the new Golden Dawn.

### **Rosicrucianism**

The three founders of the Golden Dawn were all members in a Rosicrucian order, the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, an organization founded in sometime between 1865-1867,<sup>164</sup> one of the many organization claiming ties to the Rosicrucians of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This tradition started in 1614 – or possibly as early as 1610 – with the publication of the *Fama Fraternitatis, dess Löblichen Ordens des Rosenkreutzes*, which tells the story of a secret brotherhood established in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, by Christian Rosenkreutz, after his travels in the Orient. The fraternity had six rules regulating their workings, to heal the sick for free, to merge with the masses of the lands they currently are, to reunite annually at a set date, to find a successor for themselves, to use the initials C.R. as secret sign, and to keep the fraternity's existence secret for a hundred years. The reason given for the *Fama's* publication was that the current members found and entered the tomb of the founder, where among miraculous things they found the body of Christian Rosenkreutz intact and non-decayed. A year later the *Confessio Fraternitatis* was published, further reasserting the claims of the *Fama* and provoking curiosity to find out if an organization detailed in the two manifestos was actually real, by both those who wanted to join and those wanted to destroy it. 1616 saw the publication of yet another work, *Die Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreutz*, a highly fantastical and allegorical tale narrated by Christian Rosenkreutz. The search for the organization behind these publications lead to no results, so it fell upon the seekers to found Rosicrucian organizations. Due to the popularity and availability

---

<sup>162</sup> Jocelyn Godwin. *The Theosophical Enlightenment*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press. 1994. 347-361.

<sup>163</sup> Edward Maitland. *Anna Kingsford: Her Letters, Diary, and Work*. London: John M. Watkins. 1913. 229.

<sup>164</sup> Christopher McIntosh. *The Rosicrucians: The History, Mythology, and Rituals of an Esoteric Order*. Newburyport, MA: Weiser. 1998. 109.

of Freemasonry this meant that Rosicrucianism essentially became an offshoot of Freemasonry, with fringe organizations, often inside Masonic lodges, or independent ones still employing the Masonic structure, like the Gold-und Rosenkreuz became a staple of Western esotericism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>165</sup> This order of the Golden and Rosy Cross boasted some interesting peculiarities: the highest grades were off limit to members and were reserved for secret chiefs of superhuman qualities, the naming of the grades was also borrowed by the Soc. Ros. in Anglia and thus by the Golden Dawn as well. According to Franz Hartmann's *In the Pronaos of the Temple of Wisdom, Containing the History of the True and False Rosicrucians*, a book available in the Westcott library, the original Rosicrucians were a spiritual brotherhood and not a physical one, and as those interested in their knowledge, mostly for their material gains searched for them amongst the Freemasons, thus not just profaned the original higher ideas but spoiled Masonry in the process as well.<sup>166</sup> As time went on the original ideas of a call for change and reform and a secret wisdom that can make the world a better place for all, present in the three Rosicrucian manifestos were substituted with secret wisdom about the mysteries of alchemy, and ancient knowledge. The Societas Rosicruciana itself was more of a Masonic organization than Rosicrucian. Membership was limited to Master Masons and activities included quarterly meeting with some minor ritual, lectures on esoteric topics and an annual dinner,<sup>167</sup> an organization Rosicrucian mostly in name, enough to uphold the interest in Rosicrucian myth. A literary interpretation of this myth, the *Zanoni* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, was referenced by both Mathers and Westcott in their works, and they believed that Bulwer-Lytton was a member of a Rosicrucian order, despite his continuous dismissals of the claim.<sup>168</sup> Westcott attributes membership to Bulwer-Lytton in the *Zur aufgehenden Morgenröthe* (The Rising Dawn), in his 1916 paper, "Data of the History of the Rosicrucians".<sup>169</sup> Westcott also interpreted the teachings of the Rosicrucians quite differently than what can be found in the original manifestos. He believed that their knowledge came from Egypt and Hermetism, that the Christian motifs present were in reality Gnostic, they taught about reincarnation, correspondences, and magic in general and set the ideal Rosicrucian adept as an example to be followed in strength of will, and

---

<sup>165</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 75-78.

<sup>166</sup> Franz Hartmann. *In the Pronaos of the Temple of Wisdom, Containing the History of the True and False Rosicrucians*. London: Theosophical Publishing Society. 1890. 70.

<sup>167</sup> Kenneth Mackenzie. *The Royal Masonic Cyclopedia*. New York, NY: Harper Collins. 1987. 616. Ellic Howe (1978): 33.

<sup>168</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 78-79.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.* 79.

character.<sup>170</sup> The Societas Rosicruciana is often dismissed as inconsequential, but before the Golden Dawn another small group emerged, that focused on much the similar forms of occultism that we see in the Golden Dawn. Created around 1840, announced in 1870 in Richard James Morrison's *Zadkiel's Almanac*, this group was first named "The Most Ancient Order of the Suastica; or The Brotherhood of the Mystic Cross"<sup>171</sup>, renamed and reorganized in 1873 by Frances Irwin as *Fratres Lucis*, the Brotherhood of Light.<sup>172</sup> Irwin claimed to have received the rituals from Cagliostro through skrying with a crystal ball, and in 1883 a smaller workgroup formed inside the Fratres Lucis, the Society of Eight. Members included Irwin, Hockley, Mackenzie, Cox, Frederic Holland, John Yarker, W. A. Ayton, and Westcott. Hockley's place after his death was taken by Mathers.<sup>173</sup> It is thus evident that the Golden Dawn had roots in Rosicrucianism, both in its idealized imaginary form as well as through physical fringe-Masonic organizations.

## Egypt

Western practitioners and theorists of magic have long since looked to Egypt as the source of magic and wisdom. Even to those uninterested of the mystical persuasion Egypt often held the place of the mystical other. Multiple Classical and Renaissance authors professed in varying contexts the antiquity of the Egyptian culture, the truth of its religion, called it the "mother of magicians", claimed that magic in Egypt was stately sanctioned, practiced widely and freely. Stories of the power of the magicians is present in the Old Testament, stories well known in the nineteenth century and undoubtedly known to members of the Golden Dawn. Plato in the *Timeaus* and the *Critias* attests the antiquity of the Egyptian priestly tradition and soul, to which the Greek are like children, while Isocrates idolized the philosophy of the Egyptians in his *Busiris*.<sup>174</sup> Diodorus of Sicily attested the greatest achievements of some of the most famous Greeks to have originated from Egypt, and even goes so far as to claim that the gods and goddesses originated from Egypt.<sup>175</sup> His interpretation that Osiris and Isis were

---

<sup>170</sup> R. A. Gilbert ed. *The Magical Mason. Forgotten Hermetic Writings of William Wynn Westcott, Physician and Magus*. Wellingborough: Aquarian. 1983. 29-39.

<sup>171</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 85.

<sup>172</sup> Yorke NS 73.

<sup>173</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 85.

<sup>174</sup> Erik Hornung (2001): 22.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* 22.

the most important deities in Egyptian religion was highly influential in the development of esoteric ideas about Egypt, as the availability of Egyptian mythology through the Greek authors, which formed the general understanding of Egyptian religion for centuries. The sphinx appeared as the symbol for the mystical nature of Egypt in the works of Plutarch and Clement of Alexandria, rediscovered again by Pico della Mirandola,<sup>176</sup> and the pyramids captivated the imagination of many, as they do even today. Of course there were more rational views of Egypt as well, Pliny was staunchly opposed to the idea of an esoteric Egypt<sup>177</sup>, and the animal cults were seen as at best strange, at worst a target of mockery by all Greco-Roman authors. But not just the works of the Greeks on Egypt were read by members of the Golden Dawn, but works of Egyptians or purported Egyptians as well. We have already discussed the topic of Hermes Trismegistus, the dispute about his origin, but the earliest sources on alchemy were Egyptian authors, Bolus of Mendes, and Zosimus of Panopolis, although their works were written in Greek.<sup>178</sup> Gnosticism also had at least partial roots in Egypt, as well as the notion that Simon Magus studied there.<sup>179</sup>

Writers on magic in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries often attributed Egyptian learning to the heroes of their stories. Christian Rosenkreutz was believed to have studied in Egypt and from the Sabians.<sup>180</sup> Abramelin, a fictional Egyptian mage, who supposedly taught magic to Abraham of Worms in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in an oasis, and wrote it down in 1458 for his son proved to be an influential source on the Golden Dawn, as Mathers translated and published it with the title of *The Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*.<sup>181</sup> The highly elaborate ritual, magical squares, and the use of varied implements were influential in the creation of the Golden Dawn rituals. Various forms of Freemasonry also claimed to have originated from Egypt, or Egyptian traditions, and kept the ideas about the mystical Egypt in circulation among themselves. To the Masons the pyramids were sacred places of initiation, as in Abbé Jean Terrasson's novel *Séthos*,

---

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* 24.

<sup>177</sup> He called the pyramids useless and stupid, a claim that would have been much contested by the tales of miraculous events happening in and around them, which were prevalent in the pulp literature of the 19th century.

<sup>178</sup> Erik Hornung (2001): 34.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.* 43. The role of Gnosticism in the development of Western thought, esoteric or not, and the emergence of Gnostic ideas in discourses is at length analyzed by Cyril O'Regan. *Gnostic Return in Modernity*. New York, NJ: State University Of New York Press. 2001.

<sup>180</sup> Erik Hornung (2001): 106.

<sup>181</sup> S. L. MacGregor Mathers trans. *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*. London: John M. Watkins. 1900.



or the claims of Cagliostro that he received initiation in the vaults of the pyramids, by his teacher Althotas.<sup>182</sup> Mozart's *The Magic Flute* also proved to be highly influential in the visual representation of Egyptian initiations, "ritual design", especially through the sets designed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel and a few years later Simon Quaglio.<sup>183</sup> The cult of Isis saw a revival during the French revolution, when Egyptian symbolism became popular in architecture as well, and during Napoleon Isis became the patron of Paris; and the rumor that Napoleon himself was initiated into a mystery under the Great Pyramid.<sup>184</sup> The Romantics longed for Egypt, literary works were abundant with Egyptian motifs, both positive as a place of ancient wisdom, and as the negative, a place of horror and death. Mummy literature also became popular in England, starting out with Jane Loudon's *The Mummy!: A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century*, followed by many more stories about reanimated dead serving as either monsters or in the case of female mummies as romantic interests.<sup>185</sup> The 1845 short story, *Some Words with the Mummy* by Edgar Allan Poe encapsulates the zeitgeist with the conversation between the mummy Allamistakeo and some Englishmen on whether Victorian England or Ancient Egypt is the better on all fields of life and sciences. In the end the mummy loses since they were not able to produce cough drops, a marvel of modern pharmaceutical technology. There were also less enthusiastic authors on Egypt, critical of the attempts of connecting Egypt with all knowledge, mundane or mystical. Casaubon, Meiners, Herder and later Goethe all articulated opinions that the Egyptians were just as humane as the Greeks or others of their era and should be viewed as such.<sup>186</sup>

The idea that the tarot originated in Egypt, along with a "Book of Thoth" was first promoted by Antoine Court de Gebelin.<sup>187</sup> Both the tarot and the associated Egyptian symbolism plays an important role in Golden Dawn ritual. The generally used Rider-Waite deck, created by A. E. Waite, member of the order, illustrated by Pamela Colman Smith, was based on medieval decks and largely on the symbolism employed by Eliphas Lévi, but the

---

<sup>182</sup> Erik Hornung (2001): 121-122. Althotas is basically Hermes, as it is Thoth prefixed with the Arabian article al.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* 125.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.* 135-137.

<sup>185</sup> Caroline Tully. "Egyptosophy in the British Museum: Florence Farr, the Egyptian Adept and the Ka." in Christine Fergusson, Andrew Radford edd. *The Occult Imagination in Britain, 1875 – 1947*. Abingdon: Routledge. 2008. 131-145. 134.

<sup>186</sup> Erik Hornung. (2001): 130-132. These voices were often present in the 19th century as well. In a letter by F. L. Gardner he expresses sadness over F. E. Garrett's satire, *Isis Very Much Unveiled*, a critique directed against Blavatsky and Theosophy. Yorke NS 73.

<sup>187</sup> Erik Hornung. (2001): 173.

explanations give the purported connections with Egyptian mythology. Aleister Crowley created his own set of cards, illustrated by Frieda Harris, which he titled *The Book of Thoth*. The influence of Theosophy was also immense on the Golden Dawn, although one of the reasons for the order's foundation was to counter the eastern orientation of Theosophy, but the two agreed on the importance of Egypt. This is only a short sketch on the footprint left by Egypt on the West, the various interpretations, appropriations, mentions etc. would be too numerous to fully explore. But this introduction sheds some light on what was known of the Egyptians before the hieroglyph's secret was uncovered. Little was known, much was imagined and this imagination became deeply rooted in the esoteric thought and was undoubtedly more influential in the development of the late nineteenth century esotericism of the Golden Dawn, the later offshoots and the visions of Aleister Crowley.

After many false attempts at deciphering the hieroglyphs Champollion's decipherment created a strange conundrum. On the one hand the availability of new primary sources blew away much of the mysticism surrounding Egypt but on the other hand there emerged an abundance of sources on various religious and magical practices. nineteenth century occultists even found some elements between their practice and that of Egyptian magicians, as in the importance of the spoken word, images, colors, and secret names. The central nature of the spoken word was emphasized by contemporary Egyptologists, whose works were known to members of the Golden Dawn, for example P. Le Page Renouf, Lewis Spence, Alfred Wiedemann and E. A. Wallis Budge.<sup>188</sup> The perceived Egyptian idea was that the proper sequence of sounds, even when the words pronounced had no meaning, affected the world, and could even bind deities to do the magician's bidding. Especially important were, in the development of nineteenth century conceptions on magic, *The Book of the Dead*, and more importantly the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri.<sup>189</sup> *The Book of the Dead*, with the first extensive English translation published in 1876 by Samuel Birch, was a guide for the soul's journey in the afterlife and became an important source of symbolism and magical formulae in the nineteenth century's occult milieu. It is worth noting that the whole concept of the Egyptians having one manual for death and afterlife was constructed by Karl Lepsius in 1842, in his *Das Tottenbuch der Ägypter*, which was later used as a general term to encapsulate all sources that dealt with the topic of the afterlife. However for the occultists the concept mostly remained that these were all part of one mystical tradition, complete with the notion that the instructions are

---

<sup>188</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 88.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.* 89.

not just for the dead, but the whole texts is an allegory for magical working and the promised boons of spiritual eternal life can be attained by the living. This idea of the ancient Egyptians had the analogue of a holy book was also formulated greatly with the arrival and exhibition of the *Papyrus of Ani* to the British Museum in 1888, the year the Golden Dawn was founded. The Greco-Egyptian magical papyri contained various spells and magical practices. The Neoplatonists Iamblichus and Porphyry wrote much on theurgy, the process of unity with a deity through a trance induced by invocations. Both Iamblichus' *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, and Charles Wycliffe Goodwin's translation and commentaries on the Greco-Egyptian magical papyrus were familiar to Mathers and Farr.<sup>190</sup> Equally important were the "Egyptian mystery religions", a development of Hellenistic Egypt, the superimposing of Egyptian mythology on Greco-Roman mystery religions,<sup>191</sup> especially the cults or mysteries of Isis and Osiris, which spread throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>192</sup> The Golden Dawn, as numerous other secret societies conformed to the three step process of initiation, seen in mystery cults, of ordeal, revelation, and oath of secrecy. The primary source for the mysteries of Isis for members of the order was Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*. The cults of Isis and Osiris faded out during the early-Medieval period, only to be rediscovered by the Renaissance, and re-enter the field of public imagination, connecting all esoteric societies in a quest to link themselves with the Egyptians, and received the final consolidation when Count Cagliostro created the Egyptian Rite of Freemasonry.<sup>193</sup>

To glimpse on the various influences on Golden Dawn thought one should examine the collection of the Westcott Hermetic Library, "*open to all Members of Any College of the Rosicrucian Society, the Founder reserves the right to permit other persons, who are desirous of studying works on Egyptology, Magic, Alchemy, and the Occult Sciences, to have access to the library.*"<sup>194</sup> Opened in 1891, with a collection of 286 books<sup>195</sup> this library was specifically

---

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.* 90.

<sup>191</sup> Jan Assmann, Florian Ebeling edd. *Ägyptische Mysterien. Reisen in die Unterwelt in Aufklärung und Romantik. Eine kommentierte Anthologie.* Nordlingen: C. H. Beck. 2011. 29-30.

<sup>192</sup> Laurent Bricault. *Les Cults Isiaques Dans Le Monde Gréco-romain.* Paris: Les Belles Lettres. 2013. 23-45. Laurent Bricault, Miguel John Versluys edd. *Isis on the Nile: Egyptian Gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. Proceedings of the IV. International Conference of Isis Studies, Liège, November 27-29 2008.* Leiden: Brill. 2010. 39-40.

<sup>193</sup> Jan Assmann, Florian Ebeling edd. (2011): 91-144.

<sup>194</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 129.

<sup>195</sup> A complete catalogue and the 1897 revised rules of the library are published in George Mills Harper. *Yeats' Golden Dawn.* London: Macmillan. 1974. Appendix S. 290-305.

made to suit the needs of learning occultists, with books and manuscripts on astrology, mesmerism, philosophy, Neoplatonism, Hermetic texts, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, the magic of John Dee, Egypt, the works of the alchemist Eugenius Philalethes, occult fiction, witchcraft and ethnography.<sup>196</sup> Some notable books included the works of Agrippa, Paracelsus, and Eliphas Lévi, Francis Barrett's highly influential *The Magus, or Celestial Intelligencer*, as well as a copy of the *Fama Fraternitatis*. There was a certain lack of grimoires, although Mathers translated and published the *Goetia*<sup>197</sup> and the *Almadel*,<sup>198</sup> as well as material about spiritualism, which as a passive form of contacting otherworldly entities was seen as contrasting the active action focused Golden Dawn method.

The Egyptian collection of Westcott's library contained various kinds of works, without much distinction, from contemporary scientific Egyptology to 17-18<sup>th</sup> century tractates with an esoteric bend. Books on language and writing included T. Young's 1831 *Coptic i.e. Egyptian Dictionary*, and 1830 grammar; *A New guide to the Study of Coptic* by R. C. Fisher; J. Burton's *Excerpta Hieroglyphica*; Nicolaus Cusanus' mystical interpretation of the hieroglyphs in the form of an edition of *De Symbolica Aegyptiorum sapientia symbola* right next to the *Essay on Young and Champollion's system of Hieroglyphics* by H. Salt; A. T. Cory's *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollon Nilous*; Athanasius Kircher's *Prodromus Coptus sive Aegyptiacus*. Other books on Egypt were James Bonwick's *Pyramid Facts and Fancies* from 1877; the *Hermetis, Aegyptiorum, et Chemicorum Sapientia ab Hermanni Conringii animadversionibus Vindicata*, a refutation of Hermann Conring's doubts about the antiquity of alchemy by Olaus Borrichius; C. J. Bunsen's *Egypt's Place in Universal History*; an anonymous German book from 1785 detailing the supposed initiatory system of ancient Egypt, titled *Crata Repoa – Oder Einweihungen in der alten geheimen Gesellschaft der Egyptischen Priester*; Denon's *Voyages dans la basse et la haute Egypte*; a catalogue of the Egyptian antiquities of the Hartwell House; Saint-Hilaire's *Egypt and the Great Suez Canal*; James St. John's *Egypt and Nubia*; the proceedings of the Congés Provincial des Orientalistes Francais; G. D'Athanasius's *The Discoveries in Upper Egypt of H. Salt*; *On the Tombs of the Egyptians, with a Key to one of them* from 1822; *Egyptian Magic* by Florence Farr, her name given by her magical motto

---

<sup>196</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 130-135.

<sup>197</sup> The first section of the *Lesser Key of Solomon*, about summoning and commanding the 72 demons. The translation was published in 1904 by Aleister Crowley. A newer edition is available as S. L. MacGregor Mathers, Aleister Crowley. *The Goetia*. Seattle, WA: Pacific Publishing Studio. 2011.

<sup>198</sup> The fourth section of the *Lesser Key of Solomon*, about the creation of wax tablets to establish connection with angels through skrying. Alison Butler (2011): 136.

S.S.D.D. in the catalogue; E. W. Lane's *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians; The Alabaster Sarcophagus of Oimenepthah I, King of Egypt, now in Sir John Soane's Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields. Drawn by Joseph Bonomi, and described by Samuel Sharpe*; C. S. Sonnini's *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*; Sir G. Wilkinson's *The Egyptians in the time of the Pharaohs*; Witsius's *Aegyptiaca*; Bruce's *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*. This latter is especially interesting as it contains the first modern description of the Ge'ez *Book of Enoch*, which influenced Victorian culture from literature and sermons to art and fringe religious movements.<sup>199</sup> The *Book of Enoch* is also interesting from the Golden Dawn's point of view as it was this book that influenced Mathers' workings in his experiments with the magical system created by John Dee and Edward Kelley. When Mathers finished his Kabbalistic systemization of the "Angelic" magic, he dubbed both the language used there as well as the whole system "Enochian magic", and it became one of the cornerstones of the Golden Dawn's, and later Crowley's, system. In total around 10% of the library consisted of books on the topic of Egypt, with most of them being of esoteric inclination and only some of the then current egyptological works. Although this list does not mean that these were the only books that members of the Golden Dawn read on Egypt, merely that these were considered important enough to include in Westcott's library. It is almost certain that at least some members read current scientific studies as well, the more esoteric texts of the 17-18<sup>th</sup> century were regarded in much the same manner and treated to hold equal amount of veracity as the newest discovery about the customs, religion and beliefs of the ancient Egyptians.

In our present field of inspection Florence Farr's monograph on Egyptian magic holds special significance. Published in 1896, three years before Budge's *Egyptian magic*, as part of Westcott's *Collectanea Hermetica*<sup>200</sup> and can be regarded as a synthesis of the Golden Dawn's approach to Egypt. Much of the claims presented in the book were regarded even by contemporary Egyptology as false or at least fictitious, and have been proven wrong since then. Our aim however is not to debunk Farr's claims but to understand the underlying system of thought and to form a concise picture of the Golden Dawn's ideas of Egypt. The book starts with an apology for magic, which "*has now fallen into disrepute was, among the Egyptians,*

---

<sup>199</sup> György E. Szönyi. "Myth and Magic: Victorian Enoch and Historical Contexts" in Peter J. Forshaw ed. *Lux in Tenebris. The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism*. Brill: Leiden. Boston. 2017. 269-296. Ida Fröhlich. "Magic, sorcery, and myth in Jewish pseudepigraphic literature. (The Ethiopic Book of Enoch)" in Fodor, A. Shvitiel, A. (edd.) *Proceedings of the Colloquium on Logos, Ethos, Mythos in the Middle East & North Africa (L. E. M.) : Budapest, 18-22 September 1995. Part 2., Popular Religion, Popular Culture & History*. Budapest. 1996. 163-175.

<sup>200</sup> A facsimile edition is available as Florence Farr. *Egyptian Magic*. Kessinger Publishing: Whitefish, MT. 1993.

*regarded with a veneration hardly accorded to in the highest Philosophy in modern times*<sup>201</sup> and was practiced by kings and priests, elected from a “*Philosophical Aristocracy*”<sup>202</sup>. These wise kings gave the ordinary people an exoteric religion, through which they could in small part participate in the mysteries and if they reached sufficient development could become initiated. One reward of the initiated was the process of mummification, as a way to prevent reincarnation.<sup>203</sup> Farr also notes that while studying Egyptian magic “*one is troubled with no vague theories, but receives precise practical details*”<sup>204</sup> and receives a “*thoroughly scientific satisfaction*”<sup>205</sup>. She provides a “*list of standard works upon the subject of Egyptian Beliefs*” so that she can “*at once state the ideas which my study of ancient lore has led me to formulate, without waiting to quote the hypotheses set forth by our leading Egyptologists*”<sup>206</sup>, but this seems to be missing from the book. In her introduction on the nature of Egyptian magic Farr provides an explanation of correspondence as a principle of Egyptian magic, as it is the material’s nature to follow the spiritual<sup>207</sup>, the division of soul and body and the cycle of life, the rationale behind astrology. Farr attributes highly psychological ideas to the types of souls present in Egyptian sources, and regards the process of life and death as a journey towards spiritual perfection mainly through self-sacrifice.<sup>208</sup> If an initiated correctly performed the secret rituals he would become Osirified, a “*perfect copy of the Macroprosopus*”<sup>209</sup>, but for the non-initiated these rituals held grave dangers, dragging the soul to the “*abysses of blind potency*.”<sup>210</sup> While elaborating the symbolism of the Egyptian gods, as forms of the universal powers, she notes that the “*most potent magical formula was the identification of the Ritualist with the God whose power he was invoking. So increasing himself to an immeasurable greatness he leapt beyond all bodies, and transcending time became eternity*”<sup>211</sup>, an idea that is

---

<sup>201</sup> Florence Farr. *Egyptian Magic*. Kessinger Publishing: Whitefish, MT. 1993. 1. Gerald Yorke paraphrased this in his manuscript titled *Magic and the Golden Dawn* as “magic has fallen into disrepute. 4000 years ago it was part of established religion. Yorke NS 99.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.* 3.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.* 3-6.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.* 11.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.* 12.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.* 12.

very much present in the Golden Dawn rituals and commentaries. Farr also mentions Hatshepsut as a fully initiated ruler, and emphasizes the role of goddesses, and priestesses.<sup>212</sup> In cases where Farr provides commentary to primary sources she leans heavily on the *Memoir of the Congress of French Orientalists held at St. Etienne, 1875*, of which the Westcott library held a French copy. She particularly references Baron Anatole-Arthur Textor de Ravisi, and the research of an M.M. Chabas on the translation of the Harris Magical Papyrus.<sup>213</sup>

Farr provides a translation of a segment of the *Papyrus of Harris*, hymns to Shu, Amon-Ra, the five great gods of Hermopolis, and an apotropaic ritual as well as some commentary on the parts of the soul and the process of a king's initiation.<sup>214</sup> A translation and explanation of the "Legend of Ra and Isis" makes up the third chapter of the book, complete with commentaries from Farr and some excerpts from Flinders Petrie's translations of some Egyptian tales, and other sources.<sup>215</sup> Farr uses these tales to confirm her ideas about the various magical powers of the Ka, Khou, Baie, and other types of souls, as well as the practice of "Neter Paut" or joining with a "God Form".<sup>216</sup> According to Farr the reason behind the older texts' seeming lack of proper magical formulas is that the secrets were better kept during the older dynasties, but as time progressed this discipline of secrecy waned. But still Farr notes that "*The Egyptians invented and carried out unquestionably the best working system of national life as national life ever yet formulated. The power and duration of their civilization prove this beyond doubt. The glory of their nation continued very nearly five times as long as the glory of any other nation except only that of the persistent Chinese.*"<sup>217</sup> The reason of this success was obviously that the science of Egypt was applied science, physics and metaphysics alike in the form of magic.

After presenting some more particularities of Egyptian magic, the physical hardships of initiation, and the pharaoh's unity with the gods etc. Farr jumps a few centuries and turns to the

---

<sup>212</sup> Farr is very much a typical figure of the New Women movement as was clearly demonstrated by Caroline Tully in Caroline Tully. "Egyptosophy in the British Museum. Florence Farr, the Egyptian Adept and the Ka" in Christine Ferguson, Andrew Redford (edd.). *The Occult Imagination in Britain, 1875-1947*. Abingdon: Routledge. 2018.

<sup>213</sup> The identity of this M.M. Chabas is unknown, most likely it refers to Francois Joseph Chabas, and his book *Le Papyrus Magique Harris*, published in 1860. Alison Butler (2011) 189. note 108.

<sup>214</sup> Florence Farr (1993): 18-25.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* 26-33.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.* 33.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD, to demonstrate the later forms of higher magic in Alexandria. Her focus in this chapter is Gnosticism, through a set of extracts from a Coptic papyrus. She is quite scornful of the later developments of Egyptian culture, as she views it as the abandonment of the earlier better periods.<sup>218</sup> Farr identifies the Gnostics as the “Philosophical Christians”<sup>219</sup> contrary to the Church’s emotional Christianity, and after a short description on the nature of Gnosticism based on Valentinus she proceeds with the presentation of the Coptic papyrus.<sup>220</sup> The text is about Jesus teaching the apostles about the creation, structure, and secret workings of the cosmos in true Gnostic fashion, complete with spells, incantations, and baptism through mystical seals. Contrary to Farr’s dislike of later Egyptian magic it seems that the Golden Dawn rituals resemble more the *Bruce Papyrus* than the *Harris Papyrus*, in its didactical tone, and emphasis on initiation. The final segment is Farr’s conclusions on Egyptian magic. She identifies the focal points as: “*to the Egyptians of old the cultivation of discernments was the aim of life*”, “*daily the initiate studied and meditated on the inward significance of the sounds and forms symbolizing the habitations of the Aeons of the Absolute*”, “*they also believed in the efficacy of fixed thought, and the repeated word*”, “*the priests gained power by the identification of themselves with the types of natural forces, known to us as gods*”, “*the cultivation of all faculties dormant in human nature*”, “*the Magic of the Egyptians was founded on an elaborate scheme of the universe; and the interaction of natural forces was most carefully observed and studied*”.<sup>221</sup> The book ends on an emotional note, a quote from Shelley’s *Ozymandias*, lamenting the loss of the greatness of the magic of Egypt. Farr’s monograph is little more than a publication of some excerpts of two primary sources, accompanied by some notes, but no cohesive presentation of the various aspects, sources or peculiarities of Egyptian magic. She also handles some topics as common knowledge, for example the *Book of the Dead* is mentioned multiple times, but never expounded on. It is evident that Farr was not a professional Egyptologist, but a layman, whose aim was to present the antiquity and beauty of a partially

---

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* 39.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.* 41.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* 44-83. The papyrus is held in the Bodleian Library as MS Bruce 96. It was acquired by James Bruce in 1769, and is part of the so called *Bruce Codex*. The translation on which Florence Farr most likely based her own translation was most likely Émile Amélineau. *Notice sur le papyrus gnostique Bruce*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale. 1891. 65-305. and Carl Schmidt. *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus*. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs. 1892. 226-277.

<sup>221</sup> Florence Farr (1993): 84-85.



imagined Egyptian system of magic, complete with initiations, the every-day use of magic, sharing uncanny similarities with the Hermetic ideas of the Golden Dawn.

But for Florence Farr reading works of Egyptology and translations of primary sources wasn't the only way to glimpse into the secrets of Egyptian magic. From 1895, while researching in the British Museum for her previously explored book, Farr had access to a first-hand witness of the Egyptian mysteries, the so called "Egyptian Adept" with whom she "made contact" while meditating in the Egyptian Rooms of the museum. This "Adept" was the mummy of Mut-em-menu, or so Farr believed, identified by the guidebook as "a lady of the college of the God Amen-Ra at Thebes."<sup>222</sup> Recent developments have shown that the coffin belonged to Mutemmenu, a chantress of Amun, the mummy inside is from the Roman period, as is the remains of a male, padded underneath the wrappings either as a way to make him look like a women, or as an attempt to restore his plumpness in life, as the deceased was probably overweight.<sup>223</sup> After establishing the spiritual connection with the mummy Farr was slow to trust, as Mutemmenu claimed to be of the rank of Magister Templi in the Golden Dawn, so she turned to Mathers – who was by this point living in Paris and gradually losing control over the Golden Dawn - to confirm whether or not she is the subject of some plot by evil forces bent on leading her astray.<sup>224</sup> As the chantress showed appropriate reactions to the secret signs presented by Farr, Mathers recognized her as one of the Secret Chiefs of the order, and gave permission to Farr to form a group with high ranking members of the Second Order to work with this newly found adept, and to give offerings to the mummy. A task that Farr completed in a truly hermetic fashion, as instead of finding proper Egyptian funerary practices she asked Mutemmenu what she would like to receive through a vision and enshrined her spirit in a box made specifically to fulfill this function, thus removing the need to visit the museum each time she wanted to contact her new guide.<sup>225</sup> It seems that both Farr and Mathers believed in the claim - largely the work of Mathers and Westcott – of the antiquity of the Golden Dawn, it to be a direct descendant of the Egyptian mysteries, that the mummy from the Ramesside period knew and could properly answer the signs of the grades. Farr then formed the Sphere Group, with the aim of through the help of Mutemmenu and the visualization of a sphere with the image of the Tree

---

<sup>222</sup> Caroline Tully (2008): 132.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.* 135. more on the mummy and similarly prepared ones see: John H. Taylor, Daniel Antoine. *Ancient Lives New Discoveries: Eight Mummies, Eight Stories*. London: The British Museum Press. 2014. Nigel Strudwick. *Masterpieces of Ancient Egypt*. London: The British Museum Press. 2006.

<sup>224</sup> Caroline Tully (2008): 136.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.* 137.

of Life, the extension of the size of this sphere and the chant of “Let Ra live, let Apophis be destroyed”<sup>226</sup> they would transmute evil into good. In 1901 the Adept ascended to higher realms and could no longer work with the group, but Farr found a new Egyptian contact for herself, the statue of Nemkheftka, a provincial official from Deshasha, identified by Farr as her *ka*.<sup>227</sup> The statue and Farr’s ideas about it being her *ka*, or even that she was in a previous incarnation the wife of Nemkheftka served as inspiration for the two Egyptianizing plays, *The Beloved of Hathor* and *The Shrine of the Golden Hawk*, written by her in collaboration with Olivia Shakespear.<sup>228</sup>

The Golden Dawn in true Hermetic fashion emphasized the role of revelation in acquiring knowledge, at least when the knowledge in question could not be reached through conventional learning, for example the experiences of Annie Horniman and Frederick Leigh Gardner in their astral travels to the planets of the solar system.<sup>229</sup> Whenever knowledge was available through written material, ritual, or through a living master it was preferred instead of revelations. As a requirement for Inner Order membership one was required to “*learn the Egyptian art of the formation of a combined series of images of Gods or Forces, so as to have the effect of a continuous prayer or invocation of the Power desired.*”<sup>230</sup> As well as a special stress on mythology and the technique of assuming god forms, which were all skill acquirable through conventional means and practice.<sup>231</sup> Florence Farr’s case with the two Egyptian spirits seems to be the only case when Golden Dawn members were revealed knowledge about practices attributed to the antecedents of the order. A similar case would happen with Aleister Crowley in Egypt, in his revelations from Aiwass, which will be expanded on in a later chapter. There were also other important sources for the Golden Dawn’s system of magic that fall outside the constraints of this present dissertation. The Enochian magic of John Dee merits a mention as it was the work of Mathers that systemized it and reintroduced it into the esoteric milieu.<sup>232</sup>

---

<sup>226</sup> Darcy Kuntz. *The Golden Dawn Legacy of MacGregor Mathers*. Lynnwood, WA: Holmes Publishing Group. 1998. 166-72.

<sup>227</sup> Caroline Tully (2008): 140. Warwick Gould. “The Music of Heaven’: Dorothea Hunter” in Deirdre Toomey (ed.). *Yeats Annual No. 9: Yeats and Women*. Houndsmills: Macmillan Press. 1997. 170.

<sup>228</sup> Caroline Tully (2008): 141.

<sup>229</sup> Yorke NS 11[GD MSS 5]

<sup>230</sup> Yorke NS 99.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> Yorke NS. 71.



## Changes in approach to magic

The Golden Dawn left a strong mark on the later development of Western esoteric thought, changing and refining earlier ideas, which in the past century became cornerstones of modern magical organization. By taking a closer look on these fundamental changes to earlier forms of esotericism, brought on by the most prominent members of the Golden Dawn, especially Westcott and Mathers, we can conclude our chapter on the structure and nature of the order's ideology on magic, secret knowledge, and the role it plays in the life of the aspiring adept.

Pre-19<sup>th</sup>-century sources describe magic as a solitary activity, performed by the mage and in some cases a group of assistants or disciples. The Golden Dawn elevated the practice from a personal activity to one performed with a group. One of the primary inspirations for this were the 17<sup>th</sup> century stories about the Rosicrucians, which presented them as an existing fraternity of practicing mages.<sup>233</sup> Although there still remained rituals intended for personal use, but much of the rituals and experiments that were practiced were to be carried out at least in a small group of two-three magicians. The method of the shift from solitary to group activity was to adapt magic into a structured organization influenced by the structure of Masonic organizations, with the intent to facilitate access and spread the secret wisdom of the ancients to those with a required inclination.<sup>234</sup> This opened the way for other organizations focused on not just the theoretical but practical application of magic to flourish in the early to mid-twentieth century.<sup>235</sup> Supplementing this the process of the transmission of knowledge changed as well. From the earlier reliance on individual sources, either written or from a master, the Golden Dawn restructured it into a school-type format, with snippets of knowledge being given at appropriate levels. In this process the Golden Dawn inadvertently created a canon of the Western magical tradition that remained influential since then.<sup>236</sup> But the effect of the Golden Dawn's legacy is not only evident in structural changes to the esoteric tradition, but in theoretical aspects as well. The order's magic transformed the role of intermediary spirits, which were of crucial importance in earlier forms of magical thought. Instead of relying on a benign or malign spirits to perform the magicians bidding, the Golden Dawn focused on

---

<sup>233</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 144.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* 144.

<sup>235</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaff (2013): 42-44.

<sup>236</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 145.

evocation and invocation.<sup>237</sup> Through invocation the magicians brings down the power into himself, and through evocation brings them out from himself, through the system of correspondences between the microcosm and the macrocosm. The highest form of this type of magical practice is when the aim of the ritual is that the magician becomes one with the invoked power, altering his consciousness in the process and becomes able to communicate with his “higher genius”.<sup>238</sup> Crowley later took the lessening role of spiritual beings to the extreme when he identified them not as independent entities but as constructs and denizens of the mind, an idea that would be highly influential in more contemporary developments of magical thought. This was at least partially caused by early developments of psychoanalysis and psychology, but to explore the intricacies of the interplay of esoteric ideas and early psychology would require a separate volume on its own.

The most important change brought on by the Golden Dawn was the shift in the aim of magic. As a restatement of the ideas first surfacing during the Renaissance the goal of magic became personal transformation, the betterment of self, and spiritual development.<sup>239</sup> Much of the practice of Medieval magic was concerned with material gains, acquiring wealth and health, protection from disasters and accidents, and much of the search for hidden knowledge was a search for the location of buried treasure and riches held underground,<sup>240</sup> and this was highly influential until the nineteenth century. The Golden Dawn’s use of Hermetic and Kabbalistic symbolism, Egyptian imagery, the elaborate rituals, ritual implements all served the purpose to evoke a sense of altered consciousness, or even a form of alternative religious experience, to facilitate an experience of transmutation, and the change in one’s very being. This idea of spiritual development culminating in a personal union with the divine is the central tenet of the Golden Dawn belief, as an answer to the perceived failings of organized religion, a personal search for connection with the supernatural, and the search for answers on the topics left unexplored by scientific progress.<sup>241</sup> It seems as a stark contrast that the aim of the magical working of the Golden Dawn was individual self-transformation when the methods employed in the pursuit of it were often conducted in group activities. But the performance of magic in a

---

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.* 148.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.* 149.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.* 149.

<sup>240</sup> On Medieval magic see further: Owen Davies. *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2009.

<sup>241</sup> Ronald Hutton. “Modern Pagan Witchcraft.” in Bengt Ankarloo, Stuart Clard (edd.). *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe in the Twentieth Century*. Athlone Press: London. 1999. 10.

community was not seen as a distraction from the personal growth of members, but on the contrary as a facilitating factor in reaching higher levels of spiritual awareness. Members of the Inner Order were even encouraged to form smaller “study groups” as well as independent study but were discouraged to perform magical acts alone. This seeming contradiction stems from the masonic roots, the synthesizing tendencies of the order, and to an extent between the conflicts of individuality and community, and a desire for further exploration of the self.<sup>242</sup> The attempt to reconcile these aims and methods led the Golden Dawn to function as a school of magic with a predetermined curriculum and set of rituals meant to lead the initiate to self-perfection.

These innovations of the Golden Dawn are of course not without precedents, the idea of magic being a tool in spiritual growth dates back through the Renaissance to Late Antiquity at least. Forming an organized structure to pass on esoteric knowledge through steps of initiation was already practiced by other organizations. However the Golden Dawn’s trifold focus on practical magic, self-development, and a grade based organized system proved to be highly influential.

---

<sup>242</sup> Marco Pasi. “The Modernity of Occultism: Reflections on Some Crucial Aspects” Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Joyce Pijenburg. (edd.). *Hermes in the Academy*. Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam. 2009. 59-74.

*Rituals, lectures, and other materials*

In the Outer Order of the Golden Dawn members had little access to proper magical rituals. With the exception of two purification rituals taught at the Neophyte grade members mostly participated in rituals during initiations and the Equinox ceremonies. Proper magical experimentation was encouraged for members of the Second Order, when the theory taught during First Order membership was put to practice by the select few, invited to join the Second Order. Below we will examine the text and symbolist, enumerate the elements of Egyptian origin and form a conclusion on the role these played in the ritual framework.

**The process of initiation**

At its inception the Golden Dawn started with five grades of initiation, all found in the Cypher Manuscripts. The manuscripts contained the bare bones of a system of initiations, but it was Mathers, commissioned by Westcott, who created elaborate and detailed rituals.<sup>243</sup> These initiations were important events in the order's social life, and all members of sufficient rank were invited to participate.<sup>244</sup> Other than these the only other communal rituals were the two celebrated during the vernal and autumnal equinoxes. The original Outer Order was later complemented by the three ranks of the Inner Order, of which membership was even more exclusive. Progress through the order was structured in a way that after each initiation there was a mandatory learning period, where the freshly initiated had to complete the curriculum set for that grade. After a successful examination and the payment of grade fees<sup>245</sup> the next initiation ritual was organized, and the process then repeated. To apply as a neophyte the candidate were not required a curriculum but had to have a recommendation from a member.<sup>246</sup> In the case of the Outer Order there was an overlaying theme of the advancements, the seeker professes the resolve to search for the hidden knowledge and thus gets brought before the gates

---

<sup>243</sup> A copy of the Cypher Manuscripts is available in Yorke NS 2.

<sup>244</sup> In the Yorke collection there are numerous invitations to initiation ceremonies as well as some diary entries by F. L. Gardner about certain rituals. Yorke NS 102.

<sup>245</sup> The cost increased with each grade starting from 1 guinea, increased with half crown for each step of initiation. Yorke NS 7.

<sup>246</sup> This was a fairly common procedure in occult organizations. The Golden Dawn as others advertised itself in journals and last pages of books, so a recommendation could be obtained from the leading members if the candidate was not known by anyone else in the order.

of Eden and advancer further and further in, learning more about the hidden mechanism of creation and becoming well-versed in the “occult sciences”.<sup>247</sup>

The structure of the Outer Order initiation rituals were masonic in nature. They all start with an opening ritual, where the acting officers are enumerated, the members present are checked to be of sufficient grade and if everything is in order the temple is declared open. During this time the candidate is outside the temple. After the opening the initiate is brought in, usually hoodwinked and accompanied by an officer, is led around the temple, one or more times, asked question that either the candidate or the accompanying officer has to answer for and swear an oath of secrecy. The rituals are highly symbolic but also didactic in nature, as each movement is explained and the symbolism revealed and interpreted during the ritual itself. In the case of later rituals smaller rituals are inserted, while the candidate is taken out from the temple, while the interior is reorganized in specific manners, then brought back and the process continues. After the initiate completes the mystical journey she is given the new title, and the accompanying secret signs and passwords. This is followed by a closing ceremony and the freshly initiated can apply at the librarian for the manuscripts of the curriculum for the next degree. The texts of the rituals are long and elaborate and at most cases it was not required by the officials to know them by heart. In a letter from F. L. Gardner to August Gardner he is asked to learn the part of the Kerux in the Ritual of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Path (a part of the Theoricus ritual) by heart so “*as to be able to take part in it without the aid of a book until the time when the lights turned up.*”<sup>248</sup> Membership and rituals had monetary costs as well. The price of entry was one guinea<sup>249</sup>, yearly membership cost half guinea and the price of each initiation was half crown per rank, additive at each rank paid after the ritual.<sup>250</sup> Initiation rituals were often performed in succession on the same evening.<sup>251</sup> For non-acting officials participation was limited during initiations as members were required to maintain absolute silence during the rituals.<sup>252</sup>

---

<sup>247</sup> The distinction of sciences is important as from a Golden Dawn perspective the teachings of Kabbalah and Hermeticism, the „wisdom of the ancients” was as true, methodical and verifiable as mathematics, chemistry or other fields of science.

<sup>248</sup> Yorke NS 73.

<sup>249</sup><sup>249</sup> By this time the guinea was out of circulation, the term referring to £1.05 was often used to denote the price of services and fees.

<sup>250</sup> Yorke NS 7.

<sup>251</sup> Yorke NS 102. contains multiple invitations for initiations and an Equinox ritual.

<sup>252</sup> Yorke NS 7. contains a copy of the by-laws of the Isis-Urania Temple.



## Clothing and ritual implements

The elaborate rituals of the Golden Dawn called for elaborate clothing and ritual implements. As color played an important role in the orders hermetic ideas; as color was regarded not as a symbol of a certain force, but the forces themselves<sup>253</sup>; the color of the robes, wands, banners, swords and parts therein all held significance. Most of these is outside of our present field of investigation as their meaning is not related to Egypt. A few items however require mentioning. The magician is clothed in a tau robe, most often black with a colored collar. On his or her head is a nemyss, which was and is still uncommon in western magical practices. It is unclear why this was chosen but it certainly signifies the Golden Dawn's purported connection to Egypt. The ankh, often referred to as the symbol of life<sup>254</sup> or crux ansata is often employed, especially in the Inner Order rituals where it is used as an alternate form of the rose and cross symbol. The temple itself is also of importance. The room is aligned to the cardinal directions, with checkered floor as in Masonic temples. In the East is a dais where the highest officials sit and in front of it are two pillars, one black on the left and one white on the right. These are referenced by multiple names, Boaz and Jachin in the Masonic fashion, the Pillars of Hermes, and the Pillars of Shu or the Pillars of the Gods of the Dawning Light or the Northern and Southern Columns of the Gate of the Hall of Truth, after the Book of the Dead.<sup>255</sup> They stand on cubical stands and are painted in complementary colors, and on their top are red pyramids, each holding a candle. The Z1 document explains the pillars as: *“The Bases of the two Pillars are respectively in Netzach and Hod; the White Pillar being in Netzach and the Black Pillar in Hod. They represent the Two Pillars of Mercy and Severity. The bases are cubical and black to represent the Earth Element in Malkuth. The columns are respectively black and white to represent the manifestation of the Eternal Balance of the Scales of Justice. Upon them should be represented in counter-changed colour any appropriate Egyptian designs, emblematic of the Soul. The scarlet tetra-hedronal capitals represent the Fire of Test and Trial: and between the Pillars is the porchway of the Region Immeasurable. The twin lights which burn on their summits are “The Declarers of the Eternal Truth.” The bases of the*

---

<sup>253</sup> Regardie, Israel. *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic. Vol I-X.* Phoenix, AZ: Falcon Publishing. 1984. Henceforth abbreviated as GD.

GD VI. 27.

<sup>254</sup> GD VII. 36.

<sup>255</sup> Chic Cicero, Sandra Tabitha Cicero. *Secrets of the Golden Dawn Temple.* London: Llewellyn. 1999. 21.

*tetrahedra, being triangular, that on the White pillar points East, while that on the Black points West. They thus complete the Hexagram of Tiphareth though separate, as is fitting in "The Hall of the Dual Manifestation of Truth."*<sup>256</sup> The pillars are decorated with vignettes from the Book of the Dead, or as the Z1 document states, with any other Egyptian illustration symbolic of the soul. On the black pillar the images are the ones that accompany the 125<sup>th</sup> formula, *The Formulae of Coming Entering in the Hall of Two Truths*<sup>257</sup>, divided into five registers. Three of these shows a number of gods witnessing the weighing of the heart, depicted in another register, followed by the image of the dead being brought before Osiris. On the white pillar there are the images of the 17<sup>th</sup> formula, depicting the soul's joyful life in the underworld. Mathers provides further explanation on the selection of these specific formulas in a separate document, titled *The Pillars*. "*The archaic illustrations are taken from the vignettes of the 17th and 125th chapter of the Ritual of the Dead the Egyptian Book of the Per-em-Hru or the Book of Coming Forth into the Day, the oldest book in the world as yet discovered. The Recension of the Priests of ON is to be found in the walls of the Pyramids of the Kings of the 5th and 6th Dynasties at Sakarah, the recensions of the 11th and 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasties on the sarcophagi of that period, and the Theban recension of the 18th Dynasty and onward is found on papyri, both plain and illuminated. No satisfactory translation of these books is available, none having been yet attempted by a scholar having the qualifications of mystic as well as Egyptologist. The Ritual of the Dead, generally speaking, is a collection of hymns and prayers in the form of a series of ceremonial Rituals to enable the man to unite himself with Osiris the Redeemer. After this union*

*he is no longer called the man, but Osiris with whom he is now symbolically identified. "That they also may be One of us," said the Christ of the New Testament. "I am Osiris" said the purified and justified man, his soul luminous and washed from sin in the immortal and uncreated light, united to Osiris, and thereby justified, and the son of God; purified by suffering, strengthened by opposition, regenerate through self-sacrifice. Such is the subject of the great Egyptian Ritual."*<sup>258</sup> The Pillars document provides the translation of the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter. The translator is given as Frater M.W.T, Ma Wahanu Thesi that is Marcus Worsley Blackden, who was an Egyptologist, a volunteer staff member of the Archeological Survey under Newberry in

---

<sup>256</sup> GD VI. 56.

<sup>257</sup> E. A. Wallis Budge. *The Papyrus of Ani*. London: The Medici Society. 1913. 336.

<sup>258</sup> GD III. 2.

Beni Hasan and El-Bersha, and painted colored drawings of the wall-paintings.<sup>259</sup> Blackden published his own translation of the Papyrus of Ani in 1915, titled *The Ritual of the Mystery of the Judgment of the Soul*<sup>260</sup> in which he tried to prove that the Book of the Dead was in truth an initiatory rite with much similarities to the Neophyte ritual outlined in the Cypher Manuscripts.

## Neophyte

The first grade that every member of the Golden Dawn had to pass was the grade of the Neophyte. As the first step of initiation the ritual contains the general outline of the Order's thought, aims and methods.<sup>261</sup> All these were explained to the initiate during the ritual. The main theme of the Neophyte Ritual is the coming to the light of knowledge and understanding from the darkness of ignorance, a symbolic death and resurrection. The ritual begins without the initiate with the opening of the temple, a check that all present members have been initiated in the neophyte grade.<sup>262</sup> This is done by all present members performing the secret sign of the Neophyte. The ritual then follows with the enumeration of the officers and the explanation of their respective roles and symbolism.<sup>263</sup> The ritual contains a separate ceremony for purification and sanctification of the temple, this is done with a questioning of each officer in succession, reporting on their status, place held in the temple, and the role they fulfill. They then purify each cardinal direction with incense and water. After they check that everyone and everything is in order the temple is opened with an adoration and a magical formula. The adoration is important as it paints a picture of God that the Golden Dawn worshipped. It is as follows:

*“Holy art Thou, Lord of the Universe.  
Holy art Thou, whom Nature hath not formed.  
Holy art Thou, The Vast and Mighty One.  
Lord of the Light and of the Darkness.”*<sup>264</sup>

---

<sup>259</sup> He also worked with Flinder Petrie and later Howard Carter.

<sup>260</sup> M. W. Blackden. *Ritual of the Mystery if the Judgement of the Soul: From an Ancient Egyptian Papyrus*. Lynwood, WA: Holmes Publishing Group. 2001.

<sup>261</sup> Transcripts of the Outer Order rituals are found in Yorke NS. 26, NS 63, NS 71.

<sup>262</sup> GD VI. 4.

<sup>263</sup> GD VI. 4-8.

<sup>264</sup> GD VI. 9.

This prayer is a shortened and slightly rephrased version of the *Poimandres* I:30. In the Neophyte ritual it is followed by the phrase *khaabs am pekht*.<sup>265</sup> This is presented as the original Egyptian inspiration<sup>266</sup> of the Greek phrase *konx om pax*<sup>267</sup> which was supposedly used in the Eleusinian Mysteries, meaning light in extension. But there is no accepted translation for the Greek phrase, and the validity of the Egyptian is also contentious, and the translation seems to be Mathers' work without much philological basis.<sup>268</sup> In the ritual the formula of *khaabs am pekht-konx om pax-light in extension* is used as a tripartite confirmation that the light of occult knowledge shines forth into the darkness as the temple is symbolically opened, with the Egyptian and Greek phrase acting as words of power, accompanied by knocks and each word said by a different officer.<sup>269</sup> The candidate is then purified with each element, brought in the temple, performs an oath to keep secret all that will happen to him and then led around to the station of each officer where a short question and answer session takes place. The initiate remains silent during this part, as the Hegemon answers in his stead. He is referred to as "Child of the Earth", and the circumambulation is symbolic of the soul's travel from darkness to light. At the end the initiate is taken to the altar and receives a blessing through the invocation of the Lord of the Universe, to aid the candidate in his search for spiritual enlightenment. This leads the candidate to be accepted into the order, as this is proclaimed the *khabs am pekht* phrase is employed again as a magical confirmation of the proceedings.<sup>270</sup> The candidate is then taught the secret step, sign and password. One part of the sign is the name *har-par-krat* explained as the title of the Egyptian god of silence<sup>271</sup> as a reminder of secrecy, and this is also enforced with a short sympathetic magical act.<sup>272</sup> Once again the symbolism of the ritual is didactically explained to the fresh neophyte.<sup>273</sup> This includes the meaning of the phrase *khabs am pekht*, the furniture of the temple, including the pillars and the Egyptian vignettes, and through it the cosmology of the Golden Dawn's beliefs. "a *The Red Cross above the White Triangle, is an*

---

<sup>265</sup> GD VI. 9.

<sup>266</sup> Mathers Address on the Pillars, GD VI. 18.

<sup>267</sup> The phrase originated from Marcus Musurus' 1514 edition of Hesychius' *Lexicon*

<sup>268</sup> Some other propositions of the time included Egyptian, Sanskrit and even Mayan origin for the Greek term.

<sup>269</sup> GD VI. 9-10.

<sup>270</sup> GD VI. 15.

<sup>271</sup> GD VI. 17.

<sup>272</sup> GD VI. 20.

<sup>273</sup> This final explanation includes the meaning of *khaabs am pekht*, the hieroglyphs on the pillars, among the hermetic symbolism of the offices, sections of the temple etc.

*Image of Him Who was unfolded in the Light. At its East, South, West and North Angles are a Rose Fire, Cup of Wine and Bread and Salt. These allude to the Four Elements, Air, Fire, Water, Earth. The Mystical Words - KHABS AM PEKHT - are ancient Egyptian and are the origin of the Greek KONX OM PAX - which was uttered at the Eleusinian Mysteries. A literal translation would be Light Rushing Out in One Ray and they signify the same form of Light as that symbolized by the Staff of the Kerux. East of the Double Cubical Altar of created things, are the Pillars of Hermes and of Solomon. On these are painted certain Hieroglyphics from the 17th and the 125th Chapters of the Book of the Dead. They are the symbols of the two powers of Day and Night, Love and Hate, Work and Rest, the subtle force of the Lodestone and the Eternal out-pouring and in-pouring of the Heart of God. The Lamps that burn, though with a veiled light, upon their summits show that the Pathway to Hidden Knowledge, unlike the Pathway of Nature - which is a continual undulation, the winding hither and thither of the Serpent - is the straight and narrow way between them. It was because of this that I passed between them, when you came to the Light, and it was because of this that you were placed between them to receive the final Consecration. Two contending Forces and one which unites them eternally. Two basal angles of the triangle and one which forms the apex. Such is the origin of Creation, it is the Triad of Life. My Throne at the Gate of the East is the Place of the Guardian of the Dawning Sun. The Throne of the Hiereus at the Gate of the West is the Place of the Guardian against the Multitudes that sleep through the Light and awaken at the twilight, The Throne of the Hegemon seated between the Columns is the Place of Balanced Power, between the Ultimate Light and the Ultimate Darkness. These meanings are shown in detail and by the color of our robes. The Wand of the Kerux is the Beam of Light from the Hidden Wisdom, and his Lamp is an emblem of the ever burning Lamp of the Guardian of the Mysteries, The Seat of the Stolistes at the Gate of the North is the Place of the Guardian of the Cauldron and the Well of Water of Cold and Moisture. The Seat of the Dadouchos at the Gate of the South is the Place of the Guardian of the Lake of Fire and the Burning Bush.”<sup>274</sup> These encapsulate the numerous elements of the Golden Dawn’s syncretistic belief system: the Hermetic concept of elements, the order being the successor of Egyptian mystery religion, Kabbalistic allusions, and dualistic understanding of the world, where the aim is not the victory of light or dark but an equilibrium between the two. After this basic knowledge is imparted on the initiate he also receives a short address from the Hiereus that explains his new obligations, some general rules of conduct, and the required curriculum before he could progress to the next grade. Then the*

---

<sup>274</sup> GD VI. 18-19.

ritual concludes with the closing ceremony, that is a repeated and reversed form of the opening ceremony, with consecration, and purification. It also includes the consumption of the “Mystic Repast”. This is composed of four things, corresponding to each element, a rose’s scent, a red lamp’s heat, bread and salt, and a cup of wine.

Although this is the first initiation, it is also the most important as the structure and symbolism employed in it serve as the basis for much of the later initiations as well as other rituals and magical ceremonies devised by members of the Golden Dawn.<sup>275</sup> All non-initiatory rituals took place in a temple organized in the way of the Neophyte ritual. Much have been written on it by members themselves, of which the most impactful were those written by Mathers, to further expand the hidden symbolism of the ritual to members initiated into the Inner Order.

### **The Z documents interpretation**

We have seen that in the Neophyte Ritual there are some direct allusions to Egyptian religion but the general structure and wording of the ritual follows a more masonic core with some general hermetic symbolism. But there is another way of interpretation through the so called “Z1 document” or *The Enterer of the Threshold*, which proposes a more unique approach to the ritual in a peculiar synthesis of Egyptian, Kabbalistic and hermetic symbolism.<sup>276</sup> The Z1, Z2, and Z3 documents were written around 1892, or even earlier, most likely by Mathers,<sup>277</sup> and each was meant for the Inner Order members as an extended explanation of the Neophyte ritual. The Z1 explains the ritual, the officers and the Temple, the Z2 is a series of magical rituals based on the structure of the Neophyte ritual and the Z3 is a description of the mystical events during the initiation from the candidate’s viewpoint.<sup>278</sup>

In the Neophyte Ritual there are seven officers; Hierophant, Hiererus, Hegemon, Kerux, Stolistes, Dadouchos, Sentinel; who perform the ritual and three more; Imperator, Cancellarius, Praemonstrat; who are not required to be present physically as they represent the authority of the Second Order. Each of the acting officers represents an Egyptian god-form and the temple

---

<sup>275</sup> The long lasting influence of the Neophyte ritual is curiously illustrated by the fact that in 2017 a studio named keep silence (sic) published a virtual reality version of the ritual, called Virtual Temple: Order of the Golden Dawn, with the promise of later including further rituals as well.

<sup>276</sup> Pat Zalewski. *Golden Dawn Rituals and Commentaries*. Vols 1-3. Self Published. 2001. Vol. 1. 154.

<sup>277</sup> Pat Zalewski (2001): 178.

<sup>278</sup> GD VI. 32-86.

is also filled with gods being present without physical representations, totaling in 65.<sup>279</sup> The names used in the Z1 document are the Coptic variants.<sup>280</sup> The gods with corresponding officers are the following.

The Hierophant represents Ousiri – Osiris – the *Expounder of the Sacred Mysteries*<sup>281</sup> and rules and governs over the whole ritual. Placed at the Eastern side of the temple as a solar deity he also represents the Inner Order of the Golden Dawns, thus professing the legitimacy of the initiation. Ousiri is depicted holding the crook and scourge, colored blue and red, and a gold bennu or phoenix wand. In the Golden Dawn system these colors represent Geburah, Chesed and Tiphareth, the three Sephiroth that corresponds to the three ranks of the Inner Order.<sup>282</sup> The role of Ousiri in the ceremony is summed in the *Osiris Prayer*:

*“For Osiris on-Nophiris who is found perfect before the Gods, hath said:*

*These are the Elements of my Body, Perfected through Suffering,  
Glorified through Trial.*

*For the scent of the Dying Rose is as the repressed sigh of my suffering:*

*And the flame-red Fire as the Energy of Undaunted Will.*

*And the Cup of Wine is pouring out the Blood of my Heart:*

*Sacrificed unto Regeneration, unto the Newer Life:*

*Which I destroy in order that they may be renewed.*

*For I am Osiris Triumphant, even Osiris on-Nophris, the Justified:*

*I am He who is clothed with the Body of Flesh,*

---

<sup>279</sup> Pat Zalewski (2001): 179.

<sup>280</sup> The reason behind this is debatable. The proper Egyptian spelling of the names were little known for the pop-culture at the time, and the transcription was still contentious as there was no agreed upon way of vocalization. As Mathers had extensive connections with egyptologists in the British Museum and also spent considerable time there so in theory the then current developments of the field could have been accessible to him. This poses another problem since the vocalization of the Egyptian names was debated, with no single version accepted as authentic. So it seems that instead of using the well known Greek versions of the names the Golden Dawn instead chose to follow the Coptic version, which was a sort of middle path between the original authentic Egyptian and the corrupted Greek form.

<sup>281</sup> GD VI. 60.

<sup>282</sup> Other ritual implements held both physically by the Hierophant and symbolically by Ousiri include a sceptre, corresponding to the Middle Pillar of the Tree of Life, which grants him authority to open and close the temple. A lamén which proves his authority to wield the sceptre, and represents the fire and Sun that brings life, and the self-sacrifice required by the initiate. The Banner of the East, draped in Golden Dawn color symbolism representing the ascent of the initiate into Perfect Knowledge of the Light. GD VI. 58-59.

*Yet in whom is the Spirit of the Great Gods:  
I am the Lord of Life, triumphant over Death.  
He who partaketh with me shall rise with me:  
I am manifestor in Matter of Those whose Abode is in the Invisible:  
I am purified, I stand upon the Universe:  
I am its reconciler with the Eternal Gods:  
I am the Perfection of Matter:  
And without me, the Universe is not.*<sup>283</sup>

According to this hymn, Ousiri is the representation of the solar current, the light shining forth in darkness. The story of Osiris' death and resurrection is incorporated as Ousiri being a god of spirit and god of life, who resurrects those who participate in the ritual.<sup>284</sup> Thus Ousiri is the main actor of the Neophite Ritual, since the main theme of the ceremony is the symbolic death and resurrection of the initiate, who from the darkness of ignorance arrives to the light of knowledge, expounded by the god of light and life, through the Hierophant.

The Hierous, sits in the Western corner of the temple and corresponds to Hoor – Horus – protecting the Hall on the physical and astral planes as well. Depicted as he steps on a red serpent, as symbol of the Qlippoth and demons. The Hierous holds multiple items as well of which the Sword of Judgement, also called the Sword of Vengeance<sup>285</sup> alludes to the title of Horus, Avenger of His Father, and he is also depicted with the double crown of upper and lower Egypt.

The Hegemon corresponds to the goddess Thmê - Maat – as a reconciler between the forces of the Hierophant and Hierous, the *Equilibrium of the Scales of Justice the Guardian of the Threshold* and the *Preparer of the Way for the Enterer*<sup>286</sup>. The attire is explained in Kabbalistic symbolism and the Hegemon also assumes the name *Before the Face of the Gods in the Place of the Threshold*<sup>287</sup> and represents three aspects of the same goddess, Thma-Ae-St, Thma-aesh and Thmaa-ett, each equated with influences from different Sephira.<sup>288</sup> Other than

---

<sup>283</sup> GD VI. 57.

<sup>284</sup> J. S. Kupperman. "By Names and Images: Golden Dawn Egyptian Mythology" *Journal of the Western Mystery Tradition*. (1) 2001.

<sup>285</sup> Pat Zalewski (2001): Vol 2. 208.

<sup>286</sup> GD VI. 61.

<sup>287</sup> GD VI. 62.

<sup>288</sup> GD VI. 62.



the names the only connection to Egyptian mythology is the representation of Thmê as the *illuminated way*<sup>289</sup> which corresponds with Maat as the right way of living.

The Kerux and Sentinel both correspond to two aspects of the same deity, Anoup – Anubis. In the case of the Kerux it is *Ano-Oobist Empe-Eeb-Te*, Anubis of the East and the Sentinel is *Ano-Oobi Em-Pemen-Te*, Anubis of the West.<sup>290</sup> Anubis of the East fulfills the role of a psychopomp, guiding the initiate with the so-called Lamp of Hidden Knowledge in hand. He also makes sure that the candidate is well-prepared and speaks for him or her during most of the ritual. The other officer representing another aspect of Anubis, the Sentinel's job is to prepare, and protect the candidate from the Dog-faced Demons<sup>291</sup> during the time of spiritual darkness and vulnerability before being initiated.

The final two officers act in tandem and so do their corresponding god-forms. In the Northern side of the temple the Stolistes corresponds to Auramouth – Mut - and in the Southern the Dadouchos to Thaum-Esh-Neith - Neith. Both god-forms assume the role of purification with water and fire respectively, with little mention of any symbolic connection to their Egyptian goddess counterpart.<sup>292</sup>

Besides the seven god-forms being represented by the physically present officers the Z1 document mentions three other major deities being present during the ceremony. These being Nephtys, Isis and Thoth, being represented by the Imperator, Praemonstrator and Cancellarius respectively if they are present during the initiation.<sup>293</sup> The space behind each officer's throne and some other crucial points of the temple are the places of the Invisible Stations, where spiritual powers are present without physical representation. These include among others Harpocrates, the children of Horus, Kerubs with various Egyptian associations and even Set as the slayer of Osiris, Apophis, Typhon and Bastet.<sup>294</sup> With these many Egyptian gods present during the ritual the temple itself assumes the role of the Hall of Judgement from the *Book of the Dead*. The whole ritual becomes a sort of re-enactment of the trials of the soul, with the candidate taking on the role of the deceased.<sup>295</sup> The Z-3 document explains the meaning of the secret sign, step, grip, and password given to the fresh Neophyte when detailing the meaning

---

<sup>289</sup> Pat Zalewski (2001): 226

<sup>290</sup> GD VI. 64.

<sup>291</sup> Pat Zalewski (2001): 221.

<sup>292</sup> GD VI. 65.

<sup>293</sup> GD VI. 66.

<sup>294</sup> GD VI. 67-68.

<sup>295</sup> In no circumstances however the Neophyte ever becomes Osiris.

of the sign of Harpocrates, the *Sign of Silence*, the document remarks that the “*with regards to taking on mentally the forms of the Gods, it may here be noted that the process is of great assistance and use in all magical working, whether of invocation or of evocation, contemplation, meditation, skrying in the spirit vision, alchemy, etc. For the forms of the Gods do here represent a certain symbolic material of the Divine Forces.*”<sup>296</sup> This summarizes the Golden Dawn approach toward Egyptian deities, as they are understood as mystical allegories of either the whole or aspects of the Divine, of which there is only one, singular and all encompassing, and all deities, angels or other beings that are mentioned or used in rituals are employed in a complex system of symbols meant to bring the practitioner closer to God, as understood by Christian Kabbala.

J. W. Broddie-Ines, the leader of the Amen-Ra temple in Edinburgh, wrote an essay about the symbolism of the Canopic gods in the Neophyte ritual, during the early days of the *Stella Matutina*.<sup>297</sup> In it he states that the four Canopic gods are the *vice-gerants* of the elements, answer to the Rivers of Eden, and rule the four Corners of the Hall between the Stations of the Kerubim.<sup>298</sup> As he explained: “*In Egyptian mythology, these Gods are also said to be the Children of Horus, and to partake of his symbolism. If now, we regard the Neophyte Ceremony as representing the entrance into a new life, Regeneration - Mors Janua Vitae – the Egyptian symbolism wherein that idea was so clearly and exactly worked out becomes important. Bear in mind that a new life means a new plane or a higher world, a passing, say, from the Kether of Assiah to the Malkuth of Yetzirah.*”<sup>299</sup> To properly understand the death and resurrection of Christ one must first understand the Mysteries of Osiris. As the candidate is equated with the Soul of the Egyptian dead on his travel in the Underworld, who after passing the various trials and the weighting of the soul becomes Osiris as well, the initiate also shares a similar fate. As Osiris was broken up so is the soul of the candidate to enable a rebirth to a higher spiritual level. During the Neophyte ritual the initiate is guarded from the Qlipphotic demons by the Hieres, who takes on the role of Horus, the candidate’s organs, the mediums through which the life force acts, are protected by the sons of Horus. He then proceeds to give a Hermetic interpretation of each of the four vital organ’s function based on the axis of alimentary-

---

<sup>296</sup> GD VI. 83.

<sup>297</sup> GD VIII. 58-67.

<sup>298</sup> GD VIII. 58.

<sup>299</sup> GD VIII. 58.

circulatory and receptive-excretory<sup>300</sup>; as well as about the Egyptian process of mummification. According to Brodie-Innes the removed organs were put in an egg shaped container, symbolic of Akasa<sup>301</sup>, than put in a jar, symbolic of the god Canopus, with the head of each organ's protective god, or *Genii of the Underworld or Vice-gerents of the Elements*.<sup>302</sup> He also explains each deity's title, based on each organ's function, and the significance of the placement of the canopic jars in the context of Hermetic correspondences of cardinal directions and elements.<sup>303</sup> Correspondences are also given between the deities' attributes and various Hermetic and alchemical concepts, for example the hawk head is another form of the Eagle of Distillation.<sup>304</sup> The lesson to be learned is that the magician should take of his or her body and health as that is fundamental to magical working, as the organs and the body itself is connected to gods on multiple levels of symbolism. The essay then concludes with a recension of the Z1 document.<sup>305</sup>

---

<sup>300</sup> GD VIII. 59.

<sup>301</sup> He most likely refers to the Theosophical concept of Akasha, as the Primordial Substance that contains the Logos of the created world, and not the original concept of the first element in Hinduism. H. P. Blavatsky. *Theosophical Glossary*. Krotana, CA: Theosophical Publishing House. 1973. 13.

<sup>302</sup> GD VIII. 59.

<sup>303</sup> GD VIII. 60.

<sup>304</sup> GD VIII. 60.

<sup>305</sup> GD VIII. 62-67.

## Zelator

The next initiation ritual, of the grade of Zelator follows the same basic structure as the Neophyte. The theme is that as in the previous ritual the initiate arrived to the Gateway of Hidden Knowledge from the darkness of ignorance, now she can step through the gate and arrive at the Holy Place.<sup>306</sup> The narrative follows a more traditional western theme of the Garden of Eden and the structure of the created universe being explained to the initiate. It also employs some purported elements from the Hebrew priest's ritual before entering the Temple,<sup>307</sup> although the veracity of this claim is highly uncertain. The central message of the ritual is that the world is highly organized and the understanding of this order leads the seeker to mystical understanding.<sup>308</sup> There is only one direct mention of Egypt during the ritual, near the end of it, where the meaning of the name of the grade is given. According to this reveal the term zelator originates "from the ancient Egyptian word *zaruator*, a Searcher of Athor, Goddess of Nature; but others assign to it the meaning of the zealous student whose first duty was to blow the Athanor or fire which heated the Crucible of the Alchemist."<sup>309</sup> Once again we see a ritual where an Egyptian outlook is employed but the content is strongly Kabbalistic and hermetic in nature.

## Theoricus

After the usual opening ceremony and the initiate affirming her oath of secrecy once more she is instructed to follow her guide Anubis the Guardian<sup>310</sup> through the 32<sup>nd</sup> path of the Tree of Life, which leads to the Theoricus grade and from the material to the spiritual plane. This forms a separate part of the ritual named the Ritual of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Path. The initiate is taken around the temple four times, each time the way barred by an officer where she is then questioned. The Kerux speaks for the candidate each time, identifying and explaining the symbolism of the other standing in their way. The core structure of the encounters is the following:

---

<sup>306</sup> GD VI. 96.

<sup>307</sup> GD VI. 95. We have no knowledge of any Jewish ritual or prayer that preceded the priest's entrance to the temple. The origin of this attribution on the Golden Dawn's part is uncertain.

<sup>308</sup> GD VI. 97-98.

<sup>309</sup> GD VI. 100.

<sup>310</sup> GD VI. 107.

“Hierous:(As they go round first time.) *The Sphinx of Egypt spake and said, I am the synthesis of the Elemental Forces, I am also the symbol of Man, I am Life and I am Death, I am the Child of the Night of Time.*

As Kerux and Zelator approach East, the Hierophant steps from between the Pillars and bars the passage.

Hiero:Takes Banner of the West in left hand, holds fan in right hand.

Hiero:*The Priest with the mask of Osiris spake and said Thou canst not pass the Gate of the Eastern heaven,unless thou canst tell me my Name.*

Kerux:(For Candidate). *Thou art NU the Goddess of the Firmament of Air, Thou art HORMAKHU Lord of the Eastern Sun.*

Hiero:*In what signs and symbols do ye come?*

Kerux:*In the letter Aleph, in the Banner of Light, and the symbol of Equated Forces.*

Hiero:Falls back and signing the Aquarius Kerub before Zelator with fan.

Hiero:*In the Sign of the Man, Child of Air, thou art purified, pass thou on. [...]*”

Hierous:(As they go round second time.)*I am Osiris the Soul in Twin aspect, united to the higher by purification; perfected in suffering; glorified through trial, I have come where the Great Gods are through the Power of the Mighty Name. [...]*

Heg:(For Candidate) *HEKA, Mistress of HESAR, Ruler of Water is thy name; thou art TOUM, the setting Sun.[...]*

Heg:(For Candidate) *SATEM in the abode of SHU, the Bull of Earth is thy name; thou art KHEPHRA, the Sun at Night.*”<sup>311</sup>

This part of the ritual mentions Osiris, with the epithet of Soul in Twin aspect<sup>312</sup>, Mau, Ra, Heka, Hesar, Toum,<sup>313</sup> Satem, Shu, Khephra and the partially unveiled Isis. This part of the ritual ends with a lengthy explanation about the Cubical Cross, the four elements, some Kabbalistic concepts and the images held by the Hegemon and Kerux during the ritual.<sup>314</sup> After the candidate is named a lord or lady of the 32<sup>nd</sup> path the proper Theoricus ritual continues, keeping in line with the Zelator ritual, the candidate is brought into the Sanctum Sanctroum<sup>315</sup>,

---

<sup>311</sup> GD VI. 107-108.

<sup>312</sup> GD VI. 107.

<sup>313</sup> GD VI. 108.

<sup>314</sup> GD VI. 109-111.

<sup>315</sup> GD VI. 112.

given the secret signs and the explanation of the tablets showing the Tree of Life, alchemic Sephiroth, figures of the planets and figures of geomancy.<sup>316</sup> The ritual concludes in the usual manner.

### **Practicus**

The ritual of the Practicus grade<sup>317</sup> conducts in the same structure as the previous ones. The theme is that the candidate meets with three cabeiris who each unveils more secrets about the secret workings of the universe. The teachings continue on different images and on the Judgement card of the Tarot. On the card the female figure to the right is identified among others with Isis and Nephtys, and the central figure as Horus.<sup>318</sup> The explanations given in the ritual lie even more heavily on Kabbalistic symbolism than the previous rites.

### **Philosophus**

The process of the Philosophus grade incorporates the Ritual of the 29<sup>th</sup> Path, in which there are multiple references to Egyptian mythology. First in the formula of “the Priest with the mask of Osiris/Horus/Isis spake.”<sup>319</sup> The Gates of Anubis are mentioned in relation to Isis and the Waters of Nu in relation to the heavens. “*The Priest with the mask of Osiris spake and said I am the Water, Stagnant and Silent and Still, reflecting all, concealing all. I am the past. I am the Inundation. He who riseth from the Great Waters is my Name.*”<sup>320</sup> “*The Priest with the mask of Horus spake and said, I am Water turbid and troubled. I am the Banisher of Peace in the Vast Abode of the Waters. None is so strong that can withstand the Great Waters, the vastness of their Terror, the magnitude of their Fear, the roar of their thundering Voice. I am the Future, Mist-clad and shrouded in Gloom. I am the Recession of the Torrent, the Storm veiled in Terror is my Name. Hail unto the Mighty Powers of Nature, and the Chiefs of the Whirling Storm. Hail unto ye, Dwellers of the Land of Night, for the rending of the Darkness is near.*”<sup>321</sup> “*The Priestess with the mask of Isis spake and said, The Traveller through the Gates of Anubis is my*

---

<sup>316</sup> GD VI 113-114.

<sup>317</sup> A copy in Crowley’s hand is in Yorke OS 24.

<sup>318</sup> GD VI. 123.

<sup>319</sup> GD VI. 138.

<sup>320</sup> GD VI. 138.

<sup>321</sup> GD VI. 138.

*Name. I am Water pure and limpid, ever flowing on towards the Sea. I am the ever-passing Present, which stands in the place of the Past. I am the fertilized Land. Hail unto the Dwellers of the Wings of the Morning.”*<sup>322</sup>

When explaining the Moon card of the Tarot the dogs are identified as the jackals of Anubis, guarding the gates of East and West.<sup>323</sup> In the Advancement Path 28 section Isis, Nephtys and Athor are used in the same masked priest formula.<sup>324</sup> The Tarot card used in this section, the Star, is “*in the Egyptian sense it is Sirius, the Dog Star of Isis Sothis*”<sup>325</sup> Unsurprisingly the Philosophus ritual is the longest and most complex of the initiation rituals of the Outer Order. As the initiate progressed through the rituals the Egyptian symbolism is pushed to the background and is present only occasionally as a tie-in point. In the Practicus and Theoricus grades the mention of Egyptian gods is present not as main cosmological points but almost just side notes in the shape of “this Kabbalistic idea was interpreted by the Egyptians as X god or goddess”. This seems to indicate that in the Golden Dawn thought Egypt is recognized as the origin of the mystical knowledge transferred to the student but the better known and more easily available Hermetic-Kabbalistic explanations are sufficient to understand the secrets of the universe.

### **Equinox Ceremony**

The Equinox ritual was held twice a year around the time of the equinoxes were an important part in the operation of the Golden Dawn. Although some questions about the origin of the ritual arises. There are two publications of the ritual, one by Regardia and one by Zalewsky.<sup>326</sup> It is missing from Regardie’s *The Golden Dawn*, and is only present in the *Complete Golden Dawn*. The version published by Pat Zalewsky is almost identical to the version of Regardie’s as Zalewsky’s source was most like the manuscript available at the Whare Ra New Zealand temple, of which Regardie was a member of. The only major difference that the Zalewsky version starts with the *khaabs am pekht* formula. The style of the ritual also differs greatly from the initiation rites. It employs latin phrases, entirely absent from the five Outer

---

<sup>322</sup> GD VI. 138.

<sup>323</sup> GD VI. 139.

<sup>324</sup> GD VI. 142.

<sup>325</sup> GD VI. 143.

<sup>326</sup> Pat Zalewsky. *The Equinox and Solstice Ceremonies of the Golden Dawn*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn. 1992. 49-78. GD VIII. 5.

Order initiations, and in general is more evocative a Christian ceremony. According to Regardie the stylistic peculiarities suggest that the version he published originated from Dr. Robert William Felkin, one of the founders of the Stella Matutina.<sup>327</sup> It is certain that the Ceremony of the Equinox was celebrated in the proper Golden Dawn period<sup>328</sup>, and Mathers' original version was published by Nick Farrell.<sup>329</sup> This original has a much more simplistic style, is short and straightforward and is mostly centered on the changing of the passwords for the upcoming cycle. On an inspirational level the Equinox rituals dips into an idea of the succession of the pharaohs, the resigning high priest embodies Osiris, who steps down for a successor embodying Horus.<sup>330</sup>

## Second Order

The rituals of the Second or Inner Order, officially called the R.R. et A.C, short for Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis. As we have seen before the Outer Order did not practice magic actively, whereas the Inner Order's curriculum put the theoretic foundation laid down during the first five steps of initiation into practice. Members of the Inner Order were advised to form groups for magical experimentation, practice divination and astrology, perform the banishing rituals and evocations daily, and practice meditation. While the rituals of the Outer Order were written by Mathers and Westcott based on the Cypher Manuscript the Inner Order's rituals are usually attributed solely to Mathers. The R.R. et A.C. grades start with the Portal rank, which is much like the Neophyte in the sense that it was not considered as a full-fledged rank by itself, merely an initiation into a new set of ventures, the initiate standing at the gates of something larger. The proper grades are the Adeptus Minor, Adeptus Major and Adeptus Exemptus.<sup>331</sup> The Adeptus Minor rank in itself was also subdivided into lesser grades, to which there were no separate initiations, but were more of a practicality as the required curriculum was divided into lesser portions to facilitate learning.

---

<sup>327</sup> GD VIII. 1.

<sup>328</sup> Yorke NS 102.

<sup>329</sup> Nick Farrell. *Mathers' Last Secret*. Unknown location: Rosicrucian Order of the Golden Dawn. 2011. 79-86.

<sup>330</sup> Caroline Tully (2008): 140.

<sup>331</sup> GD I. 9-12.



## Ritual of the Portal of the Vault of the Adepti

The familiar structure of the Outer Order rituals have changed, the officers are the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Adepts, the Hieres and Hegemon.<sup>332</sup> Contrary to the Outer Order rituals the candidate acts and speaks independently, without a guide. From the start the rituals are more ceremonial but still didactic in nature. The Portal Ritual is the first where Enochian is used<sup>333</sup> as a magical language. We also see more elaborate rites of purification and consecration than before, making the whole ritual “feel” more magical than the Outer Order rituals. The theme of the Portal Ritual is the rending of the veil as well as the initiate being introduced to the fifth element of spirit after the four classical elements governing over the previous rituals. The ritual includes a new pledge of secrecy, obedience and moral limitations on the use of the newly acquired knowledge.<sup>334</sup> As for the presence of Egyptian elements, there are the usual small mentions e.g. “*Wherefore in the Name of YOD HE VAU HE and in the Concealed Name YEHESHUAH, do I add the power of the Pentagram constituting the Glorified Body of Osiris, the Sign of the Microcosmos.*”<sup>335</sup> or “*Equated and equilibrated lie here the Four Elements of the body of Osiris slain.*”<sup>336</sup> During an explanation segment on the 15<sup>th</sup> card of the Tarot, the Devil is equated with Pan and “*the Egyptian Goat of Mendes*”.<sup>337</sup>

Aside of these smaller mentions there is a more important incorporation of Egyptian mythology into the Golden Dawn cosmology with a recounting of creation where Thoth creates time before Elohim creates light:

*“Heg: The Realm of Chaos and of Ancient Night, ere ever the Aeons were, when there was neither Heaven or Earth, nor was there any Sea, when naught was, save the Shape Unluminous, formless and void.*

*Hieres: To and fro in the Deeps, swayed the coils of the Dragon with 8 Heads and 11 Horns. Eleven were the curses of Mount Ebal, eleven the Rulers of the Qlippoth, and at their head were the Dual Contending Forces. (Hieres and Heg. lower weapons and step back.)*

---

<sup>332</sup> GD VII. 3-4.

<sup>333</sup> GD VII. 4.

<sup>334</sup> GD VII. 10.

<sup>335</sup> GD VII. 6.

<sup>336</sup> GD VII. 14.

<sup>337</sup> GD VII. 19. Mendes was these greek name of the Egyptian city Djedet. The chief deity of the triad of Mendes was Banebdjedet, the Ba of Osiris. The connection between this ram headed diety and Baphomet, as pictured on the Tarot was made by Eliphas Levi.

**2nd Ad:** *(Faces East) Then breathed forth Tho-oth out of the Unutterable Abyss the Word! Then stood forth Tho-oth in the Sign of the Enterer, on the Threshold of the Hall of Time as Time was born of the Eternal. (Gives Neophyte Sign) So stood Tho-oth in the Power of the Word, giving forth Light, while the Aeons that were unbegotten unfolded before him.*

*(Philosophus directed to give Neophyte Sign.)*

**2nd Ad:** *And Elohim said Let there be Light.*<sup>338</sup>

Although it would seem that in this way Thoth would be in a higher position to Elohim, it is evident from the rest of the ritual that God, mentioned in a multitude of Hebrew names, is the higher being and the Egyptian and Greek gods and other mythological creatures are subjects to God's will. The function of the different spiritual beings is mediation between the human and divine, experiencing aspects of gods, spirits, angels etc. the mage progresses up on the Tree of Life and reaches closer to union with God.

## **Adeptus Minor**

This ritual's central theme is the myth of the tomb of Christian Rosenkreutz. The temple, *the Vault of the Adepts* takes on the form of the "symbolic burying place of our Founder Christian Rosenkreutz, which he made to represent the Universe"<sup>339</sup> which is also called by "our more ancient Fraters and Sorors"<sup>340</sup> as "The Tomb of Osiris Onnophris, the Justified One".<sup>341</sup> When the ritual progresses to the point where the temple is opened, the officers analyze the keywords of the ritual, INRI and LVX in a curious manner. Each take a turn in pronouncing a letter of the keyword, than the Hebrew pronunciation, than the meaning of each letter. In the case of INRI this is "Virgo, Isis, Mighty Mother/ Scorpio, Apophis, Destroyer/ Sol, Osiris, Slain and Risen/ Isis, Apophis, Osiris – I.A.O."<sup>342</sup> In LVX it is "The Sign of Osiris Slain/ L – The Sign of the Mourning of Isis/ V – The Sign of Typhon and Apophis/ X – The Sign of Osiris Risen/ L V X (Lux) the Light of the Cross"<sup>343</sup>. The aspirant is taught the lesson of humility, dressed in simple black robe with bound hands and a chain around the neck and is bound both physically and symbolically to the *Cross of Suffering* and makes a new, more complex oath, repeating the

---

<sup>338</sup> GD VII. 8.

<sup>339</sup> GD VII. 34

<sup>340</sup> GH VII. 35

<sup>341</sup> GD VII. 35.

<sup>342</sup> GD VII. 37.

<sup>343</sup> GD VII. 37.

former oaths of secrecy, fidelity and fraternity and vowing to properly and secretly perform practical magic. After the aspirant is set free and exalted once again, redressed and is told the story of Christian Rosenkreutz. The story presented outlines the purported genealogy of the Golden Dawn. “*the Mysteries of the Rose and the Cross have existed from time immemorial, and that the Rites were practiced, and the Wisdom taught, in Egypt, Eleusis, Smothrace, Persia, Caldea and India, and in far more ancient lands.*”<sup>344</sup> The introduction of Rosicrucianism as a part of the larger Golden Dawn framework positions the order as the one which encompasses all magical wisdom of the Western world, uniting them in one coherent system.<sup>345</sup> The ceremony continues with a theatrical retelling of the discovery of Christian Rosenkreutz’s tomb, the aspirant professing the will to follow Christ in self-sacrifice, and receives the *Crook of Mercy* and the *Scourge of Severity*.<sup>346</sup> The third act of the ritual focuses on the theme of resurrection, as the just reward of self-sacrifice. The blessing given to the aspirant is an interesting amalgam of Christian and Egyptian styled phrases and unites two Egyptian gods with Jesus through the mage performing the ritual and extends this divinity unto the aspirant as well :

*“Open Door of Tomb, and lead Aspirant in. They kneel down West of Altar with heads bent. Chief stands at East of Altar with arms extended.*

---

<sup>344</sup> GD VII. 43. The rest of the retelling of Christian Rosenkreutz’s story is interesting in its own right. Much of the story was available as public knowledge since the 17th century, but the text makes references to topics that were supposed to be secret knowledge of the members of the SRIA, of which all the founders of the GD were members of. It seems they saw fit the Inner Order members to receive this secret wisdom of another organization without being initiated there. This is particularly interesting in the case of female members as the SRIA was a fraternity, whereas through being members of the Golden Dawn women could receive the same benefits that the knowledge of this secret wisdom entails as the members of the SRIA.

<sup>345</sup> The Rosicrucian connection also repositions the Cypher Manuscripts which are said to originate from the collection of Kenneth Mackenzie, who supposedly received them from a certain hungarian Count Apponyi, a student of Comte de Saint-Germain. The identity of this Apponyi is uncertain as Mackenzie spent his youth in Vienna and when he visited Eliphas Levi in Paris in 1861 a number of the members of the Apponyi family were there at the time, including Sándor, György and his son Albert, although only fourteen at the time. Westcott, the only source of the purported connection between the Cypher Manuscripts, Rosicrucianism and the Apponyi family, claims that Mackenzie was initiated in Austria, while he was living with the Apponyis and acting as an English tutor. The only known source of the story is Westcott, so it is yet uncertain if any of it is true, but due to the possibility of a Hungarian connection it would warrant further research in the Apponyi archives to ascertain whether Mackenzie was ever employed as an English tutor by the family, and if any member of the Apponyi family could have written the original Manuscripts.

<sup>346</sup> GD VII. 43-45.

*Ch. Ad: For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father but by Me. I am the purified. I have passed through the Gates of Darkness into Light. I have fought upon earth for Good. I have finished my Work. I have entered into the Invisible. I am the Sun in his rising. I have passed through the hour of cloud and of night. I am Amoun, the Concealed One, the Opener of the Day. I am Osiris Onnophris, the Justified One. I am the Lord of Life triumphant over Death. There is no part of me which is not of the Gods. I am the Preparer of the Pathway, the Rescuer unto the Light; Out of the Darkness, let that Light arise.*

*Aspirant: Before I was blind, but now I see.*

*Ch. Ad: I am the Reconciler with the Ineffable. I am the Dweller of the Invisible. Let the White Brilliance of the Spirit Divine descend. (Chief raises his hands invoking the Divine White Brilliance. There is a pause.)*

*Ch. Ad: (To Aspirant) Arise now as an Adeptus Minor of the Rose of Ruby and the Cross of Gold, in the sign of Osiris slain.*<sup>347</sup> The ritual ends with a didactic segment, when the symbolism of the ritual, the key word INRI, the Minutum Mundum diagram, and other implements used during the ritual are explained.<sup>348</sup> The new adeptus minor is then given the secret password, handshake etc. and the temple is closed in the usual way.<sup>349</sup>

The ritual implements used in this ceremony display some Egyptian symbolism, as before. Officers bear in their left hands an ankh<sup>350</sup>, at one point the aspirant carries a crook and scourge, and the wand of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Adeptus Minor is the Lotus Wand of Isis<sup>351</sup>. Obviously this wand bears little resemblance to tradition Egyptian iconography, instead it is packed full with hermetic symbolism. The shaft is multi colored, the upper end is white and the bottom is black and between are twelve colors representing each of the zodiac signs. On the white end is a lotus flower made of metal or cardboard with twenty-six petals and an orange or brass centre.<sup>352</sup> The crook and scourge are also colored according to hermetic symbolism, with each color representing a sphere of the Sephiroth.<sup>353</sup>

---

<sup>347</sup> GD VII. 51.

<sup>348</sup> GD VII. 57-60.

<sup>349</sup> GD VII. 61.

<sup>350</sup> GD VII. 35.

<sup>351</sup> GD VII. 36.

<sup>352</sup> GD IV. 45-46. The creation of this wand is one of the obligations of each Adeptus Minor and is personalized and not intended to be used by another member, only by the one who creates it.

<sup>353</sup> GD VII. 56.

## Adeptus Maior and subsequent grades

Progress in the Inner Order was slower than in the Outer Order, thus only a handful of members received initiation into the grade of the Adeptus Maior during Mather's leadership.<sup>354</sup> Contrary to the Adeptus Minor Ceremony there is no currently known, fully fleshed out manuscript of the original initiation ritual. A known manuscript containing Mathers' version does not feature an opening and closing, and consists only of a conferring adept teaching the passwords and signs.<sup>355</sup> This original ritual, teachings wise, expounded on the Adeptus Minor ritual<sup>356</sup> and it was later revised by Mathers and a yet unknown version was used in his order, the Alpha et Omega. There is a ritual written by Dr. Robert W. Felkin which was used in the Stella Matutina. This ritual contains an invocation of Egyptian deities: “[...]Yesterday is Osiris and tomorrow is Ra; I am the only one, the Ruler of that which is made. [...] I am Thooth, the scribe of the Holy Offerings; I am he who riseth in his place, who cometh into the Holy City. I have made an end of any shortcomings and I have put away my faults. [...] It is the loosening of the corruptible body of Osiris, victorious before all the Gods: all his faults are driven out; it is the purification of Osiris on the day of his birth.”<sup>357</sup> During the ceremony the aspirant remains silent, and at one point is bandaged, “mummified” and laid down with the following prayer: “(for brow) *Be not curious in unnecessary matters, for more things are shown thee than thou can understand!* (for lips) *Be silent O man, before the Lord, for He is raised up out of His Holy Habitation!* (for heart) *Woe be to the fearful heart and faint hands, and to him that goeth two ways!* (for the solar plexus) *The greater thou art, the more humble thyself, and thou shalt find favour before the Lord!* (for thighs) *To know the Lord is perfect righteousness; for to know His Power is the root of immortality! So shalt thou rest in peace. Until the day break and the shadows flee away.*”<sup>358</sup> This mummification prayer shows no similarities to Egyptian texts and is to be understood in a hermetic context. In general, as with the other rituals written by Felkin, this one lays more heavily on Christian mysticism and rarely mention Egyptian deities and even the prominence of Kabbalah is toned down. A third version of the ritual was written by A. E.

---

<sup>354</sup> Ellic Howe (1978): 97-99.

<sup>355</sup> Tabatha Sandra Cicero. *The Book of the Concourse of the Watchtowers – An Exploration of Westcott's Enochian Tablets*. St. Paul, MI:HOGD Books. 2012.

<sup>356</sup> Pat Zalewski. *Secret Inner Order Rituals of the Golden Dawn*. Phoenix, AZ: Falcon Publishing. 1986. 105.

<sup>357</sup> Pat Zalewski (1986): 106-107.

<sup>358</sup> Pat Zalewski (1986): 114.

Waite and it was used in his order, The Fellowship of the Rosy Cross. This version as Regardie puts it: “*As might be expected Christian and biblical. Waite was raised a Roman Catholic. It is also classical Waite in that he was compelled to insert quite frequently Latin phrases...*”<sup>359</sup> This is mostly true, as this version lacks the evocation of Egyptian gods, but there are still some allusions to Egyptian religion during the lengthy didactical speeches of the chief adept. During the explanation of the corresponding Tarot cards the ritual mentions Anubis, Thoth, immediately followed by a quotation from St. Paul.<sup>360</sup> There is also an interesting claim concerning the nature of dying and resurrecting gods in the form of: “*Associate Adeptus Minor, I now ask you to remember that the dead Gods are useless, whether Christ or Osiris. [...] They are not dead but sleeping; it is for us to manifest them without by the penetration of the Centre, and it is in this way that the Divine will awaken within us.*”<sup>361</sup> After the candidate is entombed and resurrected an egyptianizing ritual follows:

“*The Candidate is raised to his feet and the Second Adept touches his mouth with the Adie, as the Shrine of Osiris surmounted by the image of Anubis as a jackal is carried round in solemn procession.*”

**Chief.** *Hail, Osiris, Chief of Amentet, Lord of Immortals, stretching out unto the uttermost regions of space, Lord of the prayers of the faithful, Chief among the mighty! Hail, Anubis, Dweller in the Tomb, Great Chief in the Holy Dwelling! Grant that the dead may live: grant that in life we may know God. (The shoulder and heart are laid at the feet of the Candidate by the Second Adept and the Usher of the Rite.)*

**Chief.** *They have brought thee the sacrifice as the eye of Horus. They have brought thee the heart of Horus. The sacrifice is complete: let none resist the will of the Gods. Behold, Horus (indicating the Second Adept) has overcome that which would devour thee! Behold, Horus is the Spirit, the Holy Son, Redeemer of the soul, the Holy Father, Osiris. (Second A. Holds shoulder of sacrifice to mouth of Candidate.)*

**Chief.** *I am thy Spirit, thy Son, Horus: I speak to thy soul, Osiris. I have touched thy mouth: the Spirit of the Divine Ones loveth thy soul. (The Priestesses beat their breasts, and say willingly,) Woe! O Woe! We cry aloud for those are in chains.*

**Chief.** *Take now, Mighty Adeptus Major, the ram-headed Wand and set free the voice.*

**Chief.**

---

<sup>359</sup> GD VII. 62.

<sup>360</sup> GD VII. 142.

<sup>361</sup> GD VII. 142.

*Take thou the Ram-headed Wand and liberate the sight of . . . (Done. The Priestesses wail again. ) Woe! Woe! This man (woman) is in chains, he (she) cannot free himself (herself) from the bonds. (The Candidate is laid upon a lion-headed couch, his head being toward the north, and his feet to the south. One Priestess is at the head and another at the foot. The Usher walks round, sprinkling water freely with papyrus grass in the four quarters.)*

**Chief.** *O Osiris, all that is hateful in . . . has been brought unto Thee, and all the evil letters that are in the name of . . . (give name). O Thoth! Come! Come! Take these evil letters in the hollow of thine hand and lay them at the feet of Osiris, (repeat four times). O Thoth, lay the evil that is in the heart of (give name) at the feet of Osiris. (Repeat four times. The Usher takes incense and burns it at the four quarters. )*

**Chief.** *Behold, the God of Creation, the God who forms and moulds thy limbs, dwelleth in thy heart. He is thy aspiration, and thy aspiration gives thee protection in this day. (The Usher of the rite pours out water, and burns incense in front of the Candidate.)*

**Usher.** *O (gives name), I have given thee the essence of the eye of Horus, the illuminating power of the Spirit: thy face is filled therewith, and the perfume thereof spreadeth over thee. (The Usher lays oil on the lips.*

**Usher.** *Receive the crystal unguent, the scent of Holy Places. (The Usher pours out water mixed with soda, and lays it between the brows.) Thou art pure like Horus, thou art pure like Set, the Hawks of the North and the South. (He brings the Black Wand and places it to the lips of the Candidate.)*

**Chief.** *Hail! Holy One! The Twin Hawks have opened thy mouth, and henceforth thou shalt have speech in Heaven, in Earth and in the Rose. The eye of Horus has been given to thee. Drink the milk of thy Heavenly Mother. (The Usher gives him a small vessel of milk, and the Candidate drinks. This is repeated with another small vessel of milk given by the Second Adept . The Candidate rises to his feet.) Holy is the spot that the purified child of man has reached. It is the spot in which he (she) shall become the Child of Heaven. (Pause.) Let the Candidate be bound with the fivefold bandage of Osiris, that he may utter the five-fold dedication. (Two Priests bring a bandage, 5 yards long, and tie it round the Candidate's left foot. It is coiled round his feet, and the Chief Adept prompts him to say:)*

**Chief.** *(At the first coiling.) I dedicate my feet to the Paths of Ra. (It is coiled round his legs.)*

**Chief.** *(Prompts at the second coiling.) I dedicate my life to the Mother of God. (It is bound about the heart.)*

**Chief.** *(Prompts at the third coiling.) I dedicate my heart to the Divine Rapture. (It is coiled about the neck.)*

*Chief. (Prompts at the fourth coiling.) I dedicate my mind to the Great Quest. (It is bound about the head.)*<sup>362</sup> The rest of the ritual continues with in a similar manner, with the chief adepts sometimes speaking as Horus, until the candidate receives the blessing of Osiris and Isis. This segment stands in stark contrast to the earlier parts of the ritual, which contains mostly mystical allusions and Biblical quotes.<sup>363</sup> The final words of the ritual recontextualizes as a direct continuation of an Egyptian tradition, as a ritual of Nut, and the knowledge given as “*the wisdom that once lived in Egypt*”<sup>364</sup> Waite later revised his ritual and removed much of the references of Egyptian gods and magic.<sup>365</sup>

The final grade of the Inner Order is the Adeptus Exemptus. No initiation rite written by Mathers is known, although it is likely that he has written one for the Alpha et Omega. As with the Adeptus Maior there is a Stella Matutina and a Fellowship of the Rosy Cross version published.<sup>366</sup> The Stella Matutina version centers around the theme of transmutation. The candidate arises from the Earthbound existence, dedicates the whole of his or her existence to the service of God. The ritual employ a multitude of symbolism, mostly celestial through the use various stars as symbols, at one point the candidate declares that he or she became Osiris,<sup>367</sup> and consequently is referred to as a son of the Lord.<sup>368</sup> The Fellowship of the Rosy Cross version was most likely written after Waite became interested in Christian mysticism. In it the aspirant is anointed to priesthood<sup>369</sup> and much of the symbolism, other than the Kabbala, used relates to Easter and the resurrection of Christ.

The three remaining ranks of the Golden Dawn, the Magister Templi, Magus and Ipsissimus were considered to be unattainable by the mortal members of the order, and were reserved for the Secret Chiefs.<sup>370</sup> Although there is an interesting case from 1896 when Florence Farr claimed to have contacted an *Egyptian Adept* of the rank of Magister Templi,

---

<sup>362</sup> GD VII. 151-153.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> GD VII. 158.

<sup>365</sup> A. E. Waite. *Inner and Outer Order Initiations of the Holy Order of the Golden Dawn*. Burbaby, BC: Ishtar Publishing. 2005. 183-228.

<sup>366</sup> A. E. Waite (2005): 229-272. Israel Regardie. *The Golden Dawn Vol II*. Chicago, IL: The Aries Press. 1938. 244.

<sup>367</sup> Pat Zalewski (1986): 131.

<sup>368</sup> Pat Zalewski (1986): 133.

<sup>369</sup> A. E. Waite (2005): 273-300.

<sup>370</sup> In more modern times both the Stella Matutina and at least one modern Golden Dawn order claims to have authentic rituals and teachings for these grades, but these are without a doubt modern creations.



which was confirmed by Mathers<sup>371</sup> but other than that no versions exist for either the rituals nor the teachings for these grades.

### **Consecration of the Vault of the Adepti**

This ritual was performed on each day of Corpus Christi, and when a new Vault<sup>372</sup> was created.<sup>373</sup> The proceeding closely follows the Adeptus Minor ritual with some significant changes in the beginning and ending parts. During the opening the officers perform the Watchtower Ceremony, which is a separate ritual that summons the guardian spirits of the cardinal directions for protection, using various magical formulas in English and Enochian. The ritual follows as per the Adeptus Minor ritual, with the only exception being that the candidate's place is taken on by the chief adept. After he repeats the self-sacrifice and is released from the cross, he is then authorized by the Second Order to take back his insignias and *Higher Powers*, then invokes "*HRU the great angel*"<sup>374</sup> to strengthen the order. Then through the new strength gained from the ceremony authorizes the *Forces of Evil* to punish any member who acts contrary to their obligations. To further emphasize the renewed energy gained through the ritual the chief adept explains his new metaphysical state. He pronounces that Christ was resurrected and will stand on the Earth during the final judgment, and that he will stand beside him because "*I am the Purified. I have passed through the Gates of Darkness unto Light. I have fought upon Earth for good. I have finished my work. I have entered into the Invisible. I am the Sun in his rising. I have passed through the hour of Cloud and of Night. I am Amoun the Concealed One, the Opener of the Day. I am OSIRIS ONNOPHRIS, The Justified One. I am the Lord of Life, triumphant over death. There is no part of me which is not of the Gods. I am the Preparer of the Pathway, the Rescuer unto the Light. Out of the Darkness, let the Light arise. I am the Reconciler with the Ineffable. I am the Dweller of the Invisible. Let the white Brilliance of the Divine Spirit descend.*"<sup>375</sup> Vested in this divine light the chief then commands the Watchtowers to guard the temple in the following *Revolution of the Solar Course*, the next year. This is a

---

<sup>371</sup> Darcy Kuntz ed. *The Enochian Experiments of the Golden Dawn*. Edmonds, WA: Holmes Publishing. 1996. 32.

<sup>372</sup> A small seven sided chamber with black floor and white ceiling, symbolising the tomb of Christian Rosenkreutz. GD VIII. 29.

<sup>373</sup> GD VIII. 17.

<sup>374</sup> GD VIII. 25.

<sup>375</sup> GD VIII. 26.

plastic example of the Golden Dawn style of invocations and assuming god forms to perform a magical command and project authority over the various beings and forces of the world.<sup>376</sup>

### **The place and function of Egyptiana in the Rituals**

As the above examples illustrate Egyptian elements can be found in almost all rituals of the Golden Dawn. Although there is some variation, their use is also limited and form two categories: the mention and evocation of gods, and the use of Egyptian mythology as analogues to the events of the rituals. From this we can gauge the scale of Mathers' knowledge of Egyptology. We know from Yeats that Mathers spent considerable time in the British Museum's library, reading works of Egyptology and that he spoke French on a level that he was able to read academic works, and he had some basic knowledge of German as well. So we can postulate that he read at least some of the available foreign works on the topic, not just the English ones. Quotes from the *Book of the Dead* came from two sources. One is Blackden's translations of certain spells, and possibly all the available translations of Birch, Lepsius, and Edouard Naville. The other is the *Papyrus of Ani*, which acquired, in this case meaning stolen, from an Egyptian government storeroom in 1888.<sup>377</sup> The most frequent Egyptian elements are the names and attributions of deities. The list of deities evoked during rituals is consistent with what was common knowledge since the Greek and Roman authors, complemented by those known from primary sources. The naming conventions of the rituals are hectic. In some cases, particularly with the better known deities, whose names were not lost Mathers often uses the Greek version. This is the case with Horus, Isis, Osiris, Anubis, Thoth etc. When dealing with gods whose name's Greek variant was not established, he often uses the contemporary transcription of the names, as with the Canopic gods, Nephtys, Maat etc. He also employs Coptic forms, it is unknown of what level did Mathers know Coptic, often changing syllables or endings to better fit the symbolism that the god was required to fulfill. There are cases when multiple versions of the gods are used, but these are constrained to didactic sections where the initiate is explained something and not when evocating the god's presence. In cases of prayers, evocation, invocation, and symbolic acts throughout the rituals Mathers often employ an

---

<sup>376</sup> Mark Stavish. "Assumption of the Godform" transcript of a lecture presented in 1998. available online at: <https://hermetic.com/stavish/rituals/godform> (accessed: 2019.09.20.)

<sup>377</sup> E. A. Wallis Budge. *By Nile and Tigris, a narrative journey in Egypt and Mesopotamia on behalf of the British museum between the years 1886 and 1913*. London: J. Murray. 1920. 144.

attribute of the named deities, as formulaic in religious prayers, both Egyptian, Jewish, and Christian. The attributes are not consistent with Egyptian sources, and are often connected through Hermetic associations, based on the forces, element the deity in question represents in the ritual, and the function they fulfill. These functions can be grouped into two categories, symbolic and active. When a god's role is symbolic it is mentioned in expositions, almost as notes that the topic, force, or concept in question has an Egyptian analogy. This is prominent in rituals where a tarot card is placed on the altar, among other ritual objects, as the corresponding card of the Sephirothic path that is travelled during the rite. The cases when the god takes an active role in the ritual are more varied. It can either be present during a ritual through an evocation or invocation, and provide blessing and aid. In cases of evocations, when an officer assumes the god form, the deity is thought to be physically present in the ritual through the celebrant that assumes the form. The evocation can also be done in place of the initiate, and as a result he is the one that assumes the god form, while the formulas are spoken by the officers. As we have seen in the Z1 document the gods can also be present without physical representation, only in spirit, and still be active participants of the ritual. The Z documents also give us a clue about Mathers' knowledge of Egyptian mythology which pretty much conform to the notion that he was a dilettante, who read some of the current monographs and articles on the developments of Egyptology. But it illuminates even more how he interpreted that mythology, and we can see that his interpretation was more Hermetic than academic, and that he gladly and easily changed details, gave new roles and analogies to deities to better fit the Hermetic framework of the Golden Dawn. Gods also fulfill the role of guardians and gatekeepers, providing challenges that the initiate has to pass, to verify that he is ready to receive further knowledge. In these cases the gods fulfill a role similar to angels in the Kabbala, and the various hurdles the soul faces while journeying through the Underworld in the *Book of the Dead*.

Other miscellaneous Egyptiana include instances of secret signs named after Egyptian gods, wordings that evoke the feel of Egyptian ceremonies and locations, a large percent of the ritual implements featuring Egyptian motifs, references to the Golden Dawn as the successor of the Egyptian mysteries etc. Except for the ritual implements the use of these is mostly a stylistic choice and doesn't have a greater impact on the theology behind the rituals. As for the implements, the ankh, nemyss, lotus and phoenix wands' designs are based on Egyptian images, and the material exhibited in England. Although the forms are Egyptian the meaning and symbolism are Hermetic, and Mathers departs from the traditional color schemes, and orders the coloring based on Hermetic correspondences.

Throughout the rituals there are three dominant types of elements, Hermetic, Kabbalistic, and Egyptian. Their proper ratio would hard to measure as they are often intertwined with each other. On the fundamental level the core beliefs of the Golden Dawn were Hermeticism, Kabbala, and a gnostic approach of Christianity, as the only god worshipped is the Tetragrammaton, but with the two Hermetic concept that all of creation, and every being are emanations of God, and are parts in the greater whole. Notions of Egyptian religion and motifs were shoehorned into the system by Mathers with some skillful elegance. In the Cipher Manuscripts there are some Egyptian elements. The formula of *khabs-am-pekht* is there, on folio 19, the ritual of the Theoricus, there is a note of Isis=Sandalphon. The Philosophus grade ritual's draft on folios 33-41 the Hierophant assumes the role of Osiris and the initiate is stopped in circumambulations "*As stagnant water. Stopped by HS. As Horus/ turbid troubled water. Stopped by HG. as Isis./ [...] Embracing Nu & river of Eden.*"<sup>378</sup> Along with an image of a pyramid with the elements written in Hebrew on each side are the only mentions of relevance to Egypt in the Cipher Manuscripts. From this sparse connection to Egypt, supported by Mathers' interest he crafted a syncretic system that incorporated elements from Hermeticism, Kabbala, Gnosticism, and his own understanding of the religion and perceived mystery tradition of Egypt. Mathers' understanding on Egypt was not academic, he overlooked details that were known even at the time in order to syncretize the various traditions into one coherent system. It was not his aim with the Golden Dawn rituals to revive Egyptian religious rituals or traditions, but to show that the wisdom and knowledge that one could attain among the order originated from Egypt, the culture that was perceived to have the strongest legitimacy on magic and mysticism. Thus the Golden Dawn's system was presented as the current keeper and caretaker of these ancient mysteries and knowledge that can bring one closer to spiritual perfection and God.

---

<sup>378</sup> A transcription by J. S. Kupperman and facsimiles of the Cipher Manuscripts can be found at [http://www.tarrdaniel.com/documents/Thelemagick/gd/publication/english/Cipher\\_Manuscript.html](http://www.tarrdaniel.com/documents/Thelemagick/gd/publication/english/Cipher_Manuscript.html) (accessed 2019.09.20.)

## The teachings of the grades of the Golden Dawn

Between each successive grade in the Golden Dawn there was a mandatory waiting period until the next test and initiation could be undertaken. This period was supposed to be spent with learning the curriculum of the freshly acquired grade, provided by the librarian in the form of manuscripts titled Knowledge Lectures, which were copied extensively by the initiates.<sup>379</sup> These manuscripts formed the backbone of the Golden Dawn's ideology, and are assumed to have been written by Mathers and Westcott.<sup>380</sup> Besides the Knowledge Lectures there was another group of texts produced by the order's members, called the Flying Rolls. These were mostly circulated by Inner Order members, and thus reflect a deeper layer of occult thought.

The First Knowledge Lecture conveyed the basic building blocks of the magical system of the Golden Dawn. This includes the elemental symbols, the Zodiac, astrological symbols and their corresponding elements, the Hebrew alphabet, and the Kabbalistic Tree of Life.<sup>381</sup> This caused some "...*involuntary feeling of disappointment – 'Is this all', he will say to himself, 'After all promises, the elaborate ritual, the pledges of inviolable secrecy. A few symbols to be found in scores of books'*"<sup>382</sup> as expressed by J. W. Brodie-Innes in his *Notes on the First Knowledge Lecture* but then consoled the disappointed initiates that this knowledge is necessary to understand the sciences yet to be learned.<sup>383</sup> The first knowledge lecture contained instructions on the Kabbalistic Cross and the only piece of practical magic available to Outer Order members, the Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram.<sup>384</sup> This ritual had many uses from cleansing and banishing to invocations. In structure it is a mix of Christian ritual with Kabbala, with Kabbalistic formulas used in Christian prayer, magic words used to appeal to angels and the

---

<sup>379</sup> Yorke NS 64.

<sup>380</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 39.

<sup>381</sup> GD III. 63-65.

<sup>382</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 39. footnote 51. On a similar note by Anne Horniman we read in the Flying Roll no. 18 that a lot of fresh initiates lose their enthusiasm for learning but „*If our Order be anything deeper and higher than a mere club for the dissemination of archeological and literary knowledge, the obstacle to be overcome must be more subtle than those which come between us and success in the ordinary aims of life.*”

<sup>383</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 39.

<sup>384</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 38.

use of classical ceremonial magic implements, a dagger and the pentagram.<sup>385</sup> Each Knowledge Lecture also contained a meditation exercise on various topics.<sup>386</sup>

The Second Knowledge Lecture introduced alchemical symbolism and the alchemical correspondence with the Tree of Life, the order of elementals and their presidents, the Tetragrammaton, and the Qliphoth, the evil demons of matter and shells of the dead. This lecture explains the four worlds of the Kabbala and the divine names associated with the Sephiroth.<sup>387</sup> The Third Knowledge Lecture consists of the Kabbalistic description of the soul, a classification of the Hebrew letters, explanation of the symbolism of the fylfot cross, swastika, and the Caduceus of Hermes.<sup>388</sup> The Fourth Lecture contains the geomantic figures of the zodiac, geometric figures corresponding to the planets, and other figures and their explanations. The Fifth Lecture further develops on the themes of the previous lectures and introduces the color scales, which played an important role in the Golden Dawn rituals. It was also required from the member to write an essay on the rituals, draw badges of each grade, draw the Tree of Life and be able to control their aura.<sup>389</sup>

The material learned during the Outer Order membership, through the mandatory Knowledge Lectures and individual study formed the basis of the Golden Dawn's understanding of magic. The topics of Kabbala, the Tarot, Enochian magic, and astral vision were assumed to be known by an initiate ready to enter the Inner Order. Upon being initiated in the grade of Adeptus Minor the member gained access to the Flying Rolls, if they paid the fee for copying,<sup>390</sup> first to the first ten and then at the second and third stage of the grade to another twenty four of the thirty six total. These documents are an interesting mix of various writings by the most prominent members of the order. Some are theoretical lectures, some are administrative<sup>391</sup> and some are descriptions of personal magical experiments, so the Flying Rolls sheds some light on what the Golden Dawn members actually did and how they put theory into practice. Not all of the texts

---

<sup>385</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 38.

<sup>386</sup> Yorke NS 64. GD III. 87-89.

<sup>387</sup> GD III. 65-75.

<sup>388</sup> GD III. 75-77.

<sup>389</sup> Alison Butler (2011): 38.

<sup>390</sup> Francis King. *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic and Alchemy: Golden Dawn Material by S. L. MacGregor Mathers*. Rochester: Destiny Books. 1987. 286. Appendix E publishes a catalogue of the Flying Roll sin Westcott's collection. It consists of the number, the title, the date of issue and the price charged to members for copying.

<sup>391</sup> For example Roll no. 5. explains the rules of messaging between members, and that the address of the office of the order should not be kept written out in full, only in Hebrew.

mesh with our present field of inspection so we will only focus on those that either contain some methodical foundations or discuss anything related to Egypt.

The first Roll, *Warnings*, written by Westcott, states that the basic of magic is Will, through it one can manipulate the world.<sup>392</sup> This is consistent with the general changes of the nineteenth century in relation to the nature and role of magic, with the shift from reliance on external powers to evocations and working from internal powers.<sup>393</sup>

In the Flying Roll no. 4, *Spirit Vision*, Florence Farr and Elaine Simpson recount their experience of using *spirit vision* on the Empress Tarot card. After meditating on the card they saw a vision in which they met Isis who reveals to them that “*This love, I have plucked from my heart and have given it to the world; that is my strength. Love is the mother of Man – God, giving the Quintessence of her life to save mankind from destruction, and to show forth the path of life eternal. Love is the mother of the Christ – Spirit and the Christ is the highest love – Christ is the Heart of Love, the heart of the Great Mother Isis – The Isis Nature. He is the expression of her power – She is the Holy Grail, and He is the life blood of spirit, that is found in this cup.*”<sup>394</sup> The two are then let go with a blessing from Isis.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Roll, *Imagination*, deals with imagination, and states that it is equally important to train imagination and will to become a successful mage as the effect of will can be channeled through imagination to create a better and more defined effect.<sup>395</sup> Westcott’s comments on this text makes a distinction between imagination and fancy, or simple thoughts, and that through the act of manifesting ideas through will elevates man above the angels, as they lack the creative force. When a human uses this creative force he *is a step nearer to the Demiurgos*.<sup>396</sup>

Roll no. 7, *Material Alchymy*, is a lesson on alchemy by Westcott, where he explains that since the medieval authors often called alchemy hermetic, they implied that it originated in Egypt, from Hermes Trismegistos, the *prehistoric demi-god, or inspired teacher*.<sup>397</sup> The text syncretizes Rosicrucian ideas of alchemy, hermetic concepts of the elements and planes of existence and even some eastern ideas of reincarnation and enlightenment, as well as creating correspondences between some elements, particularly gases, and the Sephirots.<sup>398</sup>

---

<sup>392</sup> Yorke NS 57.

<sup>393</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaff (2013): 70-71.

<sup>394</sup> Francis King (1987): 72-73.

<sup>395</sup> Francis King (1987): 47-53. I believe this is also the first case where an energy vampire is mentioned.

<sup>396</sup> Francis King (1987): 53.

<sup>397</sup> Francis King (1987): 179.

<sup>398</sup> Francis King (1987): 180-190.

Roll no. 10, *Self Sacrifice*, references the same pseudo-etymological connection between the word amen and Amon that was given in the Lesser Pentagram ritual.<sup>399</sup>

In the 13<sup>th</sup> Roll, *Secrecy and the Hermetic (Love)*, Florence Farr contrasts the methods of the ancient Egyptian initiations and *Ancient Mysteries*, where rigorous physical test and violence was used before initiation with the Golden Dawn's focus on disciplining the mind.<sup>400</sup>

Roll no. 19, *Aims and means*, written by Westcott, lays out the aims and goals of the order: spiritual development, extending perception, the practice of divination, and procuring the influence of Divine Powers.<sup>401</sup>

Flying Roll no. 29, *Order by D.D.C.F. as to 4 Lieutenants – declared June 18, '94 issued Nov. 4*, while being of administrative in nature sheds some light on the order's understanding of the Egyptian gods of Horus, Isis, Aroueris and Nephthys.<sup>402</sup> Written by Mathers in 1894<sup>403</sup> it relegates authority to Percy Bullock, Florence Farr, Edmund William Berridge, and Annie Horniman to become Westcott's lieutenants in ruling and managing the order. As badges of office they were given the symbols of the aforementioned deities. Percy Bullock was given the symbol of Horus to show that “*appeal is to be made in all grave matters coming under the dominion of Horus... such as Disagreement. All things pertaining to wrath, misunderstanding and irritation between members. Enforcement of the authority of the Chief of the Order. All frankly suggested plans requiring energy in their carrying out. Also the administration of advice to inferior members of the Second Order on all matters requiring decisive actions.*”<sup>404</sup> Florence Farr received the symbol of Isis so that “*appeal is to be made in all grave matters coming under the dominion of Isis. . . such as the maintenance of peace and harmony between members. Instruction in doubtful application of occult correspondences. Decision in cases of vacillation and doubting of mind of inferior members, and decisions in matters affecting the harmony existing between different methods of occult working.*”<sup>405</sup> Edmund Berridge was tasked with „*all grave matters coming under the Dominion of Aroueris... such as all cases of doubt and difficulty in the application of rules for divination. Matters requiring subtlety and tact, and all*

---

<sup>399</sup> Francis King (1987): 139. In the Lesser Pentagram it is Amoun the hidden one, in the Flying Roll it is Amon or Amen the Ideal God force.

<sup>400</sup> Yorke NS. 57.

<sup>401</sup> Francis King. 115.

<sup>402</sup> Yorke NS. 57.

<sup>403</sup> Francis King. Appendix E. 287.

<sup>404</sup> Yorke NS. 57.

<sup>405</sup> Yorke NS. 57.



*decisions regarding the formulation of ideas.*”<sup>406</sup> Annie Horniman was tasked with “*all grave matters coming under the dominion of Nephthys. . . such as all cases of difficulty in the application of given rules to material correspondences. Difficulties in the ordering of studies of inferior members. All questions regarding difficulty in the selection of Forces to work, under or with, for a fixed end. All cases of doubt or difficulty requiring a right application of rules already given.*”<sup>407</sup> All of the deities dominions given by Mathers conform to the era’s popular understanding of Egyptian mythology as discussed in the previous chapter.

Roll no. 31, *Ethiopian Letters*, is a discourse on the Enochian and Ethiopian alphabets Moina Mathers writes that the *Book of the Concourse of the Forces*, a collection of Enochian tablets compiled by MacGregor Mathers which will be examined later, is undoubtedly descended from “*Egyptian Wisdom, and it’s meaning is the esoteric meaning of the Great Egyptian Symbols of the Pyramid and the Sphinx. The probability is then that the Tablet language has its origins in the Egyptian and its close resemblance to the Ethiopic (which is generally supposed to be derived from Egyptian) is very marked on the Table.*”<sup>408</sup>

In Roll no. 33, *Enoch Visions*, we read about a series of vision where the seers, Annie Horniman, Dr. Pullen-Berry, Dr. Berridge visited the elemental planes. The imagery always includes a pyramid and a sphinx and the seers conversed with the sphinx, angles, Harpocrates and the four Canopic gods, each corresponding to an element.<sup>409</sup> Flying Roll no. 35 contains some further discussion on the Z documents explanation of the Neophyte ritual. It begins with the proclamation that “*The Great Thooth is the highest aspect of the Hermes of the most ancient Egyptian Mysteries, and corresponds almost to the Great Angel Metatron. It is the Archangel of Kether in the Briatic World. The Mercury of the Romans must not be confused with this Great Hermes.*”<sup>410</sup> This paragraph is the quintessential Golden Dawn statement, a mystical Egyptian scenery painted on the underlying Hermetic-Kabbalistic ideas, with a bit of intellectual superiority to finish it. Later we see a comment on the gods present during the Neophyte ritual that they are “*generally most differentiated by their Crowns: Amen-Ra by the high feathers, Mo-ooth (Maut) has the same headdress as Horns. She corresponds to Aima Elohim. The high Hermes-Tho-oth has the same headdress as Amoun Kneph, the Sacred Spirit. Remember that*

---

<sup>406</sup> Aroueris is the Greek version of Heru-Ur, Horus the Elder, interpreted as Apollo by Plutarch.

<sup>407</sup> Yorke NS 57.

<sup>408</sup> Yorke NS 26. OS. 58.

<sup>409</sup> Yorke OS. 58.

<sup>410</sup> Yorke OS. 58.

*Thooth, Truth, has two aspects — the higher and the lower. The higher is Absolute, the lower is suitable to human comprehension. To tell the higher form of a truth to one who cannot understand it is to lie to him because, though correctly formulated, it will not be correctly received.*”<sup>411</sup> There is also a note on the different spellings of the name Thmaah, according to their corresponding element, Sephirot and Hebrew letter.<sup>412</sup>

### **Some notes and conclusions**

There are some topics concerning the ritual workings of the Golden Dawn yet remaining to be examined.<sup>413</sup> First the method with which the names of deities and divine beings were spoken, or with the terminology employed by Mathers, vibrated. This means that the names were pronounced syllabically or in some cases even letter by letter, with extended length. Mathers also instructed the students to first imagine the name in the heart and then pronounce it with the intent to vibrate it through the whole universe.<sup>414</sup> We see one of the expressive example of Golden Dawn syncretism in a paper titled *The Pyramid Gods and their Attributions*, by Mathers, in which he details the Enochian elemental pyramids and corresponding Egyptian deities, as well as the place these deities take during the Neophyte Ritual. He also provides a Coptic name variant with the addendum that the ending “st” signifies a more spiritual force. The scheme of the correspondences follows the same sequence. The name of the god is given, both the common Greek or Egyptian variant, then the Coptic. This is followed by the elemental attributes, then the description of the god’s appearance. As an example “*Fourth. HORUS. Hoor. Ruleth above when the Four Triangles of the Pyramid or three out of the Four are of the Element of Fire. For he representeth the letter Yod of YHVH, the fiery and avenging force of*

---

<sup>411</sup> Yorke OS. 58.

<sup>412</sup> Yorke OS. 58.

<sup>413</sup> Yorke NS 27 contains a manuscript from the collection of Richard A. Barclay, in unknown hand, in a small hardcover notebook that is filled with what appears to be chapters and illustrations from a book on Egyptian magic. I was unable to identify the origin of the text. There is no title given, only the hieroglyphs for *hekau*. The contents are: He who penetrates into the mysteries, This is the key to the mysteries, These are the three-fold sceptre of Egypt, I am Osiris, O blind soul, The Mistress of the Hidden Temple, The hieroglyphs speak, The place of initiation, Thoth founded the mysteries, Glory be to thee O Osiris, The Door of Pe-I-em-Hru, Days of the week and their Gods, Principal titles of the Priesthood, The Pyramid. It could be somewhat beneficial in uncovering in fullness the Egyptian and Egyptianizing sources of early 20<sup>th</sup> century magic if one could find the author and/or origin of this manuscript.

<sup>414</sup> GD V. 55-56.

*the Spirit, the opposer of the infernal and devouring fire. Shape: God with Hawk's head and double mitre. Phoenix wand and Crux Ansata.*"<sup>415</sup> The attributions are through the mythology of the deity, the imagery somewhat follows the original Egyptian depictions but complemented with Golden Dawn magical implements in the form of wands. In the case of better known deities like Horus in the example the attributions of the corresponding fire and themes of revenge are easy to understand but in some cases the correspondences seem entirely accidental. The list of the gods detailed are: Osiris, Isis, Nephthys, Horus, Aroueris (another aspect of Horus), Hathor, Sothis, Harpocrates, Apis, Anubis, Tharpesh (most likely Bastet), Ameshet (Imset), Hapi, Tmoumathph (Duamutef), and Kabexnu (Qebhsenuf).<sup>416</sup> It is not this list of deities is the more important of this document, but the closing sentences as those shed some light on Mathers' ideas about the nature of the Egyptian gods. "*These be the Gods of Egypt who rule above the Pyramids of the Sixteen servient Angels and squares of each Lesser Angle, and in the middle of each pyramid is the sphynx of its power. Revere then the sacred symbols of the Gods, for they are the Word manifested in the Voice of Nature. These be the Elohim of the Forces, and before their faces the forces of Nature are prostrate.*"<sup>417</sup> This shows that the Golden Dawn considered the Egyptian deities to be existing divine beings, with function similar to angels in the Kabbala, subservient to God, as all beings of creation. Essentially they are manifestations of the Creator, and as the steps on the Tree of Life important aids that lead the mage closer to the goal of uniting with the divine. Or in less sublime cases as governors of forces of nature can be worked with to acquire health, achieve goals, and even become invisible. The connection between the Egyptian deities and Enochian Tablets is further expounded in a paper titled *Gods of Egypt and the Enochian Tablets* by Dr. H. Pullen-Burry<sup>418</sup> which complements Mathers' explanation with the inclusion of astrology and instructions on the creation of diagrams. The final example that we will glance at is the Enochian Chess, a chess variant created by Westcott, with the rules possibly finished by Mathers. Whether or not the game was actually playable or not<sup>419</sup> is of little concern to our field, but the convoluted structure of the game, the symbolism of the figures

---

<sup>415</sup> GD X. 96.

<sup>416</sup> GD X. 96-97.

<sup>417</sup> GD X. 97.

<sup>418</sup> GD X. 98-108.

<sup>419</sup> Rules can be found in Chris Zalewski. *Enochian Chess of the Golden Dawn: A Four-Handed Chess Game*. Woodbury MN: Llewellyn. 1994. There are some accounts of some members actually playing the game, among them Yeats, his wife and Mathers. Ann Saddlemyer. *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs. W. B. Yeats*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2004. 71.

was based on the correspondences between the elements, Enochian tablets and Egyptian deities outlined in the previously inspected papers.<sup>420</sup>

The Egyptian motifs in the Golden Dawn rituals, lectures, and other material can be categorized in two ways, an internal and an external one. The internal categorization is based on the availability of the material and the participatory aspect of it. First of all there was a sharp divide between material available to Outer Order members and Inner Order members, as well as the already structured access to knowledge based on rank. Naturally this is after 1892, and before the schismatic period, as before the creation of the Second Order the whole membership had access to the same material, and after the schisms in certain groups these lines became quite blurred. Participation in rituals, as an actor or a spectator was tied to rank as well. For Outer Order members the available material was their participation in initiations, the knowledge lectures containing no explicitly Egyptian elements, and lectures occasionally held by higher ranking members on various topics. The written material given to them contained the basic teachings of the Golden Dawn, and it seems that the basics were Hermeticism and Kabbala. The only real connection they could feel to Egypt in the workings of the order were the obvious visual elements, the robes, nemysses, Egyptian vignettes etc. as well as the occasional mentioning of Egyptian deities during the rituals but without having access to their deeper meaning. Another important differentiating factor in the material available to the two Orders is the chance of participation. For Outer Order members the focus was on theory and this meant that most of them participated in the rituals passively. Those of high enough rank could be active performers in initiations of lesser ranked candidates, but for most they were taken around in the temple, answered for by officials when prompted, and had little access to put into practice the theory they learned. Being the initiate in the rituals meant that the magic was not done *by* them but done *to* them, and the initiate witnesses the gods but does not become one with them. For members of the Inner Order the case was different. They had access to a wider range of material as well as they were incentivized to practice magic, in person, in group, or during the rituals. As much of the initiations was done with the leadership of high ranking members they were the ones performing magic. This meant that during the rituals when the priest or priestess evoked the gods of Egypt, this transformative act took place in him or her and not the initiate, who were in true mystery cult fashion just shown the miracles. This is of course just re-stating the obvious as most religions have a division of laymen and clergy, and in this analogy the Inner Order can be regarded as the clergy of the Golden Dawn. The material to which the Second

---

<sup>420</sup> GD X. 111-127.

Order members had access held the deeper theoretic foundations of the rituals and the syncretistic system of the order. It is not entirely clear whether these ideas were originally present at the time when Westcott, Woodman, and Mathers founded the order, but it can be postulated with some certainty that at first Mathers worked out the rituals from the backbones available in the Cypher Manuscripts, and then later on created the interpretation of the mysteries.

The external category is based upon their place in the greater scheme of Golden Dawn ideology, which we will refer to as surface and foundational Egyptiana. Foundational level Egyptiana are cases when the used Egyptian elements fulfill a core function in the ritual or “theology”. These include occasions when the symbolism of the ritual is built around an Egyptian myth or religious practice, as in the case of the Z interpretation of the Neophyte ritual, the prevalent belief that the gods of Egypt are existing beings as forces of nature, their attribution to elements, cardinal directions, or as governors of angelic legions, the belief and practice that one can assume the form of an Egyptian deity partaking in its powers, and even the belief that the Golden Dawn is the descendant of an ancient Egyptian initiatory order. Surface level Egyptiana are occasions when the elements and motifs used are more superfluous and could easily be exchanged with elements of other esoteric traditions, for example the extra identifications, almost like side notes, with Egyptian traditions in the otherwise Hermetic or Kabbalistic explanations during the rituals, the Egyptianizing interpretations of tarot cards etc.

As this chapter have showed both are abundant in the Golden Dawn. The core beliefs of the Golden Dawn can be summed somewhat like this. Magic exists, and can be learned, and through it one can achieve spiritual development and through practice reach a mystical union with God. The tradition of magic originates from Egypt, as visible from the Hermetic sources, the roots of the Kabbala lead back to Egypt, and the Golden Dawn is a descendant of this ancient tradition. The Egyptian gods exist in one form or another and can be reached and communicated with, but the method of communication is not through the rituals found in Egyptian sources (although in some occasions the texts and wordings can and should be used), but through Hermetic and Kabbalistic rituals and prayers. The Egyptian ancestry is further reinforced by the use of ritual clothing and implements reminiscent of Egyptian clothing, especially those worn by pharaohs, and insignias of power. But as we have taken a closer look at the available Golden Dawn material one thing is crystal clear. Although in the outward representation, and to an extent in the “theology” of the order as well Egypt seems to hold an important place, but this place is at maximum tertiary. The basis of the order’s worldview, approach to magic, goals, and methods are Kabbalistic, which in this case is not Jewish Kabbala, but the Christian and

Hermetic Kabbala formulated during the Renaissance. This is supplanted by Hermetic correspondences and notions on the human capacity to effect change on the universe, the basis of the emphasis on color symbolism. The role of the Egyptian elements could easily be filled by the mythology and pantheon of any other religion, or as with the case of the Inner Order rituals with the myth of Christian Rosenkreutz. The role fulfilled by Egyptian deities is the same fulfilled by angels, archangels, and demons, often in conjunction with each other, and regarded to be similar entities. Still the idea was that the Golden Dawn was performing real Egyptian magic, and the Egyptiana were more than visual cues but were one cornerstone of the group's self-identity.

In the Golden Dawn there was much need to legitimize the teachings organized mostly by Westcott and Mathers, even as those who became members were themselves searching for spiritual fulfillment and not skeptics bent on proving the fallacies and mistakes of the order's ideology. First through the story of contact with Anna Sprenger, then with Mathers' wrongly turned-out personal contact with the Secret Chiefs. Inwards, towards members the leaders, especially Mathers after his departure to Paris, and in the later history of the order Mrs. Mathers, dr. Felkin, and the other successors had to reaffirm their authority on multiple occasion, but in the outward image, towards esoteric milieu the Golden Dawn boasted a strong argument. In contrast with other organizations however the Golden Dawn could present their system of esoteric knowledge as the oldest and thus the one closest to the Truth. With placing the order's roots in Egypt not just through some phrases in lectures taught to fresh initiates, but through multiple occasions during rituals, the whole visual representation of the order and in core teachings as well, Mathers created a legacy for the Golden Dawn that was more ancient than the Rosicrucian, and thus could incorporate their teachings as well, older than the rest of the Western esoteric tradition and even older than the Indian wisdom of Theosophy. This enabled the order to incorporate any and all different traditions of Western magic into one cohesive system by finding analogues in real or purported Egyptian myths and traditions. The Golden Dawn's aim wasn't the resurrection of the ancient Egyptian religion – as most members were already in some form Christian – but to continue on a tradition, of which origins they thought to find in Egypt, and to provide a working system of practical magic. An old concept and imagery, attested in the Western esoteric tradition since the Greco-Roman period, set behind a new and very much nineteenth century development, with the shift from theory to practice, from a solitary activity to a social one, with new personal and spiritual goals, with the usual caveats that the Egypt known to members of the Golden Dawn had little to do with the real ancient Egypt.

## Afterlife

In 1892 Samuel Mathers and Moina Mathers have moved to Paris, and created the Ahathoor temple in 1894. This temple was a small one, until 1896 only eleven members joined, and most of those were expatriate British and American.<sup>421</sup> It is certain that both of them lectured on Egyptian religion in the Louvre and on private soirées, though not in any official capacities.<sup>422</sup> They became involved in an attempt to revive the Egyptian mysteries, and in 1899 they put on a public performance of the Rite of Isis at the Théâtre Bodiniere,<sup>423</sup> and a year later held initiations into the Mysteries of Isis. Mathers saw Paris to be the perfect place to revive a cult of Isis, as there were Isis altars in Roman times, during the Napoleonic era Isis was the tutelary goddess of Paris, and Mathers even suggested an etymology that the origin of Paris as Baris meant barque in Coptic and with a Hermetic correspondence the city itself became the barque of Isis in her search of Osiris' pieces.<sup>424</sup> They also had a shrine at home dedicated to Isis. Two newspaper articles give detailed information of what the viewers saw of the public Rite of Isis and the secret initiation. F. Lees article<sup>425</sup> details the theatrical performance with enthusiasm for its artistic nature, evocative performance and beauty of the "dances of the four elements". Mathers also gave a symbolical explanation of the ritual and the costumes in the following interview. The ritual was the usual anachronistic cocktail of motifs. Most of it was modelled after Hellenistic sources, the robes worn were taken from the *Papyrus of Ani*, of which Mathers believed to show an earlier form of Isis worship.<sup>426</sup> The private initiations differed from the public performances. Andre Gaucher, a journalist, partook in one and published a highly sensational account of the proceedings.<sup>427</sup> He was taken blindfolded in a carriage to a secret location, and experiences a performative ritual, an unveiling of the statue of Isis, and some fantastic elements. From the description it seems that the ritual was a reenactment of the

---

<sup>421</sup> Ellic Howe (1978): 295.

<sup>422</sup> Caroline Tully. "Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers and Isis" in Dave Evans, Dave Green (edd.). *Ten Years of Triumph of the Moon*. Harpenden: Hidden Publishing 2009. 64.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.* 64.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.* 65.

<sup>425</sup> F. Lees. "Isis Worship in Paris: Conversation with the Hierophant Ramses and the High Priestess Anari." *The Humanitarian*. 16. 1900. 82-87.

<sup>426</sup> Caroline Tully (2009): 68.

<sup>427</sup> Andre Gaucher. "Isis a Montmartre." *L'echo du Merveilleux*. 446-9 1900. 470-472. trans. Christopher Kimberley. 2008.

Autumn festival of the search and discovery of Osiris,<sup>428</sup> but the style, lack of long speeches seem non-Mathersian. From the interview it seems that both Samuel and Moina Mathers believed in Isis and Osiris and made efforts to establish a religious practice that was closer to the Egyptian practices but ultimately they were unable to shed the Hermetic customs and conceptions. It is unknown how trustworthy the two articles are and especially in the case of the private initiation it is uncertain what parts actually happened and what are the products of a sensationalist journalist. It is certain however that Mathers' "neo-pagan" Isis cult was short lived and was unable to take roots or exert any significant influence on Western esotericism.

The story of the Golden Dawn is very much the story of MacGregor Mathers, the extraordinary dilettante who was the epitome of the self-educating Victorian middle class, and spent countless hours learning, working, and propagating esoteric ideas in his search for spiritual ascension. Mathers died in November 1918, possibly from the Spanish flu. His eulogy was published in the April issue of the *Occult Review*, written by Brodie-Innes, who remembers Mathers as *"Of his scholarship it is not for me to speak, so far was it beyond my own, yet I know it was as frankly acknowledged by some competent authorities, as it was bitterly denied and depreciated by his opponents. I once showed some of his letters to me on the Kabbalah to my own first teacher in Hebrew, a Rabbi and an advanced Kabbalist, and he said, "that man is a true Kabbalist. Very few Gentiles know as much, you may follow him safely. " When he arranged a Temple of Isis for the Paris Exhibition, an Egyptologist whose name is world-famous said, "MacGregor is a Pharaoh come back. All my life I have studied the dry bones; he has made them live. " These are but two examples out of many. Yet there have been those who have said that his Kabbalah and Egyptology were shallow and superficial, a rehash of other men's work. Who shall decide? Yet I do know that many questions I asked him were answered at once, and satisfactorily, with abundant citation of authorities, showing intimate acquaintance with the subject, and never have I detected a mistake. [...]Of his occult knowledge and power I can speak more confidently. He had the rare gift of making clear-cut and luminous those deep inner teachings, so often veiled in nebulous vapourings and prolix verbiage, wherein one plods through leagues of slush to pick out a few gems. His astrological knowledge was exceptional, as is abundantly proved by many horoscopes that have passed through my hands, in which the accuracy of his judgment as evidenced by events was convincing. He had also the second-sight of his race developed to a remarkable degree. Of this I have had many proofs. Ceremonial magic of many ages and countries was familiar to him, and eminent*

---

<sup>428</sup> Caroline Tully (2009): 71.



*scientists have told me that his explanations of the power and effect of ceremonial were clear and logical.*”<sup>429</sup> The claims made by Brodie-Innes are typical in that they attribute some relative authority to Mathers’ self-learning, on par with trained professionals. We can easily doubt this, as his contributions to the scientific progress of Egyptology were nonexistent, or even his translations from a philological viewpoint lack any meaningful contribution, but he had a talent to theatrically paint a picture of the Egypt that he imagined, and incorporate these images and ideas into vibrant rituals. Mathers’ largest contribution was the creation of the Golden Dawn’s syncretic magical system and the revival of some forgotten and lesser known sources of the Western esoteric tradition.

After the rebellion of the Isis-Urania temple and the events that followed, the group that broke up with Mathers left his focus on Egypt as well behind. The attention of the Stella Matutina and others turned towards mystical Christianity, or other forms of esotericism devolving to the usual scheme of esoteric organizations, when the leaders claimed greater and greater magical prowess, with the skeptic members becoming disappointed faster, leaving, and giving up the pursuit of magic or creating other groups repeating the same process. One of these disappointed students went further than the others, and set out to create not just a new group to study the derivative of the same system, but to create a new religion. This disciple was Aleister Crowley the most infamous occultist of the early twentieth century. After his relationship with Mathers turned to the worst, Crowley became adversarial. In his autobiography he mentions that they both conducted magical attacks on each other, Crowley portrayed the character of Mathers as a villain in the novel *Moonchild*. One of the reason for their secession was that Crowley believed that Mathers became uninterested in Egypt, or at least in working with the Egyptian gods, based on Mathers’ apparent uninterest in Crowley’s adventures in Egypt. This also meant for Crowley that he lost his only connection to the Secret Chiefs, as he was now on bad terms with every leader of what remained of the Golden Dawn, so he set out to forge a new link for himself. Let us now turn our attention towards Crowley, and the events that led to the creation of the *Liber AL*.

---

<sup>429</sup> J. W. Brodie-Innes. “Some Personal Reminiscences” *The Occult Review*. 29. 4. (1919): 198-199.

*Aleister Crowley, Thelema and Egypt*

To understand how Aleister Crowley became one of the most well-known occultists of the twentieth century it is necessary to outline the most important events of his life. Since there are many extensive bibliographies, we only aim to point out the most important events of his life, especially those, that led to the writing of the *Book of the Law*, his resistance and eventual acceptance of the book. Doing this we have to disregard the other fields of his working, the numerous poems and plays he wrote, some of which earned him favorable reviews or his accomplishments as a rock climber and mountaineer. It is a sad development of history that Mathers' life is little known compared to Crowley, and that while the majority of Crowley's writing, notes, and correspondence have been kept for us to examine, Mathers' notes and written material were lost in the turmoil of the twentieth century. It is also important to note that the events discussed below are represented mainly through the eyes of Aleister Crowley himself. The main source for his life, and the basis of every biography written about him, is his own autobiography and biographic writings in the *Equinox*. We do not aim here to uncover the controversies around certain events, rather this chapter would like to present his life the way Aleister Crowley saw it. Knowing how he interpreted certain aspects of his childhood and youth we can glimpse into his method of thought and acquire a better understanding of the creation and concepts *Book of the Law*. Crowley's life after the *Liber AL* will not be addressed, presenting his later life and workings in the light of the *Book of the Law* would require another study.

**Childhood and school years**

Aleister Crowley was born on 12 October 1875, in Warwickshire and was named Alexander Edward Crowley.<sup>430</sup> His family lineage placed him in an upper middle-class setting that could provide him with the financial and educational benefits that would make it possible to him to be a "full time occultist". The basis for his family fortune were set by Crowley's great-grandfather, Thomas Crowley, and his brothers, who formed a business partnership in 1821, and bought the Turk Street Brewhouse, Alton, on August 28, the same year. The partnership took the name of A. C. S. & H. Crowley, and became a famous and successful business operation. They adopted a new business model, with creation of the four pence menu of a

---

<sup>430</sup> Richard Kaczynski (2010): 14.

sandwich and a glass of ale the company could rise above competition who generally offered only a glass of ale for the same price. Even Charles Dickens noted the rising popularity of Crowley's Ale, writing that "*a feeding place, established to supply the Railway public with a first-rate sandwich and a sparkling glass of Crowley's Ale.*"<sup>431</sup> Besides the brewing industry the family sponsored schools and had a great interest in numerous railway companies, effectively helping the building of new railroads, especially the London-Alton line which proved important in the continual rise of their brewing industry.

Aleister's father Edward Crowley (1830-1887) was an educated engineer, but never practiced his profession, his chief form of income were various business interests, until his retirement at the age of twenty-six, when he retired to devote himself to religion. He broke away from the family tradition of Quaker faith, he became an Anglican clergyman, but later converted to the Plymouth Brethren, which was a fundamentalist denomination, with no centralized authority or clergy, which was famous for the great number of internal schisms that occurred in the history of the Brethren. The Brethren movement began in 1827, by Anthony Groves, Edward Cronin and John Darby as an attempt to reach the union of every Christian denomination without priests, ministers or any formal order of service, relying solely on the Bible.<sup>432</sup> Although the movement tried to gap the boundaries between the various denominations, it eventually became famous of the many schisms that occurred in the Brethren's history. Edward Crowley joined the Exclusive Brethren, the ultraconservative side of the denomination, where he spent most of his time evangelizing both by sermons and through religious literature. He distributed a great number of tracts, Bibles and pamphlets. He married Emily Bertha Bishop (1848-1917) in 1874. She had to convert, and although her family was devout evangelical Christians she had to alienate from her family.

The young Aleister Crowley, referred mostly by the nickname Alick, lived a sheltered and happy boyhood with few signs of his antagonism towards Christianity until the death of his father in 1887. He enjoyed the benefits of a wealthy family, in the shape of servants, tutors and boarding schools. He idolized his father, but his relationship with his mother was cold. The daily Bible readings were a formative part of his childhood, he liked the unusual sounding names of the Old-Testament, and became fascinated with the Book of Revelations after her

---

<sup>431</sup> Charles Dickens. "An Unsettled Neighborhood" *Household Words*. 10. 242. (1854): 289-292. 291.

<sup>432</sup> see further Roy F. Coad. *A History of the Brethren Movement: Its Origins, Its Worldwide Development and Its Significance for the Present Day*. Vancouver: Regent College Publishing. 2001.

mother called him the Beast after some mischief, a name and number he would later use when referring to himself.<sup>433</sup>

At the age of ten he was transferred to Erebor School in Cambridge, with Reverend Henry d'Arcy Champney as headmaster, who proved to be a true Brethren zealot, on the border of insanity, a border that he would later cross. In the beginning Aleister enjoyed the school and wanted to follow in the footsteps of his father, studying the Bible as much as he could, but encountered his first of many problems with the integrity of the text.<sup>434</sup> During the spring term of 1886, Crowley was summoned home, because his father was ill, and was diagnosed with tongue cancer, which could've been treated but the Brethren decided against surgery, instead trying luck with the new method of electro homeopathy. Edward Crowley died on March 5 1887.<sup>435</sup> This event proved to be a great turn in Aleister's life, his problems with his mother, religion and school began to take shape. Also in his autobiography he remarks that his father's death was the point when he had to become self-conscious, and refer to himself in the first person.<sup>436</sup> Emily was also changed by the death of his husband, and the Raven schism inside the Brethren, a division in which she lost her remaining friends. This schism opened Aleister's eyes, and he became more and more critical towards the faith of the Brethren, considering them to be hypocrites beyond redemption.

In his bitterness and anger Crowley started his rebellion against the Brethren and Erebor, although he do not specify the nature of his misdeeds in his autobiography. But we know that he was severely punished for every mischief that he committed, and for those that he was only falsely accused for, at least according to Crowley. He thought that the punishment wasn't just, because others could get away with misbehaving by acting hypocritically during prayers and sermons.<sup>437</sup> He despised the charity work done by the school, because every Monday the students had to feed and proselytize the paupers from Cambridge's slums. These so called Badger's Meetings were put to an end by Crowley's uncle, Tom, who threatened Champney with the health authorities. As a result Aleister was treated worse than before. After an allegation of sodomy and drinking, he was sentenced to Coventry, meaning that he could not

---

<sup>433</sup> Martin Booth (2000): 3. Lawrence Sutin (2000): 20. Richard Kaczynski (2010): 15. Tobias Churton (2011): 21.

<sup>434</sup> He found no answer to the problem of Jesus' death on Friday and resurrection on Sunday adding up to three days.

<sup>435</sup> Tobias Churton (2011): 24-25. Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 19.

<sup>436</sup> John Symonds ed. (1989): 52.

<sup>437</sup> John Symonds ed. (1989): 60-63.

speak with anyone, had to work during play hours and roam the empty schoolyard during work hours, and receive only bread and water.

During his last year in Erebor he became obsessed with achieving the ultimate sin, but nobody could tell him what exactly this sin was. Nevertheless as an act of revenge on his teachers, mother and Christianity, which he blamed for his misfortune, he decided that he will achieve this ultimate sin, whatever it may be. He fought the battle on a symbolic plane, mainly because he couldn't figure out what the greatest sin was supposed to be. He could have figured it out on his own that this great sin was of course sexual in nature, but he could not imagine that the organ of reproduction had anything to do with any willing act. But he was still accused and punished for something, but he didn't know what he had committed, because he was never faced with the accusations and was only required to confess his sin and repent.<sup>438</sup> He was removed from the school by his uncle, after Champney told him that Aleister was suspected with sodomy and drunkenness. Tom said that the accusations were absurd, and that Champney is a lunatic, which turned out to be true some time later and the school finally ceased working. The ill treatment had a negative effect on both Crowley's mental and physical health. He got accustomed to solitude and became timid. Later in his life as compensation he often aimed to be the center of attention. Physically he was suffering from albuminuria<sup>439</sup>, which prognosed kidney disease and he was not expected to survive until adulthood. As a treatment he was prescribed a diet and a change of country, which led him to Wales and Scotland under various tutors. During this time he took an interest in mountain climbing, which became an important hobby in his life, and he met some of his most important acquaintances during various climbs throughout Europe.

After his health improved Crowley started to attend a day school in Streatham, where he continued his project of sin as an act of rebellion against his mother and Christianity. He started to smoke, masturbate and have sex with women. His reasoning was that he did not hate God or Christianity, but he could not accept the God and Christianity of those that he hated, because the true Christianity was not of hypocrisy and cruelty as he had seen among the Brethren.<sup>440</sup> During his time in Erebor he only had problems with the Brethren, but later he spread his skepticism towards other denominations. Crowley's obsession with sin came to an end when he was sixteen. During the summer he was assigned a tutor, called Archibald Douglas,

---

<sup>438</sup> John Symonds ed. (1989) 69-70. Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 19-20.

<sup>439</sup> White foam in urine. Richard Kaczynski (2010): 21-22. Lawrence Sutin (2000): 27.

<sup>440</sup> John Symonds ed. (1989): 71.

who was more a worldly person than the previous tutors. Douglas showed him a world that Crowley could like. He introduced him to cards, billiards, betting and women, while teaching him how to enjoy them without damaging himself or others.<sup>441</sup> But Crowley may have given away himself to his mother in his letters, so his uncle intervened and removed Douglas. But the short adventure had its effects. Crowley developed his view on sexuality, that it is a physiological need and it should be permitted in any case when it comes from mutual wish, while social, moral, religious and financial restrictions only complicate human relations in unnecessary extent, which causes psychological problems. He maintained this view on sexuality through his whole life. He also developed an interest towards poetry, which became a prominent part of his life, he wrote a great number of poems and also some dramas, but none of them were printed at this time.

### **University and the mystical awakening**

After the troubled school years Crowley passed the entrance examinations to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1895. At first he studied philosophy as part of the Moral Science Tripos, but switch later to English literature. College became a life changing place for Crowley. Before starting his first semester he changed his name from Alexander, which he despised on account that his mother called him on that name, to Aleister, which is the Gaelic equivalent for Alexander. He managed to exempt himself from the compulsory church attendance on account that he was a member of the Plymouth Brethren, whom do not have sermons in the sense of the Church of England. During his first year Crowley became a member of the chess club and played the game on a regular basis and for a short time he was even thinking about pursuing a professional carrier, but he became disillusioned when visiting the Chess Congress in Berlin in 1897, after seeing the masters and vowed to never play a serious game again.<sup>442</sup> He started to read a greater variety of literature, with romantic poetry becoming his favorite, especially of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Richard Francis Burton, which led him to being interested in western esotericism. His most influential friend at this time was Henry Anthony Adamson, who showed him Shelley, and played a major role in the change of curriculum. Generally Crowley was looking more for the worldly pleasures than the spiritual ones, so he did not gave effort to studying esotericism until some important events took place. Worldliness and sin was a way of

---

<sup>441</sup> Kachynski, Richard (2010): 27. Churton, Tobias (2011): 26.

<sup>442</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989) 139.

“cleansing away Christianity”<sup>443</sup>, but contradictory for a short time he was a member of the Celtic Church, a romantic community, which aimed to form a synthesis between the various denominations present in England. Even after his focus switched to the spiritual plane he sought fulfillment in Christian mysticism before turning towards esotericism. Crowley’s literary workings were first printed in Cambridge’s student publications. Later he self-sponsored the printing of his poetry and dramas, some of which garnered him quite positive reviews from critics. Considering the choice of profession Crowley chose the Diplomatic Service, which led to some interesting theories considering his later life. It was proposed that Crowley became affiliated with occultism and especially with the Golden Dawn on governmental orders as part of counter intelligence actions, because as we have seen before the membership of esoteric societies were made up of politically active members.<sup>444</sup> Here we do not plan to investigate whether or not Crowley was a government agent because whatever were his initial motivations, he became affiliated more with the occult that would be required for counter intelligence work, and became an autonomous author on his own rights.

The true change came in 1896, in Stockholm, on New Year’s Eve. Crowley had his first magical awakening, but he did not specify the event, although some believe that it was because this was his first homosexual experience, and that the mystical experience came from his willingness to self-acceptance.<sup>445</sup> The second step towards magic occurred in October 1897, when due to an illness Crowley found himself pondering on mortality and the “*futility of human endeavour*”<sup>446</sup>, realizing that any work, or act in the physical world is subject to change and in the end will be forgotten. He set out to find a plane of activity that was different from the material world, where he could do things that really matter, and he found that plane on a spiritual level. Crowley was still thinking in terms of Christianity about the spiritual world, with the Trinity, the Devil, angels and demons. He also wanted to get a sensible experience of the existence of the spiritual plane. Feeling the need to choose sides between good and evil, he chose the latter, and purchased the *Book of Black Magic and of Pacts*<sup>447</sup>, in which he was greatly disappointed. He thought he will find a heroic Satan in the grimoires, who fought for the free

---

<sup>443</sup> Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 30-33.

<sup>444</sup> see further Spence, Richard B. *Secret Agent 666: Aleister Crowley, British Intelligence and the Occult*. Port Townsend, WA: Feral House. 2008. also Churton, Tobias (2011): 30-31.

<sup>445</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 513. Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 36. Churton, Tobias (2011): 29. Sutin, Lawrence (2000): 38.

<sup>446</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 123.

<sup>447</sup> Waite, Arthur Edward. *Book of Black Magic and of Pacts*. privately printed. 1898.

will of man, but all he found was a petty figure who could achieve small malicious feats. Forfeiting the plan to summon the Devil, Crowley instead wrote to the author of the book, a certain Arthur Edward Waite, because he found a passage that hinted to the existence of an initiatory order called the Hidden Church, which was much like the Celtic Church. He was told to read the *The Cloud upon the Sanctuary* by Karl von Eckartshausen. He became so wrapped up in the idea of attaining spiritual enlightenment, that he ended his friendship with Herbert Charles Pollit, a friendship he described as the purest form of relationship possible between humans.<sup>448</sup> Crowley started to read more on western esotericism, including alchemy and Kabbalah, which he met through the book of Samuel Mathers, who became a prominent figure in the life of Crowley after he joined the Golden Dawn. During the summer of 1898, after he dropped out from Cambridge without any degree, he was in Zermatt, Switzerland, where he met Julian Baker, a chemist and alchemist, who promised to introduce him to a man “*who was a much greater Magician than he was himself*”<sup>449</sup> He set up a meeting between Crowley and George Cecil Jones, who was also a chemist, and a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Shortly after the two met, Jones convinced Crowley that he could gain a lot by joining the Order, where he could further develop his natural ability towards magic. Crowley was initiated into the Order on November 18 1898, and took the name of Frater Perdurabo, “I shall endure to the end”.<sup>450</sup>

### **Member of the Golden Dawn**

Although he was now a member of a group of like-minded individuals, Crowley could not find his place among them. He regarded most of the members as useless in the magical sense. The Order was more like a simple gentleman’s (and women’s) club with a little extra mysticism, than a group of powerful scholars who aspires for the greater good in the spiritual and magical fields. Nevertheless he progressed rapidly in ranks, taking the rank of Zelator in December, Theoricus in January, Practicus in February, after a compulsory pause of three month, the rank of Philosophus in May.<sup>451</sup> He could not move further, because the higher ranks of the Second Order required personal invitation, and due to his rapid progress, unfriendly and

---

<sup>448</sup> Churton, Tobias (2011): 33.

<sup>449</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 171.

<sup>450</sup> Churton, Tobias (2011): 35. Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 61. Sutin, Lawrence (2000): 55.

<sup>451</sup> Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 62-63.



uppity attitude and libertine lifestyle, romantic affairs and his hostile rivalry with W. B. Yeats earned Crowley a bad reputation in the Order. His friendship with Allan Bennet, who was regarded as a formidable mage, and was rather feared than loved, also caused him some discomfort amidst the other members. The problems within the order started after Mathers left London and moved to Paris in 1897, but were contained for two years by Florence Farr, acting head of the London branch<sup>452</sup>. During his stay in London Crowley was tutored by Allan Bennet, and evolved rapidly in the fields of various esoteric practices, but their mutual work came to an end when Bennet had to leave for warmer climate due to his persistent spasmodic asthma. At first Crowley and Jones tried to conjure Buer of the *Goetia*<sup>453</sup>, the spirit responsible for healing, but their experiment produced a totally unexpected result, the form of the apparition was totally different from the one recorded in the *Goetia*, so the duo terminated the summoning before it was complete.<sup>454</sup> In the end Bennet's trip to Ceylon was sponsored unknowingly by Crowley's mistress. During this time Crowley was preparing to conduct the ritual of Abramelin, to summon his Holy Guardian Angel. The ritual was translated by Mathers, and Crowley was authorized with the rights of distribution. To do this he needed a place of complete solitude, so he bought the Boleskine mansion, by the banks of Loch Ness, and moved there in 1899. While he was preparing for the ritual, which took at least half-year, he applied to the Second Order, but to his greatest surprise he was rejected by Florence Farr, the Praemonstrix of the Order, who deemed Crowley unfit for advancement. He visited Mathers in Paris the next year, and on January 16, Mathers personally initiated him into the grade of Adeptus Minor, which was the first grade of the Second Order; known as the *Rosea Rubea et Aurea Crucis*. Crowley took the motto *Christeos Luciftias*, Enochian angelic for "let there be light".<sup>455</sup> He returned to Boleskine and undertook the Oath of the Beginning of the Abramelin rite. But he could not complete it due to various circumstances. For start he couldn't find a proper assistant, then some dark phenomena occurred, like the rampage of the lodge-keeper, that nearly ended with murder, then the schism between Mathers and the rest of the Order broke out in full scale, after Mathers accused Westcott with forgery. It was during the escalation of the conflict that Crowley contacted the Order to acquire some training material fit for his new rank in the Second Order,

---

<sup>452</sup> Regardie, Israel (1983): 17.

<sup>453</sup> Goetia is the magical practice of summoning angels and demons and force them to do various biddings of the mage. The main sources are the *Lesser Key of Solomon* and *The Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*.

<sup>454</sup> Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 70. Crowley, Aleister (1989): 180-181.

<sup>455</sup> Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 64. 73. Churton, Tobias (2011): 54.

but he was refused, and the freshly formed London committee did not accept his initiation by Mathers. Meanwhile Mathers accepted Crowley's offer of apprenticeship, so Crowley left Boleskine for Paris. Working with Mathers Crowley came up with a plan to end the revolt, he returned to London in April, where he tried to contact the loyal members first. He witnessed mysterious fires while traveling, of which he concluded that he was under magical attack.<sup>456</sup> Although Crowley was named Mathers' plenipotentiary his authority was not accepted by the members of the Second Order. Crowley tried to force a meeting where he would get vows of obligation to the Golden Dawn, but his plans were thwarted by the committee, and he and the remaining members who were loyal to Mathers were suspended from the Order. Crowley dragged the issue to court, claiming that some of his property was locked away at the headquarters of the committee and that he was unlawfully restrained from entering the house. He was losing the case, so he withdrew from pressing it further. He was in an uneasy state in London, he could not resolve the revolt in the Order, his initiation into the Second Order was not accepted and he had some legal problems hanging over his head, so in June 1900 Crowley embarked on a long vacation to Mexico.<sup>457</sup>

### **Looking for a road to travel**

During his stay in Mexico Crowley experimented with the magic of John Dee, claiming to successfully complete a ritual of invisibility, which allowed him to stroll around Mexico City in a golden crown and a scarlet robe without attracting any attraction to himself.<sup>458</sup> He also looked into the thirteen Aethyrs, described by John Dee, through a crystal ball, and wrote an account on each of the spheres. He met with Don Jesus de Medina-Sidona, who initiated him into the local Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, conferring to Crowley the highest degree possible. He also created a new magical order, which he named Lamp of Invisible Light, the first initiate being Medina. They set up a perpetual fire, and conducted various rituals involving light. But Crowley's interest waned shortly after the creation, and he abandoned his order.<sup>459</sup> By the end of the year Oscar Eckenstein, a long time mountaineer friend, joined him in Mexico, and warned Crowley that his main problem with magic was the lack of concentration, it was the cause of

---

<sup>456</sup> Churton, Tobias (2011): 58-60.

<sup>457</sup> Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 82.

<sup>458</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 203.

<sup>459</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 201-204. Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 83-85.

his growing dissatisfaction with the outcomes of his experiments in ritual magic and the lack of finding the truth he was searching for, telling Crowley that instead of wasting time on poetry and occultism he should focus more on climbing. He became a mentor, teaching him methods of concentration through visualization. It was during his stay in Mexico that Queen Victoria died, an event that caused Crowley and Eckenstein to shout in joy and burst into dance, because “*To us Queen Victoria was sheer suffocation*”<sup>460</sup> Crowley left Mexico in April 1901, and after a week in San Francisco left for Honolulu. During his travel, and the time spent in Hawaii he read mostly Theosophists. From Hawaii he travelled to Shanghai and Hong Kong, mainly to visit Elaine Simpson, who was his last ally in the Golden Dawn and with whom they used to visit each other on the astral plane. The meeting would provide a chance to check their diaries and conclude whether their experiments were successful. The meeting proved to be a total disappointment for Crowley. Elaine married to a merchant and totally abandoned magic, to the extent that she won a first prize in a fancy dress ball when wearing her adept’s robe and regalia.<sup>461</sup> Crowley left shortly after the meeting embarking for Ceylon to meet his former mentor Allan Bennet. This meeting proved to be beneficial. Bennet was now an aspiring monk under the name of Bhikkhu Ananda Metteya, under the tutelage of Ponnambalam Rámanáthan, also known as Sri Parananda (1851-1930). Under their guidance Crowley received his “*first groundings in mystical theory and practice*”.<sup>462</sup> He studied yogic postures (*asana*), controlled breathing (*pranayama*), mantras, concentration (*dharana*) and meditation, but he could only bear the ascetic lifestyle for two weeks, and left for a week of debauchery, but then decided to further pursue his studies, and reached some successes in reaching higher levels of concentration. After Bennet and Crowley toured much of Ceylon they parted ways, Bennet went to Burma to further pursue illumination, and Crowley went to India to learn more about Hinduism, and to prepare for the planned expedition to climb, with Eckenstein, the Mount Godwin-Austen, known today as K2. But he soon became tired of Hinduism, and was stricken with malaria, so in January 1902 he returned to Bennet, and spent the remaining time until the expedition with learning and poetry. The five members of the expedition, after a painstaking journey to Kashmir, started the ascent in June. They spent 68 days on the mountain, but due to the bad weather conditions they were unable to make a proper try at the summit. Crowley was on his way home, with a brief stop in Egypt and a visit in France, where he met with Mathers,

---

<sup>460</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 216.

<sup>461</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 229.

<sup>462</sup> Crowley, Aleister (1982): 157.

who seemed uninterested in Crowley's oriental adventures, which led Crowley to believe that Mathers lost his connection with the Secret Chiefs and his magical powers.

### **The Book of the Law**

Crowley stayed in Paris, writing poetry with a nihilistic feel, spending his time with Gerald Festus Kelly (1879-1972). Through Kelly he became acquainted with a group of artists, all dining in the Le Chat Blanc, but was fed up with the cliques in Paris he decided to try again the Abramelin ritual, and returned to Boleskine in 1903. Answering the invitation of Kelly, who was visiting his mother, Crowley met with Kelly's sister, Rose Edith Skerrett (1874-1932) and her fiancé. Despite he viewed her as under-educated, he felt pity on the lady, who was already a widow, and on her way into an arranged marriage. Crowley felt the need to intervene and proposed her, on the terms that after the marriage he would return to magic, poetry and climbing and she would be free to do whatever she wanted. Rose said yes, and the couple were declared husband and wife by the sheriff of Dingwall on 12 August 1903.<sup>463</sup> The marriage was not well received by Rose's family, Gerald even tried to punch Crowley, but because it was legal, they eventually had to accept it. The couple travelled to West-Scotland under the pretense of a honeymoon, where the two eventually fell in love with each other. Feeling the need to impress his wife Crowley planned a grandiose honeymoon through Naples, Cairo, Ceylon and China. In Cairo he organized a night for themselves in the King's Chamber of the Great Pyramid of Giza.<sup>464</sup> There he wanted to show off his magical prowess, he recited an invocation from the *Goetia*, the result seemed positive with the sensible apparition of an astral light that glowed in the chamber. Soon after they set out for Ceylon, but instead spent a few months in Galle because Rose felt that she was pregnant. They returned to Cairo in January, and decided to stay there until spring. On 16 March, Crowley tried another magical show-off, by summoning the sylphs, the elemental spirits of the air.<sup>465</sup> The conjuration went on, but Rose started to mutter: "*They are waiting for you.*"<sup>466</sup> At first Crowley didn't pay much attention to this, but the same thing happened during the conjuration the next day and on the third day, while repeating the same

---

<sup>463</sup> Churton, Tobias (2011): 89-90. Kaczynski, Richard (2010) 119-123.

<sup>464</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 371.

<sup>465</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 392. Crowley, Aleister (1991): Chapter VI.

<sup>466</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 392.

conjunction Rose said that: “*He who waits is Horus.*”<sup>467</sup> Knowing that Rose never study or even read Egyptian mythology Crowley’s interest rose and he tried to test her wife with various questions about Horus, both in the field of mythology and occultism, asking about his appearance, moral qualities, weapon, corresponding color and planet etc. and to Crowley’s greatest surprise she answered every question correctly. Finally he took her to the museum and asked her to point out a depiction of Horus. Rose passed numerous instances of Horus, and pointed to a wooden stele, which according to Crowley bore the catalogue number 666.<sup>468</sup>

Having thus affirmed that Rose was indeed mediating Horus he listened to her advice on how to properly invoke the god. He had to conduct an invocation, in the next three days, through which he would meet a messenger and receive further instructions. Success came on the second day, March 20, the day of the equinox, which would also happened to be the day of the Equinox of the Gods, the beginning of a new era.<sup>469</sup> This new era was the third one, the first being marked by nature worshipping religions governed by Isis, the second was the period of patriarchal religions with a dying and resurrecting god, marked by Osiris. The new era would be a glorious period, marked by Horus. Crowley also found out that the revelation was not directly passed on by Horus, but by a messenger named Aiwass or Aiwaz, a name that he was skeptical about, he thought that Rose had made it up from the Arabic word for yes – aiwa – and he could only accept the name after years had passed. For two weeks Crowley studied the stele 666. He met with the curator of the Cairo Museum, Émile Bursch (1842-1930), and received a French translation of the text. Crowley received the new instructions from Rose in a trance on April 7. He had to enter the “temple” and sit by his table in the next three days from noon to one o’clock to receive the revelations. He did so, and apparently he heard a voice, speaking above his left shoulder, dictating the text of what became the *Liber AL vel Legis*.<sup>470</sup> Each day he wrote down one chapter of the book, and completed the book on April 10. The central motif of the text is the Will, given in its greek form, *thelema*. Thelema, with a capital T, was used as the name of the magical, religious and philosophical system developed mostly by Crowley,

---

<sup>467</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 392-393.

<sup>468</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 393. Churton, Tobias (2011): 98. Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 125-126.

<sup>469</sup> Crowley’s ideas of cyclic time draws from ancient religions as well as from his fundamentalist Christian upbringing, where dispensationalism was a basic theory. see Bogdan, Henrik. “Envisioning the Birth of a New Aeon: Dispensationalism and Millenarism in the Thelemic Tradition” in Bogdan, Henrik, Martin P. Starr (2012): 89-107.

<sup>470</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 394. Crowley, Aleister (1983): VI. Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 127-129. Sutin, Lawrence (2000): 122-125.

with the contributions of his fellow magicians and disciples. Discovering one's true Will should be the main goal of life, and after the discovery, pursuing it with the exclusion of everything else, and so creating a world without conflicts. The way by which the Will can be discovered is magic. After the book received some final touches from Crowley and Rose, which will be addressed later, it was ready to be spread. During his whole life Crowley claimed no authorship over the *Liber*, in fact pointing out multiple times that was entirely dictated to him, he was only a mechanical assistant in the process.<sup>471</sup> Writing to Gerald Yorke in 1944 he states that: "*It is the only known document which carries in itself proof that its author belongs to a totally different Order of Being: he sees things from a point beyond our conception.*"<sup>472</sup> Although he felt joy over the revelations he received he did not know what to do with them further. He sent out a few typescripts with a small note announcing the dawn of a new age, but did nothing to further the case of the spread of the book.

After they returned to Boleskine in anticipation of the future newborn, Crowley sent a copy of the *Liber AL* to Mathers, accompanied by a letter that explained that the Secret Chiefs chose Crowley as their new representative, and the head of the Golden Dawn. Mathers did not reply and Crowley was certain that the misfortunate events, the death of the hunting dogs, Rose being assaulted by a servant, were the effects of Mathers' attack with black magic. As a counter measure Crowley summoned Beelzebuub for protection, an event which caused Mathers to demand a formal apology and again expelled Crowley from the Golden Dawn. Meanwhile Crowley founded a publishing company to self-manage his books, and named it the Society for the Propagation of Religious Truth in 1904. His daughter was born on July 28, and Crowley named her Nuit Ma Ahathoor Hecate Sappho Jezebel Lilith. For a brief period Crowley abandoned magic to be a father. He dedicated his time to his family and to poetry. In 1906 Crowley set out for an expedition to climb Kangchenjunga, but it came to an end when part of the team rebelled against Crowley, and started to descend at night, which led to the death of Alexis Pache and several porters. After the gloomy expedition, he was awaiting for the arrival of Rose and the child. But before they arrived to Calcutta, where Crowley was waiting, on October 28 a holiday festival took place, he went to the bazar to enjoy the fireworks. A couple of thugs tried to mug him in an alley, and he shot at them, and fled the scene.<sup>473</sup> A reward was

---

<sup>471</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 395. It was argued by Israel Regardie and others that Aiwass was the expression of Crowley's subconscious. see Regardie, Israel (1982): 473-494.

<sup>472</sup> Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 129.

<sup>473</sup> Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 151-152.

posted for any information on the gunmen who shot the thugs, so he needed to flee the country, so after the arrival of Rose, the Crowley family decided to tour Southern China on their way to Hong Kong. As an effect of the unfortunate climb, another loss of faith in the world eloped over him, much like the one in Cambridge. On their way to Tengyueh his pony reared and they both fell from a cliff. Having survived the fall without a scratch he realized that his life was spared for a greater purpose. He self initiated himself into the highest rank of the Golden Dawn, the Exempt Adept, and decided to resume practicing magic, with the intention of conducting a proper magical retirement. He wrote in his letter to Clifford Bax that “*it is one thing to devote your life to magic at 20 years old, and another to find at 30 that you are bound to stay a Magus. The first is the folly of a child; the second, the Gate of the Sanctuary*”<sup>474</sup> Crowley planned to visit Elaine Simpson in Shanghai, but for this he had to cast off Rose and the child to return home alone. Much to Crowley’s surprise and against his hope, Elaine was the first reader of *The Book of the Law*, who accepted it as a prophetic revelation. Together they tried to summon Aiwass who revealed to Crowley that he should continue doing magic, return to Egypt and to devote himself to his cult. On his way to America, when Crowley stopped in Japan he received a vision, where the Secret Chiefs, in the form of the Egyptian gods, welcomed him amongst them, and into the Order of the Silver Star, the highest order of the Golden Dawn, previously unavailable to mortal beings. After these experiences he began to work on a commentary to *The Book of Law*. After an unsuccessful attempt to form a team for a second expedition to Kangchenjunga, Crowley finally returned to England on 2 June 1906, and received the shocking news, that her daughter, Lilith has died of typhoid in Rangoon.<sup>475</sup> He also discovered that Rose became an alcoholic, so he blamed Lilith’s death on alcohol, removing the blame for himself for abandoning his wife and child. He was treated for a series of illnesses, gave up with the invocations he performed every day for the last four months and fell into depression, until his former mentor, George Cecil Jones arrived, with whom he discussed magic, and began to work together, and in July they started to think about the foundation of a new magical order.

Crowley and Jones kept working together, and devised a new rite of initiation, based on the ritual of the Golden Dawn, which they tested on 9 October 1907.<sup>476</sup> The new rite proved to

---

<sup>474</sup> Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 150.

<sup>475</sup> Churton, Tobias (2011): 121.

<sup>476</sup> Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 157-158. Sutin, Lawrence (2000): 173-174

be working great, because Crowley experienced *samadhi*<sup>477</sup>, union with the godhead, and after six failed attempts he was finally able to succeed with the Abramelin ritual. Due to Rose's alcoholism and the fragile physical state of their newborn daughter Lola, Crowley's personal life was crumbling, so he experienced the Ordeal of the Abyss, a *rite de passage* that destroys a magician's ego, by taking away everything he held dear. Crowley felt that this was the effect of his early oaths and another signs of him being a chosen, so eventually he came to accept the unfortunate events that took place, and resolved to keep working on the magical path he had chosen. This experience shed new light on the death of Lilith, it was a warning message from the gods, because he became much too attached to the girl, and Rose had failed as a proper magical partner. After a consultation with Jones, he told Crowley that he received a new level of initiation, a rank that was previously thought to be unreachable for corporeal beings, and thus he was the Master of the Temple, a title that he had refused first, but after a few months accepted it, and took the new motto of *Vi Veri Vuniversum Vivus Vici*.<sup>478</sup> With his new title he had a new obligation, to found a new temple. While on the look-out for disciples Crowley put more effort to keep in contact with his Holy Guardian Angel, whom he realized to be Aiwass, and through automatic writing received another book, titled *Liber VII* on October 30, then in November the *Liber Cordis Cincti Serpente*, both books, together with *The Book of the Law* would become central works of the Thelema. On 15 November 1907, Crowley, Jones and John Frederic Charles Fuller, who wrote a praising essay about the poetry of Crowley and became friends with him after, formed the governing triad of the new order, the A∴ A∴,<sup>479</sup> the *Argentum Astrum* or the Silver Star, an order that would act as a successor to the Golden Dawn. In the times to follow Crowley kept writing down the messages of Aiwass, which he received trough automatic writing, whenever he pleased. These books were incorporated into the Thelemic Holy Books, and served as a basis for the workings of the A∴ A∴. After nearly two years of preparation the *Argentum Astrum* was ready for publicity, Crowley released the table of correspondences under the title 777, then, on the spring equinox of 1909 he published the first issue of the *Equinox*, the

---

<sup>477</sup> Samadhi is a sanskrit word used in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Yoga to identify a higher lever of meditation, when the consciousness of the subject becomes one with the object.

<sup>478</sup> Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 172.

<sup>479</sup> The origin of the symbol is uncertain, as well as the proper name of the order. The most widely accepted version is that the A∴ A∴ is an acronym for *Argentum Astrum*, but there are also other variations, *Arcanum Arcanorum*, *Astron Argiron*, *Arik Anpin*, *Angel and Abyss*, *Atlantean Adepts* to name a few. Crowley never used the full name when writing about the order.



official biannual journal of the order.<sup>480</sup> With this the A∴ A∴ started to attract students, and one of these students, Kenneth Martin Ward, led to the rediscovery of the *Liber AL vel Legis*. Ward paid a visit to Crowley at Boleskine during the summer of 1909, and when the two were talking about the next issues of the Equinox, which would feature an explanation on John Dee's Enochian magic, and sports. Ward wanted to learn to ski, but had no equipment. Crowley promised to lend Ward his spare skis, and show him the Enochian tablets, but forgot where he put either of the two. Searching through old papers he found a familiar yet nearly forgotten manuscript, the original *The Book of the Law*.<sup>481</sup> He previously thought, that the original was lost, and was using a typescript, when needed, he now turned his attention back towards the *Liber*, and started to work on a commentary. After five years of its writing this accidental event affirmed the position of *The Book of the Law* as the central holy text of Thelema, with the rest of the holy books being supplements to the Law. It was only at the point of the foundation of the Silver Star that Crowley finally accepted *The Book of the Law* as the basis on which he could build his own religion, and over the course of the years to follow he continuously worked with it and used it to formulate the rituals of the Silver Star and when he held the leadership of the Ordo Templi Orientis (1912-1947) to reform that order to a fusion of Thelema and sexual magic.

---

<sup>480</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 593-594. Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 183-184. Churton, Tobias (2011): 144.

<sup>481</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 595.

*Liber AL vel Legis***Functions of the text**

According to Crowley, in 1904 when the *Book of the Law* was written down he did not realize the potentials of its contents. He merely automatically wrote down everything he heard, while not paying much heed to the orders the book told him to do, nor did he claim authorship of any of the text. But if we set aside Crowley's testimony of the events, and suppose that Crowley was indeed the author and editor of the *Liber AL*, questions arise concerning the function of the text and the function of the claims of it being dictated by a higher being. Let us review the context of the Cairo workings. During his time in the Golden Dawn Crowley unsuccessfully tried to be initiated into the Second Order, he was rejected by Farr, when he applied, and he was rejected again by the Isis-Urania branch after he was personally initiated by Mathers. Although the order expelled Crowley after the schism, where he sided with Mathers, he still thought of himself as a mage, who was working with the same rituals, under the guidance of the same Secret Chiefs, and while *de iure* not a member of the Order, he was a *de facto* member in the eyes of the Secret Chiefs. In 1902 Farr left the Golden Dawn, as the last member who was in direct contact with one of the Secret Chiefs, through the mummy of Mutemmenu. Crowley was also disappointed with Mathers and claimed that he was no longer able to speak with the Secret Chiefs. With both leaders out of the picture Crowley saw himself as the ideal candidate for the leadership of the Golden Dawn, whether it meant a formal material leadership, or a metaphysical rule, which meant that he would be connected to the Secret Chiefs, one of the main goal of the Golden Dawn. It is more likely that Crowley was aspiring for the spiritual leadership of the Order, to achieve a personal connection to those that he regarded as the highest authorities, possibly become a member of them, and through this method acquire the perfect understanding of magic and the universe. If this meant that he were to take up formal leadership of the Golden Dawn, it would be an acceptable burden. Another factor could be that because he was not accepted into the Second Order, he wanted to "beat" them, by achieving something that even the highest ranking members of the Order were unable to reach.<sup>482</sup> To prove this he needed an authority that legitimized him and his workings. He was aware that Mathers and Farr both used the artifacts stored in the British Museum as conduits for magical and spiritual practices, and of course he was well known about the many Egyptian elements and

---

<sup>482</sup> Tully, Caroline (2010): 36.

symbols that were used in the Golden Dawn rituals. Thus to properly validate himself he had to seek higher powers than the antiquities in the British Museum, he had to travel to the original source of magic, where he could establish direct contact with the gods.

Crowley was well aware that no matter how well he would present the story of a revelation, he would not be welcomed back into the Golden Dawn. In that case he had to find a way to break away from the oath that he swore. During his whole life there was only a short period when he doubted the efficiency of magic, but never the esoteric cosmology of the Golden Dawn. A new goal was proposed with the *Liber AL* heralding the dawn of a new aeon, a time period of circa two millennia. The arrival of the Equinox of the Gods signaled the beginning of a new era, with a different ruling god, and with that a shift in mindsets and methodology of magic. The prophet of this new era was Crowley himself and one of his first duties was to clear the road for a new universal religion, by destroying the Golden Dawn, which he could achieve through the publication of its rituals. But to do this he was exempted under the oath of secrecy that he swore when he joined the Order. He did this from 1909 to 1913 when he profaned the Golden Dawn by publishing its secret rituals and materials in the *Equinox*. Although the text instructed Crowley to “*take the Stele of Revealing from the museum, fortify his own island and translate the book into all of the world’s languages*”<sup>483</sup> he obviously failed in doing this at least in the physical sense of the statement. On a spiritual sense, after 1909 he devoted his life to fulfill the duties of the prophet of the new aeon, despite bankruptcy, negative media attention to his writings and lifestyle, controversies in the Ordo Templi Orientis over the Thelemic elements introduced by him; but he succeeded in spreading the ideas underlying Thelema, as it is apparent from its influence on New Age movements, popular culture and rock music. One final note must be said about the *Liber AL* considering the editions. After Crowley wrote the book in manuscript he created a typescript version which was used by him until the rediscovery of the original manuscript in 1909. He showed the text to Mathers and some of his friends but did not start to spread its message. Crowley mainly used the *Liber AL* for personal working. He published the book in 1925 in Tunis, but only eleven copies were printed, which were used internally. While he pondered on the contents of the book and explained a lot of its teachings in the *Equinox* the text itself was reserved for those who were initiated into the Silver Star. In 1938 the Ordo Templi Orientis privately issued the book to be printed, but the exact number of copies is unknown. These copies were also used internally by the O.T.O and it was only forty years after Crowley’s death that the *Book of the Law* was first published for the greater audience

---

<sup>483</sup> Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 129.

in 1987 by Weiser Books, based on the edition that was published in 1983 in the *Equinox*. It was after this publication that the *Liber AL* received some interest from occultists outside the Ordo Templi Orientis.

### **The Stele of Revealing**

While writing and editing the *Libel AL vel Legis* Aleister Crowley drew from various sources, some of which he learned while he was a member of the Golden Dawn, others he picked up during his travels to the Far-East, but only one of the sources is explicitly mentioned in his account about the writing of *The Book of the Law*. This source was the stele, under the catalogue number 666, known as the Stele of Ankh-ef-en-Khonus or the Stele of Revealing. It is a double sided, wooden stele, dating to around 716 BC, and was made for a priest of Montu, Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu I., in Theba. It was found in 1858, at Deyr al-Bahri, at the mortuary temple of Hatshepsut, by Francois Mariette, and was exhibited in the Bulaq museum until 1902, when it was transported to the Egyptian Museum of Cairo, where in was catalogued with the inventory number A 9422.<sup>484</sup>

The stele's measurements are 51.5 cm height and 31 cm width and both sides are painted. On the front side there is an image depicting the priest standing before Re-Horakhty, under a winged disk and the goddess Nut, with fourteen lines of text. The image shows Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu presenting offerings to the god, who sits on his throne of the left side of the picture, with the symbols of the land of the dead behind him. The text identifies the priest as an Osiris, dead, and the solar god, and praises him in his forms of Ra, Atum and Kephra, and also praises Hathor, the Mistress of the West.<sup>485</sup> On the back of the stele there are twelve lines from the *Book of the Dead*, Spell 30A, *Spell for not letting N's Heart Create Opposition against Him in the Realm of the Dead*, and Spell 2, *Spell for Coming Forth by Day and Living After Death*.

The image shows three deities: Nut, the goddess of the sky, Re-Horakhty and again Re-Horakhty represented in the form of the winged disk, the Behedeti. Re-Horakhty was a merged god of Ra and Horus. The name's meaning is "Ra who is Horus of the Horizons"<sup>486</sup> and depicted the aspect of the rising sun and which made him a symbol of rebirth. Crowley was more inspired

---

<sup>484</sup> Sheikholeslami, Cynthia May. "The burials of the priests of Montu at Deir el-Bahri in Theban necropolis" in Strudwick, Nigel C, Taylor, John H ed. (2003): 131-137.

<sup>485</sup> Zayed, Abd el Hamid (1968): 149-152.

<sup>486</sup> Shafer, Byron E. (1991): 111.

by the imagery of the stele, than the inscriptions, the three actors of the *Liber AL* were inspired by the visual representations of the Egyptian gods. The original intention of the hieroglyphic text was to secure the travel into the underworld for Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu, which was completely ignored by Crowley, and was reinterpreted as a means of formulating a “*new link between the solar-spiritual force and mankind.*”<sup>487</sup> Because Crowley’s aim was far from a scientific study, he had the freedom to interpret the inscription as he liked, and he further emphasized his authority when he communicated that the original writer, Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu, was he himself in a previous incarnation and he wrote the text as an Egyptian to the future British Crowley as a message.<sup>488</sup> This new interpretation gave new life to the stele. Before it was a funerary object of a priest, after it became a central element, a “totem”, in the Thelema. The ritual that became the central rite of the Ordo Templi Orientis, the *Gnostic Mass*<sup>489</sup>, features excerpts from the *Book of the Law*, and on the high altar there is a reproduction of the Stele of Revealing. Also Crowley’s revision of an Egyptian artifact, the fusion of imagery with an altogether new meaning, further strengthened the idea that remnants of ancient or exotic civilizations could bear a different, more holistic and mystical meaning than that of the interpretation of scholars or the original intentions of its creators. Crowley was not interested in Egyptian religion, culture or art as a scholar, he was more interested in finding a source of authority that legitimized his new philosophy and religion, and Egypt by antiquity and associated spiritual power provided him with spiritual credibility that sanctioned him as the prophet of a new aeon. This thought pattern that ancient texts and artifacts is one of the central aspects of modern esoteric schools, but it is important to note that the idea does not originate from Crowley, he merely used the method of acquiring legitimacy from a claimed ancient source to strengthen the contents of his work.

### **The structure of the *Book of the Law***

The *Liber AL vel Legis, sub figura CCXX, as delivered by XCIII=418 to DCLXVI* consists of 220 paragraphs written in prose, with some contain verse paraphrases inserted. It is divided into three chapters, marked by the speaker who relates the contents of each chapter. Depending on edition the text is accompanied by one or more of the commentaries that Crowley

---

<sup>487</sup> Tully, Caroline (2010): 43

<sup>488</sup> Crowley, Aleister (1991): 126.

<sup>489</sup> Hymanaeus Beta ed. *Magick: Book IV, Parts I-IV by Aleister Crowley*. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser. 1997.

wrote to ease the understanding of the text. The length of the paragraphs varies widely from simple sentences to longer units.

Each chapter is told by a different speaker, a reinterpretation of the gods found on the Stele of Revealing. In the first chapter the speaker is Nuit.<sup>490</sup> The name is an allusion on the goddess Nut and the French word for night (*nuit*) and was inspired by Nut's depiction of the Stele. In Crowley's interpretation Nuit is "All that exists and the condition of that existence" and she is described as a goddess of love rather than a *magna mater* deity. She promotes sexual ecstasy in the physical plane, because it mirrors the greater ecstasy that is felt after death in the union with the goddess. Nuit is described as a positive force who stand for the idea that life should be enjoyed and death shall not be feared. The second chapter is told by Hadit, who is based on the winged sun-disk, a type of depiction symbolizing Horus, image of the Stele. Hadit is the complement of Nuit, the fixed point and individual in the infinite universe of the goddess. He is represented by the Sun that is one star among the countless others in the cosmos and he is the life force inside all living being. In the third chapter the speaker is Heru-ra-ha, Re-Horakhty, the god of war and vengeance, who represents the focused will that is required to achieve the goals of life. As a composite deity of the passive Hoor-Par-Kraat and the active Ra-Hoor-Khuit he is a symbol of the union between conflicting opposites that is the goal of the human life and when achieved it confers a life without conflicts. The speakers of each chapter will be addressed in detail below.

At the end of the *Book of the Law* there is a short comment, which remained throughout the various editions, and was later expanded further, but the message remained the same. It warns the reader that the study of the book is dangerous, and it should be destroyed after the first reading. The comment paraphrases the main intention of the *Liber AL*, giving a new law for the new aeon that is: "*There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt. Love is the law, love under will.*" This message served as the basic principle for the religion of Thelema. It caused numerous controversies concerning the morality of Crowley's teachings and led to him being associated with Satanism. In different interpretations the message found its way into neo-paganism, modern witchcraft and other forms of New Age religions.<sup>491</sup>

---

<sup>490</sup> in the French translation her name is given as Nout, Hadit's name is spelled Houdit, based on Crowley's rendering of the names in the prose translation of the Stele of Revealing, and was later changed in the process of versification

<sup>491</sup> For example the main law of magic in Wicca is „Do what thou wilt, but do not harm.”

After the completion of the manuscript Crowley made some smaller changes to the text before it was printed. He introduced verse stanzas into some paragraphs (I. 14. II.17. III. 37. III.38.) based on his own poetic paraphrases of the texts of the Stele of Revealing. He also made slight changes in some paragraphs to facilitate understanding, or correct spelling errors.<sup>492</sup> Most of these changes are of no interest to our present field of study.

### **Thelemic gods and their Egyptian counterparts**

Throughout the *Book of the Law* there are multiple elements that were inspired by Ancient Egyptian religion. There are three key actors in the book that can easily be identified as gods of the Egyptian pantheon. However the similarities are mostly exterior, the names, attributes and representations may be similar, but in Crowley's interpretation they gain new meanings that were alien from Egyptian religion. Below we examine the three gods from Crowley's perspective in contrast with their original form and inspect whether Crowley based his depiction of the gods on scholarly sources or only borrowed the names to give authority to the ideas that they explain in the *Liber AL*.<sup>493</sup>

The first goddess to appear in the *Book of the Law* is Nuit – Nut. Nut is probably one of the oldest deities, the goddess of sky and since the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts she was the granddaughter of the creator god, namely Atum. There are a series of Pyramid and Coffin Texts dedicated to Nut. In Spell 548 she is depicted as a long horned cow who suckles the pharaoh.<sup>494</sup> In the Pyramid Texts of Teti there are recitations by Nut, who appears as a mother goddess, who is the mother of Isis and Nephthys and the mother of the pharaoh, Teti.<sup>495</sup> The mother function is a principal element of Nut, mainly as the mother of Osiris, and as the sky she protects the Sun, and re-creates Ra daily. Nut had no cult center. Although she was often associated with the celestial cow, she was most often depicted in anthropomorphic form, as a naked female, whose body arches over the earth, sustains the stars, and gives birth to the sun each day and

---

<sup>492</sup> I. 26. was changed to the shorter, simpler form to facilitate its understanding, I. 60. was filled by Rose, because Crowley did not hear the sentence and could only write its first half, as was III. 72. There were also some spelling changes in the names in chapter III. particularly with the spelling of Ra-Hoor-Khuit.

<sup>493</sup> Although Thelema treats them as members of the Secret Chiefs and not as gods, for the sake of easier understanding we refer to them as gods and goddesses. In Crowley's philosophy the Secret Chiefs are embodiments of certain forces, who oversee the universe, and in essence they are all the same being, with multiple aspects.

<sup>494</sup> Shafer, Byron E. (1991): 118.

<sup>495</sup> Allen, James P. ed. (2005): 67.

swallows it each night.<sup>496</sup> Through her place in the rebirth of the sun she was given a role in funerary rites, with coffins and burial chambers being personified as Nut.<sup>497</sup> In the Ptolemaic period she was associated with Hathor in the temple of Dendera. Hathor was the goddess responsible, among other functions, for love, sex and fertility.<sup>498</sup> In theory Crowley could know about this connection between Nut and Hathor, but it is more likely that he did not care about the original goddess found on the Stele of Revealing and instead used the only female figure to personify his idea of a lover goddess. Parallel to the mother aspect of Nut, Nuit first emerges as the mother of all human in the *Liber AL*. (I. 15.) But this is just the secondary aspect of Nuit, first and foremost she is a lover. I. 14. emphasizes her nakedness, and the arching stature of Nut is explained as a “*bend in ecstasy*”. She is the Infinite Space and Infinite Stars, so everything is part of Nuit, while stressing the principle of “*As above so below*”. Nuit chose Crowley, who is identified with Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu, to be her prophet and gather her children and teach them how to worship Nuit, as “*warrior lord of Thebes.*”<sup>499</sup> The worship of Nuit is in every part different from the worship of Nut. Nuit requires only one thing, love that gives the followers joy that is greater than the mundane joy experienced by those that do not follow Nuit. In I. 39. Nuit reveals that the “*word of the Law is Θελημα*”, that is “*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law*”.<sup>500</sup> Nuit requires from her followers to live in luxury and satisfy their love, when, where and with whom they want, “*But always unto me*”<sup>501</sup> In I. 57. stands the expansion of thelema, that “*Love is the law, love under will*”, which identifies love as a magical method for fulfilling the Will, and is in accord with tantric practices of the awakening of the *Kundalini*.<sup>502</sup> If one fulfills the demands of love, he is rewarded with joy, ecstasy and certainty of love from the goddess. These ideas postulate Crowley’s later affiliation with sex magic. Other forms of

---

<sup>496</sup> Shafer, Byron E. (1991): 119.

<sup>497</sup> Allen, James P. ed. (2005). 67-68.

<sup>498</sup> Traunecker, Claude. (1992): 44.

<sup>499</sup> I. 5. also I. 10. orders that the few followers of Thelema shall rule above the many others

<sup>500</sup> Thelema appears in the Septuaginta, as the word for the will of God, also in the New Testament, for example the Lord’s prayer. In the novels *Gargantua* and *Pantagruelle* by François Rabelais, the french form Thélème is the name of an abbey, where the only rule is „*Fais ce que tu veux*”. This abbey is a literary device, a utopia, which serves as a satirical way to ridicule Rabelais’ contemporaries. The monks of they abbey are inherently honorable because they are not obstructed in the fulfillment of their needs and wills.

<sup>501</sup> Crowley, Aleister (1987): I. 57.

<sup>502</sup> For further elaborations of Crowley’s connection with Tantra see: Djurdjevic, Gordan. “The Great Beast as a Tantric Hero: The Role of Yoga and Tantra in Aleister Crowley’s Magick” in Bogdan, Henrik, Martin P. Starr ed. (2012): 136. and Urban, Hugh (2003).



devotion require incense, food and drink and of course love. Nuit's color is blue and gold, much like the depictions of Nut as the night sky. It is evident that Crowley's rendering of the image of Nut found on the Stele of Revealing, in the form of Nuit, shares only a few elements with the Egyptian goddess. These similarities are mainly the aspects of representations, like the color blue and azure (I.19, 60, 64), the arching stature and naked female form (I. 14), the stars (I. 60). Thus we can affirm that Crowley was more interested in giving a source of credibility to his own ideas by connecting them with a representation of an Egyptian goddess, than giving an accurate representation of Nut. In the process of legitimizing his ideas Crowley created a new goddess, who shared some similarities with the Egyptian Nut, but in essence served a different goal. Nuit is a simple goddess, who personifies the unity of the universe and the force that unites everything in it, love. Contrary Nut was a complex deity, with changing forms of representation, attributes and functions who held a central place in the pantheon of the ancient Egyptians and took an important place in the funerary rituals from the Old Kingdom period until the Ptolemaids.

The second god found on the Stele, Behdet or Behdety is a representation of Horus. Originally Behdety was a deity of the town Behedet, but became associated with Horus as Horus of Behedet, as early as the step pyramid of Djoser, as the god of the midday sun, and was the main aspect of Horus used at the Temple of Edfu.<sup>503</sup> Horus is one of the most well known Egyptian deities as a god of vengeance and war and the protector of kingship. His most well known mythological story is the war between Horus and Seth, as Horus takes vengeance on Seth, for murdering his father, Osiris. Horus in his aspect of sun god appeared on the Stele, because at the time of its creation reaching union with the sun god after death was no longer a privilege of royalty. Crowley undoubtedly knew the story of the conflict between Seth and Horus, and possibly knew more about Horus than Nut, but in the *Liber AL* he seems to disregard his knowledge and again created a different deity, fit for his message. The Greek equivalent of Horus of Behdet was Haidith, which Crowley shortened to Hadit or sometimes Had. Hadit is the speaker of the second chapter of the *Liber AL*. He appears as the center of everything, the center of the circle, the flame that burns in the center of the star, and the core of every person. This way Crowley promoted that God cannot be found as an external force, but as an internal part of every human. His consort is Nuit, which could propose an interesting problem, namely that Nuit is more similar to Hathor, and in Edfu, the main temple of Horus, the wife of Horus

---

<sup>503</sup> Traunecker, Claude. (1992): 81.

is Hathor.<sup>504</sup> This coincidence seems to be an effect of Crowley's knowledge about the Horus myth, and not his attempt to stay true to the Edfu theology. Hadit appears as a ruthless god, who casts away those that are in sorrow of pain and regret (II. 17.), because a god can only live in the mighty. He identifies himself with the snake of the Genesis (II. 22.) and requires the worshipper to drink alcohol and take drugs. Hadit also speaks out against Reason, because reasoning cripples the working of the Will. He orders certain feasts to be held, one for Crowley and his wife, another for the *Book of the Law*, and another one for Thoth, spelled Tahuti in II. 39. and various other feasts. As a conqueror he despises all who are consoled, sorry or fearful, and proclaims that there is no change, those who are Kings will remain so and those who are slaves will remain slaves forever (II. 58.). Similarities between Horus represented in his Behdet form, and Hadit depicted in the *Liber AL* are scarce. The image of the winged disk served as an inspiration for Hadit to be a personification of the central point, but that is the only connection between the Egyptian deity and his Thelemic counterpart. His attributes links him more to the concept of *atman* in Hinduism, or the *Kundalini* in yoga.

The speaker of the third chapter of the *Book of the Law* is Heru-ra-ha. Based on Re-Horakhty, "*Re who is Horus of the two Horizons*"<sup>505</sup>. Re-Horakhty first appeared in the twenty-first dynasty, as a deity of the kingdom, rebirth and hope. Usually he is depicted as a king, with the royal insignias, which signifies that the pharaoh rules the land as the embodiment of Re and Horus. Crowley's interpretation of Re-Horakhty bears some of the attributes associated with the Egyptian deity. Heru-ra-ha is a composite god, made up of two parts. The first aspect is the active force, Ra-Hoor-Khuit, who in III. 3. is identified as the god of war and vengeance, who orders the prophet to conquer without arguments. He orders Crowley to take the Stele of Revealing and use it as an object of worship. Ra-Hoor-Khuit is the first Thelemic god who desires blood sacrifice. Paragraph III. 12. led to the claims of child sacrifice, which caused Crowley and his commune to be banned and deported from Italy in 1923.<sup>506</sup> Ra-Hoor-Khuit also gives Crowley a set of ritual instructions on how to organize the images inside the temple, and a magical ritual, which involves the mixing of meat, honey, oils and blood, preferably menstruation blood. The product then can be used to various goals, gaining strength, lust or slaying enemies. Paragraph III. 37. contains a short hymn to Ra-Hoor-Khuit given into the mouth of Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu, which is an artistic representation of the image of the Stele of

---

<sup>504</sup> Shafer, Byron E. ed. (1991): 41.

<sup>505</sup> Shafer, Byron E. ed. (1991): 111.

<sup>506</sup> Churton, Tobias (2011): 263-264. Kaczynski, Richard (2010): 396-397.

Revealing. While the setting is imagined as the priest standing before the god and exalting him, the contents of the hymn have little to do with the text of the Stele. Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu was a priest of Montu in Thebes, which Crowley knew from the Stele, but rendered his functions as priest differently. The title on the Stele describes Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu as “*Opener of the Door-leaves of Heaven in the Most Select of Places*”, and affirms that he is “*True of Voice*”. Crowley mixed up the priestly function with the confession of speaking truth and in the hymn in III. 37. gives Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu the title of “*forth-speaker of Mentu*”. The next paragraph contains a verse paraphrase based loosely on the text of the Stele of Revealing. The poem is inspired by the text on the front of the Stele, but conveys a different message. In the original Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu prays for a safe travel to the Underworld, to the place where Re, Atum, Khepri and Hathor dwells. In Crowley’s rendering he asks that he could be in the House of the gods, in their light, while he mentions the Egyptian gods with slightly modified names, Ra, Tum, Kephra and Ahathoor. The second verse also mentions the genealogy found on the Stele, that Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu was the son of Bes-en-Mut from the house of Ta-Nech. Ra-Hoor-Khuit also orders Crowley to accept anyone who seeks to be initiated in III. 42. Paragraphs III. 51-55 contains the denouncing of traditional religions. Ra-Hoor-Khuit pecks out the eyes of Jesus, blinds Mohammad, tear out the flesh of the Hindi, Buddhist and Mongolian, which implies that eventually Crowley was disappointed in every religion he tried to follow for a brief period, mainly because these religions promoted restriction in some ways, either in eating, manners or sexual habits, which Crowley found repulsing. Crowley thought that control over sexuality was one the main reasons behind the general wickedness of his contemporaries, saying that: “*As long as sexual relations are complicated by religious, social and financial considerations, so long will they cause all kinds of cowardly, dishonorable and disgusting behavior.*”<sup>507</sup> The second aspect of Heru-ha is Hoor-paar-kraat, a spelling based on the Hellenistic god Harpocrates, the child Horus, god of silence. He is only referenced briefly in III. 70. Finally as we have mentioned before, after the end of the third chapter is the Comment, and the book is signed by Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu.

When Crowley writes about her wife, Rose, he says that “*she knew less Egyptology than 99 Cairene tourists out of 100.*”<sup>508</sup> Judging from the *Liber AL* nearly the same could be said about Crowley himself. But there is an important distinction between Crowley and Rose. Rose knew nothing about Egypt because she was not interested, whereas Crowley did so with

---

<sup>507</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 79.

<sup>508</sup> Symonds, John ed. (1989): 393.

purpose. He had a general idea about the religion, culture and history of Egypt, and a greater knowledge of the hermetically filtered mystical Egypt. When he wrote the *Book of the Law* Crowley disregarded this knowledge to make way for his own ideas. On the other hand he employed a narrative that was close to that used by the Golden Dawn. His aim was twofold. He wanted to create a new religion, to spread his ideas about morality, self-conduct and ideal society, to act as the prophet of a new era. He also prepared for the possibility of regaining status in the Golden Dawn, or even ascending it and becoming the acting leader of the Order as the only person who is in direct contact with the Secret Chiefs as it is evident from the *Liber AL*. The Egyptian scenery he employed serves as a power source. When he claimed to be in contact with Egyptian deities Crowley gave his words the greatest source of authority that was imaginable in Western esoteric tradition. To achieve this credibility he did not need to be accurate in an egyptological sense, because it was not required by the audience that the *Book of the Law* was aimed at. The common view of Egypt by the esoteric societies was that Egyptology proposes a valid reading, but only a profane one, while there is another hidden meaning in the texts, artifacts and images that can be accessed by symbolism, numerology and divination. Thus Crowley paid little attention to be scientifically accurate and employed the Egyptian gods and the Stele of Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu as a source of legitimacy. He also employed other different methods to legitimize his ideas and to convey hidden messages, for example Kabbalah, mainly the Greek version not the original Hebrew, symbolism based on the Tarot cards and other elements that mirrored the rituals of the Golden Dawn.

### **Other Egyptian elements in the *Book of the Law***

The most obvious allusions to ancient Egyptian religion in the *Liber AL* are the deities, loosely inspired by Egyptian gods, who give strength to Crowley's message. Besides the gods, there are also some other pseudo-Egyptian elements of the text.

The first element is the poetic rendering of the texts of the Stele of Revealing, which was published together with the *Book of Law*. As we have seen before the original text of the Stele is a funerary offering table, intended to aid the deceased Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu in his travel to the Underworld. The main inscription on the front side of the Stele is the following:

*“To be said by the Osiris, the prophet of Montu, Lord of Thebes, opener of the doors of the sky in Ipet-iswt, Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu, justified: “O High one, may he be adored great of power, soul great of dignity, who places his terror in the gods, the one appearing on his great throne, make pathways for (my) soul, (my) spirit and (my) shadow, for I am equipped, (I am)*

*equipped spirit, make way for me to the place in which Re, Atum, Khepri and Hathor are, the Osiris, the prophet of Montu, lord of Thebes, Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu, justified, son of the one (with) the same title Bes-en-Mut, born by the musician of Amun-Re, the mistress of the house, Ta-Nech”<sup>509</sup>*

There are also shorter inscriptions which identify the gods and the priest depicted on the image of the stele. Sadly the original translation made for Crowley by the assistant of Émile Brugsch, is lost and the translations later made by Alan Gardiner and Battiscombe Gunn are also unavailable. But we can be certain that all three of these translations were proper and accurate translations of the texts of the Stele, since they were made by some of the best Egyptologists of the period. Despite he had access to the real meaning of the Stele Crowley created a poetic paraphrase which gave a different meaning to the text, and only held some resemblances the original.

*Above, the gemmèd azure is  
The naked splendour of Nuit;  
She bends in ecstasy to kiss  
The secret ardours of Hadit.  
The wingèd globe, the starry blue  
Are mine, o Ankh-f-n-Khonsu.  
I am the Lord of Thebes, and I  
The inspired forth-speaker of Mentu;  
For me unveils the veiled sky,  
The self-slain Ankh-f-n-Khonsu  
Whose words are truth. I invoke, I greet  
Thy presence, o Ra-Hoor-Khuit!  
Unity uttermost showed!  
I adore the might of Thy breath,  
Supreme and terrible God,  
Who makest the gods and death  
To tremble before Thee: —  
I, I adore thee!  
Appear on the throne of Ra!  
Open the ways of the Khu!*

---

<sup>509</sup> Leithy, Hisham-el (2007): 591.

*Lighten the ways of the Ka!  
The ways of the Khabs run through  
To stir me or still me!  
Aum! let it kill me!  
The Light is mine; its rays consume  
Me: I have made a secret door  
Into the House of Ra and Tum,  
Of Khephra, and of Ahathoor.  
I am thy Theban, o Mentu,  
The prophet Ankh-f-n-Khonsu!  
By Bes-na-Maut my breast I beat:  
By wise Ta-nech I weave my spell.  
Show thy star-splendour, O Nuit!  
Bid me within thine House to dwell,  
O winged snake of light, Hadith!  
Abide with me, Ra-Hoor-Khuit!<sup>510</sup>*

It is obvious that Crowley's aim was not giving a proper translation of the text. Because he named the poem a paraphrase of the prose on the Stele, he had the freedom to interpret the inscriptions in a way he saw fit for his message. Judging by the occultist's attitude towards Egyptian texts, Crowley worked with the same methodology as his contemporary mages. In his line of work he was free to interpret the inscriptions of a funerary stele as a text that holds a deeper, hidden message that conveys a more spiritual idea. This hidden message was far from the original intention of Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu, when he ordered the stele to be made. This new interpretation proposed by Crowley cannot be understood from the original text via ways of scientific reasoning or conventional logic. This way Crowley rendered his version not-attackable by those who worked in the same thought system that he employed. The way Crowley gave the „translation” of the stele to further legitimize the contents of the *Book of the Law*.

The eleven lines of text on the reverse side of the Stele contain versions of two spells from the Book of the Dead, Spells 30 and 2.

*„To be said by the Osiris, the priest of Montu, lord of Thebes, Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu, justified:  
„My heart of my mother (to be repeated), my breast that I had on earth, do not stand up*

---

<sup>510</sup> Crowley, Aleister (1991): Title page.

*against me as a witness, do not oppose me in the Divine Council, do not be hostile to me in the presence of the Great God, lord of the West. Though I have been united to the earth in the great west side of the sky, may I endure upon earth”*

*„To be said (by) the Osiris, the sm3ty-priest of Thebes Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu: „O Unique One who shines as Ioh, may the Osiris Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu go out among this your crowd and may those who are among the Glorious Ones give me freedom and may be opened for him the Duat, surely for the Osiris Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu (that he) comes forth by day to do whatever he pleases upon earth, among the livings”<sup>511</sup>*

This time Crowley’s rendering stays closer to the original text.

*Saith of Mentu the truth-telling brother  
Who was master of Thebes from his birth:  
O heart of me, heart of my mother!  
O heart which I had upon earth!  
Stand not thou up against me as a witness!  
Oppose me not, judge, in my quest!  
Accuse me not now of unfitness  
Before the Great God, the dread Lord of the West!  
For I fastened the one to the other  
With a spell for their mystical girth,  
The earth and the wonderful West,  
When I flourished, o earth, on thy breast!  
The dead man Ankh-f-n-Khonsu  
Saith with his voice of truth and calm:  
O thou that hast a single arm!  
O thou that glitterest in the moon!  
I weave thee in the spinning charm;  
I lure thee with the billowy tune.  
The dead man Ankh-f-n-Khonsu  
Hath parted from the darkling crowds,  
Hath joined the dwellers of the light,  
Opening Duant, the star-abodes,  
Their keys receiving.*

---

<sup>511</sup> Leithy, Hisham-el (2007): 591.

*The dead man Ankh-f-n-Khonsu  
Hath made his passage into night,  
His pleasure on the earth to do  
Among the living.<sup>512</sup>*

Yet again with the changes Crowley made on the text he created a new layer of meaning, different from the original intention of the inscription. This new layer is a magical one, different from the original spells, which were meant to aid Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu before the judgment of the Underworld.

Crowley also worked freely with the names of Egyptian gods and phrases. In some cases he retained the radicals and only changed the vocalization of the names, like in the case of Re-Horakhty – Ra-Hoor-Khuit. Other times he kept the consonant, in the sense of the English language, and modified the vowels, for example Nut – Nuit; or preserved most of the consonant with different vocalization, like in the case of Behdet – Hadit. In some other cases he added consonants like in the case of Duat – Duant in the poetic paraphrase of the reverse side of the Stele. The changes in spelling that Crowley implemented with the names were used to give new layers of meaning to the original names. Due to the modifications some names were able to convey extra meaning, like the allusion to the French word for night in the case of Nuit, or to the duality in the case of Duant. Multiple layers of meaning can be found throughout the whole *Liber AL*, with a literary reading that can be taken at face value, an esoteric reading that requires the help of an adept or the commentaries, a Kabbalistic meaning that can be understood using various methods of numerology etc. Crowley also felt that some names did not sound Egyptian enough, so he changed the spelling to sound more „authentic”, thus trying to give the *Liber AL* further legitimacy, by the use of the „original” names of the gods and not the Greek renderings which were in use by Egyptologists.

Paragraph I. 8. in the *Liber AL* explains that the „*Khabs is in the Khu*”. According to the dictionary of E. A. Wallis Budge *Khabs* translates into star,<sup>513</sup> which Crowley used as a synonym for Hadit. In Thelema *Khabs* is the identity of one’s self<sup>514</sup>, the inner Light that can be found inside every human, so the search for God should not be an external process but an internal. This inner search for the godhead is conducted via magic, and when achieved it leads to the realization of one’s true Will. *Khu* is the Egyptian word for night, according to Budge,

---

<sup>512</sup> Crowley, Aleister (1991): Title page

<sup>513</sup> Budge, Wallis E. (1920)

<sup>514</sup> Crowley, Aleister (1996): 75.



the equivalent of Nuit in Crowley's writings. Thus the Khu signifies both the universe and the outer manifestation of the Khabs, the body. Crowley also explained the Khu as the „*magical garment which it (the Khabs) weaves for itself*”<sup>515</sup> which is more subtle than the body or even the mind. This paragraph implies that the mage should seek the inner god, who is hidden inside everyone, but can be accessed through practice of magic.

Paragraph I. 26. says „*her lovely hands upon the black earth*”. This can be an allusion to Egypt, because the Egyptian term for the country *km.t* means black earth. Also I. 49. employs Egyptian deities Osiris and Isis but with a different pronunciation, Asar and Isa. The details of the Equinox of the Gods are of indirect Egyptian origin. It is based on the ritual of the Golden Dawn that was performed on the vernal and autumnal equinoxes every year. During this ritual the Hierophant, who represented Osiris, gave his position to the member who represented Horus. Crowley's Equinox followed this change of offices but on a universal scale, indicating a shift from the Aeon of Osiris to the Aeon of Horus.<sup>516</sup> There also ambient elements drew from Egyptian contexts for example the lapis-lazuli in I. 51. or the desert in I. 61. When Crowley writes about the gods he uses smell multiple times, based on the Egyptian idea, that the gods presence is signaled by good scent. Apart for the smaller Egyptian elements, the general style of the *Liber AL* resembles the prophetic and apocalyptic books of the Bible, than of Egyptian texts. There are also elements of Buddhist, yogic, Kabbalistic, Hermetic, alchemical, Tarot and Caribbean origins. These were used by Crowley to create a mystical setting for the contents of the book, and give further credibility to its words by the employment of known terms albeit with a different meaning.

The main aspect of the *Liber AL*, the Law of “*do what thou wilt*” was taken by Crowley at face value with the only restriction that it does not equal “*do what you like*”<sup>517</sup> but is rather the outcome of a long search after one's true Will and its place in the greater cosmos. Acting accordingly to the cosmos leads to a utopian state of “the Brotherhood of Man”, but it is important to keep in mind that the main aim of Crowley was not to give a new ethical norm, but instead to convey secret teaching for the progression of his and his follower's further magical practice, and so the morality of the *Liber AL* can be interpreted in a magical sense rather than an ethical one. However his authorized “magical son” Charles Stanfield Jones proposed a different interpretation that tried to equate Will with Ma'at, the Egyptian

---

<sup>515</sup> Crowley, Aleister (1996): 75.

<sup>516</sup> Tully, Caroline (2010): 38.

<sup>517</sup> Morgan, Mogg (2011): 167.

personification of justice, based on the Negative Confession found in the Book of the Dead. He also proposed that the era succeeding the Aeon of Horus will be the Aeon of Ma'at Jones' idea was not accepted by Crowley until he was nearing his death, and today it is only accepted by a smaller faction of Thelemites. It signals however that the successors of Crowley also tried to work in an Egyptian setting, working with the same thought-pattern that any idea that comes from Egypt can give credibility and legitimacy to the new idea it is incorporated into.<sup>518</sup>

### **Conclusions on the Liber AL**

By the end of the nineteenth century the height of Egyptomania was over and the craze for all things Egyptian was fading out from fashion. But when in 1904 Aleister Crowley wrote his fundamental work, the *Liber AL vel Legis* he was working with the same idea that was widely used by esoteric societies in the Victorian era. After the decipherment of the hieroglyphs in 1822 the scientific knowledge about ancient Egypt was growing. The popularity of Egypt was also evident in everyday objects of the upper classes from furniture and interior design elements to arts and architecture. Although scholarly material was openly available in museums and libraries there were educated individuals, hailing mainly from upper middle-class backgrounds, which disregarded the achievements of Egyptology and were more interested in the magical, Hermetic tradition of Egypt. The image of the mystical Egypt, the land where all magic and secret wisdom originates from, is already present in the works of Greek and Roman historians and travelers. It originated from the secrecy of Egyptian culture, the mysticism of the hieroglyphs and the marvels of Egyptian architecture. The idea of the mystical Egypt was present in western thinking throughout the Middle Ages the Renaissance and the Early modern period, even vivid after the scholarly advancements of the nineteenth century and is still a part of modern popular culture. This image postulates Egypt as the cradle of all magical practices and one of the main source for esoteric wisdom. The strong legitimizing force of Egypt is apparent from the rituals of the various esoteric secret societies of Victorian era Britain. These societies employed Egyptian motifs and symbols in their rites, clothing and accessories, studied Hermetic texts with supposed Egyptian origins. Considering Egyptology the societies were not reclusive towards the achievements of the scholars, they read and used translations of Egyptian religious texts, particularly the *Book of the Dead*, but examined them through a different lens. The main aim of the occultists was to find *gnosis*, hidden knowledge, inside the Egyptian texts.

---

<sup>518</sup> Morgan, Mogg (2011): 169-171.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was the society where Crowley became deeply involved with western esotericism. The main focuses of this group were Kabbalah and numerology, Tarot, Hellenistic mystery cults, alchemy and Hermeticism. The titles, performances and garments used in the Golden Dawn rituals employed numerous Egyptian elements, and the number of these symbols were growing as one progressed further through the ranks of the Order. After a schism that took place after a quarrel concerning the leadership of the London temple, where Crowley chose the side of the former leader, who was at that time already living in Paris, Crowley was expelled from the Golden Dawn. Although he was formally not a member anymore, he never accepted his expulsion and continued to work in the same magical system as before. When he wrote the *Liber AL* one of his aims was to try to take control over the fragments of the Golden Dawn, or if that would not succeed to create a new order that could carry on with the magical tradition of it. To come forth with proper legitimacy Crowley was in need of the strongest authority, so he travelled to Egypt to look for inspiration. He never claimed authorship over the *Book of the Law*, instead Crowley declared that the contents of the book were dictated to him by the messenger of Horus, named Aiwass, and that the main message of the *Liber AL* can also be found on an Egyptian artifact, the Stele of Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu, that would later become a central element in the rites of Thelema. After Crowley found that the reception for his book among the Golden Dawn members would be scarce, and his authority would not be accepted, he did not try to grasp leadership of the group, instead began to work towards the foundations of a new order, the Silver Star. The basic texts of this new order were the *Liber AL* and other Thelemic works that were revealed to Crowley in the years following the writing of the *Book of the Law*. For Crowley Egypt was a source of wisdom and magic, and a source of legitimacy, that gave credibility to the ideas he formulated in his writings. In most cases he disregarded the original meanings and intentions of the texts and images he used as inspirations for his writings, although he had access to proper translations and help from Egyptologists, and proposed a magical and esoteric rendering instead, which he accepted as truth. He then used his own renderings, presented as the original from ancient Egypt, to strengthen his ideas in his writings. It is hard to measure how much did Crowley know about the history, culture and religion of ancient Egypt, but it is evident from his writings that he wanted to know the least that was possible, because his interest was not of a scholarly nature, but a hermetic one. He used Egypt as a means to an end, whether that goal was to give authority to his new ideas about morality, lifestyle, religion and magic or in his search for the divine knowledge about the operation of the cosmos and his own place in the universe.

It is hard to measure Crowley's influence. In his time he was branded the "*wickedest man alive*" and was given little praise for his works on magic or his poetry. Beginning from the 1960s his ideas re-emerged and began to shape popular culture, music and new religious movements. Elements from Crowley's writing can be found in nearly every New Age movement, from Asatru to Wicca. Although Crowley was not the first to use ancient or exotic civilizations as a source of legitimacy, he played a major role in popularizing the idea, which is still being used by of various New Age and neo-pagan religions. Wicca for example employs the same method to create legitimacy by claiming its origins from Celtic religion. However it would require additional studies to grasp the extent of Crowley's influence, and not just on New Religious Movements but on the ideas of morality, individualism and sexuality from the rediscovery of Crowley's teaching in the hippie era. It is evident that Crowley used and popularized an old thought-pattern that was present in Western thinking at least since the ancient Greeks that older civilizations bear magical wisdom and authority, and by calling forth these civilizations as sources can give legitimacy to even the most stupendous ideas; and there will be certain audiences ready to accept that legitimacy.

### *Conclusions*

The nineteenth century reshaped the landscape of the Western esoteric tradition. The so called “Occult Revival” saw the rediscovery of a number of neglected sources of magic, as well as the ease of accessibility of esoteric knowledge. The social changes and the burgeoning middle class created a new audience for esoteric ideas. The ideas about the aims and function of magic changed considerably. In earlier traditions the aim was a physical goal, the acquisition of wealth, health, protection, precise predictions about the future, or just generally making life easier, in the financially secure middle class of Victorian Britain these were not the aims anymore. The void that could be filled with magic was of a spiritual nature, and the magician’s quest became a search after divine unity, mystical experiences, and a greater understanding of the secret workings of nature. Esoteric writings often borrowed the language of science with rules, causes and effects, observations, experiments etc. and were presented as a valid alternative to the fast developing sciences. Occultists also relied on the developments of the sciences to form new theories and introduce new elements and sources to their respective esoteric worldviews.

After the introduction of Eastern religious elements and concept, mainly through the Theosophical Society, and later with the renewed spread of medieval and Renaissance sources, the numerous esoteric organizations moved towards syncretism, incorporating elements, symbolism, and ideas from various religious and esoteric currents. Although Egypt already played a major role in esoteric thought as the origin and repository of wisdom, it was the late nineteenth century that saw the introduction of Egyptian sources in practical occultism. As the field of Egyptology developed and new sources were translated to European languages they found their ways into the groups that claimed to be descendants of Egyptian religious practices. Esoteric organizations claiming legacy to ancient Egypt, firm in their convictions that what they are doing hold the true meaning of Egyptian religion, while philologists and archeologists were uncovering more and more about the real Egypt. Two pictures of ancient Egypt lived side-by-side, one presented by Egyptologists, about a historical land, interconnected with the rest of the then known world, with a changing and developing language, culture, and religion. The other was presented by occultists as a separate land, left unaffected by the rest of the world, a mystical land of ancient wisdom, the source of magic, where changes were always regressions from a golden age. As for the occultists, they could always say that the uninitiated could not understand the hidden symbolism. As a general trend the Victorian era saw a fascination with all things Egyptian, and this fascination in the esoteric tradition reached its full height with the founding

of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Although the organization was not without precedents, it was the work of Samuel MacGregor Mathers that elevated it to becoming one of the most influential esoteric groups. Due to Mathers' fascination with Egypt, and Egyptian religion in particular, the newly formed order employed an Egyptianized visuality, and numerous Egyptian sources were incorporated into the rituals, lectures, and other materials. Mathers employed translations and were possibly somewhat familiar with the current Egyptological developments, he easily disregarded those, and cherry picked information whenever it facilitated his syncretizing work in corresponding Egyptian religious concept with Hermetic and Kabbalistic ideas. Egyptian deities were reinterpreted as forces of nature that one could communicate with, and evocate to experience an altered state of consciousness and authority above those forces. The technique of becoming one with an Egyptian god was a practice unique to the Golden Dawn. Egypt fulfilled an important role in the order's cosmology, but was also an important factor in legitimacy. As the idea of mystical and magical Egypt was still well known and popular, and the general idea that it was the source of all magical techniques, the Golden Dawn focus on practice over theory granted the order a sense of legitimacy over other esoteric groups. Mathers himself never claimed direct connection to ancient Egypt, as a follower of the Celtic Revival he only claimed unfounded familial relations to a Scottish clan. This lack of authority was used against him by other members, particularly by Florence Farr, who established connection to an ancient Egyptian mummy, thus giving direct legitimacy to her workings with the Sphere Group. After Mathers lost control over the Golden Dawn the organization soon devolved into splinter factions, and as the interest in Egypt was waning these groups upheld less and less of Mathers' Egypt focused legacy, and what remained was no more than visuality, serving as a legitimizing factor to connect the groups to the still held tradition of ancient Egyptian legacy. The Golden Dawn in its heyday created a unique blend of various esoteric traditions, and incorporated Egyptiana into the core beliefs of a small group of turn of the century middle class occultists. This group boasted among its member some of the artistic elite however and thus was able to leave a large imprint on the occulture of the era, and on the later developments of the Western esoteric tradition.

The strand of using Egypt as a tool of legitimacy was picked up by one of Mathers' most enthusiastic disciple, turned enemy, Aleister Crowley, when he set out to establish a direct connection with the Secret Chiefs, a connection that he believed was lost both by Mathers and the rebels of the Golden Dawn as well. In his foundational work, the *Liber AL* he found this connection, and as he grew to accept the work and refined its thought system he created a new religion called Thelema, with a pantheon modelled on Egyptian deities. Crowley was even more

disregarding of the academic developments of Egyptology and made little effort to found his work on proper Egyptian sources, other than the “Stele of Revealing”. This dissertation only focused on the *Liber AL*, but further exploration on the developments of Thelema, and Crowley’s attitude towards Egypt would merit some further research.

Let us take a short glance at the legacy left behind the Golden Dawn and Crowley. There a number of organizations that claim legacy to the original Golden Dawn, or use the initiation structure of the order. Structural changes aside some rituals written by Mathers are still used in various magical systems today, the two banishing rituals of the Pentagram and Hexagram, the Watchtower ceremony, and the Kabbalistic Cross are used as general preparatory rituals in many esoteric groups. Crowley reshaped much of the popular understanding of magic and esotericism through his much publicized scandalous life. Thelema as a religion is still followed by some groups today, and the Ordo Templi Orientis that was reorganized by him still exists. Egypt is less in fashion as was at the turn of the century, but the syncretism of various esoteric traditions is a particularly strong aspect of today’s esoteric milieu.

The aims of this dissertation were to understand the role that ancient Egypt played in the works of the Golden Dawn, and in the early formation of Thelema. This was accomplished through a scrutiny of the available primary sources of the Golden Dawn, and the events leading to the creation of the *Liber AL*, as well as a textual analysis. Although in the Cipher Manuscripts there are a few mentions of Egyptian gods, it was the work of Mathers that filled the structure and temples with Egyptian deities, while Crowley followed in the footsteps of his mentor. From this we gauged that performed multiple roles in the respective belief systems. The most basic role was that of legitimacy and authenticity to show that the ideas on which the system was built were not new, but descended from ancient Egypt and the Hermetic, Christian, and Kabbalistic elements were the developments of the original Egyptian beliefs. A further role was the interpretation of the deities as forces of nature, as spiritual beings that are almost like mechanical cogs in the machinery of the universe, that can be evoked through ritual and ceremonial magic, and provide aid, blessing, or power over reality. Crowley took these ideas a step further and proclaimed that the gods are parts of each individual, and their aspects can be invoked from the inside to effect change on a personal and global scale. A large number of Egyptiana was used as scenery, to further emphasize the connection to a perceived Egyptian mystery religion, based on initiations. This idea, borrowed from earlier traditions, was visually represented most clearly by the ritual implements and clothing, all the while providing for the audience’s interest in Egypt and the desire for connection with the mystical land of the pharaohs.

The Golden Dawn's and Crowley's focus on ancient Egypt had some unique consequences. On one hand as it was very much in fashion to be interested in Egypt it helped the Golden Dawn expand its membership, all the while keeping the ideas about the mystical alternative Egypt alive in popular culture. Of course there were a large number of other authors who popularized the mystical Egypt, through novels, stories about living mummies, performances and theatre etc. but the Golden Dawn's incorporation of a large number of Egyptian elements further cemented the role of Egypt in the Western esoteric tradition. A role that always fluctuated in relevance, but it was always an image of Egypt that painted it as the cradle of magic, an endless repository of ancient wisdom, a place full of secret knowledge about the cosmos. By claiming legacy to this land any group can present its own ideas armed with a strong claim on legitimacy.



## ***Bibliography***

### **Primary Sources:**

Amélineau, Émile. *Notice sur le papyrus gnostique Bruce*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale. 1891.

Blackden, M. W.. *Ritual of the Mystery if the Judgement of the Soul: From an Ancient Egyptian Papyrus*. Lynwood, WA: Holmes Publishing Group. 2001.

Blavatsky, Helena P. *Theosophical Glossary*. Krotona, CA: Theosophical Publishing House. 1973.

Blavatsky, Helena P. *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Technology*. New York, NY: J. W. Bouton. 1877.

Blavatsky, Helena P. *The Secret Doctrine*. London: Theosophical Publishing House

Budge, E. A. Wallis. *The Papyrus of Ani*. London: The Medici Society. 1913.

Budge, E. A. Wallis. *An Egyptian hieroglyphic dictionary*. London: J. Murray. 1920.

Brodie-Innes, J. W. "Some Personal Reminiscences" *The Occult Review*. 29. 4. (1919): 198-199.

Carry, Gerald T. "Egypt: The Home of Occult Sciences, with Special Reference to Imhotep, the Mysterious Wise Man and Egyptian God of Medicine." *JAMA* 97. 7. (1931): 487.

Cipher Manuscripts. A transcription by J. S. Kupperman and facsimiles can be found at [http://www.tarrdaniel.com/documents/Thelemagick/gd/publication/english/Cipher\\_Manuscript.html](http://www.tarrdaniel.com/documents/Thelemagick/gd/publication/english/Cipher_Manuscript.html) 2019.09.20.

Crowley, Aleister. *Liber AL vel Legis*. Newburyport, MA: Samuel Weiser. 1987. also published in:

- *The Equinox (III:10)*. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser. 2001.
- *The Holy Books of Thelema (Equinox III:9)*. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser. 1983.

accessed online at:

- <http://hermetic.com/crowley/equinox-of-the-gods/liber-al-vel-legis.html> 2019.09.15.
- <http://hermetic.com/legis/> 2019.09.15.

Crowley, Aleister. *Magick without Tears*. Phoenix, AZ: Falcon Press. 1982.

Symonds, John, Kenneth Grant ed. *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography*. London: Arcana. 1989.

Cicero, Chic, Sandra Tabitha Cicero. *Secrets of the Golden Dawn Temple*. London: Llewellyn. 1999.

Cicero, Chic, Sandra Tabitha Cicero. *The Magical Pantheons*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn. 1998.

Cicero, Tabatha Sandra. *The Book of the Concourse of the Watchtowers – An Exploration of Westcott’s Enochian Tablets*. St. Paul, MI:HOGD Books. 2012.

Crowley, Aleister. *The Equinox of the Gods*. New York: New Falcon Publishing. 1991.

Crowley, Aleister. *The Law is for All: The authorized Popular Commentary of Liber AL vel Legis Sub Figura CCXX, the Book of the Law*. Phoenix, AZ: New Falcon Publishing. 1996.

Cory, Alexander Turner. *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo Nilous*. London: William Pickering. 1840.

Gaucher, Andre. "Isis a Montmartre." *L'echo du Merveilleux*. 446-9 1900. 470-472. trans. Christopher Kimberley. 2008.

Hartmann, Franz. *In the Pronaos of the Temple of Wisdom, Containing the History of the True and False Rosicrucians*. London: Theosophical Publishing Society. 1890.

Hymanaeus Beta ed. *Magick: Book IV, Parts I-IV by Aleister Crowley*. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser. 1997.

Farr, Florence. *Egyptian Magic*. Kessinger Publishing: Whitefish, MT. 1993.

Gilbert, R. A. ed. *The Magical Mason. Forgotten Hermetic Writings of William Wynn Westcott, Physician and Magus*. Wellingborough: Aquarian. 1983.

King, Francis ed. *Ritual Magic of the Golden Dawn: Works by S.L. MacGregor Mathers and Others*. Rochester: Destiny Books. 1997.

King, Francis ed. *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic and Alchemy: Golden Dawn Material by S. L. MacGregor Mathers and Others*. Wellingborough: Aquarian Press. 1987.

Kuntz, Darcy ed. *The Complete Golden Dawn Cipher Manuscript*. Edmonds: Holmes Publishing Group. 1990.

Lees, Frederic. "Isis Worship in Paris: Conversations with the Hierophant Rameses and the High Priestess Anari." *The Humanitarian*. 16. 2. (1900): 83.

el-Leithy, Hisham. Painted Wooden Stelae From Thebes from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 26 Dynasties. in Goyon, Jean-Claude, Christine Cardin, ed. *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Egyptologists*. Leuven: Utigeverij Press. 2007. 585-594.

Regardie, Israel. *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic. Vol I-X*. Phoenix, AZ: Falcon Publishing. 1984.

Schmidt, Carl. *Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus*. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs. 1892.

Sinnett, Alfred P. *The Early Days of Theosophy in Europe*. London: Theosophical Publishing House. 1922.

Waite, Arthur Edward. *Book of Black Magic and of Pacts*. privately printed. 1898.

Westcott, William Wynn. *Collectanea Hermetica*. York Beach: Samuel Weiser Inc. 1998.

Zalewski, Chris. *Enochian Chess of the Golden Dawn: A Four-Handed Chess Game*. Woodbury MN: Llewellyn. 1994.

Zalewski, Pat. *Golden Dawn Rituals and Commentaries*. Vols 1-3. Self Published. 2001.

Zalewsky, Pat. *The Equinox and Solstice Ceremonies of the Golden Dawn*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn. 1992.

Zalewski, Pat. *Secret Inner Order Rituals of the Golden Dawn*. Phoenix, AZ: Falcon Publishing. 1986.

Zayed, Abd el-Hamid. Painted Wooden Stele in the Cairo Museum. *Revue d'egyptologie*. 20 (1968). 149-152.

*The Equinox: The Review of Scientific Illuminism*. 1909-1998. various publishers, available online: <http://www.the-equinox.org/> 7 April 2014.

Gerald Yorke Collection held in The Warburg Institute, London. The Collections is categorized as old series, abbreviated as OS, and new series, abbreviated as NS.

**Monographs:**

Adkins, Lesley, Roy Adkins. *The Keys of Egypt: The obsession to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphs*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. 2000.

Allen, James P. ed. *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature. 2005.

Almond, Philip C. *The British Discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988.

Asprem, Egil. *The Problem of disenchantment. Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse 1900-1939*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. 2014.

Assmann, Jan, Florian Ebeling edd. *Ägyptische Mysterien. Reisen in die Unterwelt in Aufklärung und Romantik. Eine kommentierte Anthologie*. Nordlingen: C. H. Beck. 2011.

Assmann, Jan. *Religio Duplex: How the Enlightenment Reinvented Egyptian Religion*. Cambridge: Polity. 2014.

Assmann, Jan. *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*. London: Cornell University Press. 2001.

Bogdan, Henrik, Gordan Djurdjevic edd. *Occultism in Global Perspective*. New York: Routledge. 2014.

Bogdan, Henrik, Martin P. Starr. *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2012.

Bogdan, Henrik. *From Darkness to Light: Western Esoteric Rituals of Initiation*. Göteborg: Göteborg University Department of Religious Studies. 2003.

Booth, Martin. *A Magick Life: The Biography of Aleister Crowley*. London: Coronet Books. 2000

Bown, Nicola, Carolyn Burdett, Pamela Thurschwell. *The Victorian Supernatural*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2004.

Boyd, Hilton. *The age of atonement: the influence of evangelicalism on social and economic thought, 1785-1865*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1988.

Bricault, Laurent, Miguel John Versluys edd. *Isis on the Nile: Egyptian Gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. Proceedings of the IV. International Conference of Isis Studies, Liège, November 27-29 2008*. Leiden: Brill. 2010.

Bricault, Laurent. *Les Cults Isisiaques Dans Le Monde Gréco-romain*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres. 2013.

Budge, E. A. Wallis. *By Nile and Tigris, a narrative journey in Egypt and Mesopotamia on behalf of the British museum between the years 1886 and 1913*. London: J. Murray. 1920.

Bull, Christian H. *The Tradition of Hermes Trismegistus: The Egyptian Priestly Figure as a Teacher of Hellenized Wisdom*. Boston, MA: Brill. 2018.

Butler, Alison. *Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic: Invoking Tradition*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan. 2011.

Campbell, Bruce F. *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press. 1980.

Chambers, John David. *The Theological and Philosophical Works of Hermes Trismegistus, Christian Neoplatonist*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. 1882.

Churton, Tobias. *Aleister Crowley: The Biography*. London: Watkins Books. 2011.

Coad, Roy F. *A History of the Brethren Movement: Its Origins, Its Worldwide Development and Its Significance for the Present Day*. Vancouver: Regent College Publishing. 2001.

Colla, Elliot. *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity*. London: Duke University Press. 2007.

Conger, Arthur L. ed. *Practical Occultism: From the Private Letters of William Q. Judge*. Pasadena, CA: Theosophical UP 1951.

Conner, Patrick. *The Inspiration of Egypt: Its Influence on British Artists, Travellers, and Designers, 1700-1900*. Manchester: Brighton Borough Council. 1983.

Copenhaver, Brian. *Magic and the Dignity of Man: Pico della Mirandola and his Oration in Modern Memory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2019.

Crossick, G. (ed.) *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914*. London: Routledge. 2016.

Curl, James Stevens. *Egyptomania: the Egyptian revival, a recurring theme in the history of taste*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1994.

David Lowenthal. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1985.

David, Rosalie. *Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt*. London: Penguin 2002.

Davies, Owen. *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2009.

Davies, Rev. C. M.: *The Great Secret and its Unfoldment in Occultism. A Record of Forty Years Experience in the Modern Mystery, by A Church of England Clergyman*. London: George Redway. 1895.

DeConick, April ed. *Secret Religion (Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks: Religion)*. Farmington Hills: Macmillan. 2016.

Duquette, Lon Milo. *The Magick of Thelema*. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser. 1993.

Ebeling, Florian. *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2007.

Egil Asprem. *Arguing with Angels: Enochian Magic and Modern Occulture*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. 2013.

Everard, John. trans. *The Divine Pymander by Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus*. Mecosta MI: Wizards Bookshelf. 2000.

Faivre, Antoine. *Access to Western Esotericism*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. 1994.

Faivre, Antoine. *L'ésoterisme*. Paris: PUF. 1992.

Farrell, Nick. *Mathers' Last Secret*. Unknown location: Rosicrucian Order of the Golden Dawn. 2011.

Finneran, Richard J., George Mills Harper, William M. Murphy (edd). *Letters to W. B. Yeats*. London: Macmillan. 1977.

Frankfort, Henri. *Ancient Egyptian Religion: An Interpretation*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications. 2000.

Gange, David. *Dialogues with the Dead. Egyptology in British Culture and religion. 1822-1922*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013.

Gilbert, A. D. *Religion and Society in Industrial England*. London: Longman. 1976.

- Gilbert, Robert A. *The Golden Dawn Companion: A Guide to the History, Structure, and Workings of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*. Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press. 1986.
- Gilbert, Robert A. *The Golden Dawn Scrapbook: The Rise and Fall of a Magical Order*. New York: Samuel Weiser Inc. 1997.
- Gilbert, Robert A. *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians*. Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press. 1983.
- Godwin, Jocelyn. *The Theosophical Enlightenment*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press. 1994.
- Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas. *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2008.
- Graf, Susan Johnston. *W. B. Yeats: Twentieth Century Magus*. York Beach, ME: Weiser. 2000.
- Green, Arthur. *A Guide to the Zohar*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 2004.
- Greer, Mary Katherine. *Women of the Golden Dawn: Rebels and Priestesses*. Rochester: Park Street Press. 1995.
- Guiley, Rosemary. *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Alchemy*. New York, NY: Infobase Publishing.
- György E. Szőnyi. *John Dee's Occultism. Magical Exaltation Through Powerful Signs*. New York, NY: SUNY. 2004.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*. Leiden: Brill. 2006.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2012.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. 1998.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Bloomsbury. 2013.
- Harper, George M. *Yeats' Golden Dawn*. London: Macmillan. 1974.
- Hornung, Erik. *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and Many*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1982.

- Hornung, Erik. *The secret lore of Egypt: its impact on the West*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2001. translated by David Lorton.
- Howe, Ellic. *Magicians of the Golden Dawn. A Documentary History of a Magical Order, 1887-1923*. Newburyport, MA: Red Wheel Weiser 1978.
- Hutton, Ronald. *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of Druids in Britain*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 2009.
- Jeffrey, Franklin J. *Spirit Matters: Occult Beliefs, Alternative Religions, and the Crisis of Faith in Victorian Britain*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2018.
- Jonathan Rose. *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Class*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2001.
- Joseph-Storm, Jason A. *The Myth of Disenchantment. Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. 2017.
- Kaczinski, Richard, James Wasserman. *Weiser Concise Guide to Aleister Crowley*. York Beach, ME: Weiser. 2009.
- Kaczynski, Richard. *Perdurabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books. 2010.
- Kilcher, Andreas B. (ed.) *Constructing Tradition. Means and Myths of Transmission in Western Esotericism*. Leiden: Brill. 2010.
- King, Francis. *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic and Alchemy: Golden Dawn Material by S. L. MacGregor Mathers*. Rochester: Destiny Books. 1987.
- King, Francis. *Modern Ritual Magic*. Dorset: Prism Press. 1989.
- King, Francis. *The Rites of Modern Occult Magic*. New York, NY: Macmillan. 1971.
- Kuntz, Darcy ed. *The Enochian Experiments of the Golden Dawn*. Edmonds, WA: Holmes Publishing. 1996.
- Kuntz, Darcy. *The Golden Dawn Legacy of MacGregor Mathers*. Lynnwood, WA: Holmes Publishing Group. 1998.
- Kuntz, Darcy. *The Golden Dawn Sourcebook*. Lynnwood, WA: Holmes Publishing Group. 1996.
- MacBride, Maud Gonne. *A Servant of the Queen, her own story*. Dublin: Standard House. 1950.



- Mackenzie, Kenneth. *The Royal Masonic Cyclopedia*. New York, NY: Harper Collins. 1987.
- Mackey, Albert. *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences*. Philadelphia, PA: L. H. Everts&Co. 1884.
- Maitland, Edward. *Anna Kingsford: Her Letters, Diary, and Work*. London: John M. Watkins. 1913.
- Mathers, S. L. MacGregor. *The Kabbalah Unveiled*. Seattle, WA: Pacific Publishing Studio. 2011.
- McIntosh, Christopher. *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival* London: Rider. 1975.
- McIntosh, Christopher. *The Rosicrucians: The History, Mythology, and Rituals of an Esoteric Order*. Newburyport, MA: Weiser. 1998.
- O'Regan, Cyril. *Gnostic Return in Modernity*. New York, NJ: State University Of New York Press. 2001.
- Orpheus, Rodney. *Abrahamadabra: Understanding Aleister Crowley's Thelemic Magic*. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser. 2005.
- Owen, Alex. *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England*. London: Virago. 1989.
- Owen, Alex. *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2004.
- Parkinson, Richard. *Cracking Codes: The Rosetta Stone and decipherment*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 1999.
- Parsons, Gerald, ed. *Religion in Victorian Britain II. Controversies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1988.
- Parsons, Gerald. (ed.) *Religion in Victorian Britain. Vol. II: Controversies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1988.
- Partridge, Christopher. *The Re-Enchantment of the West*. T&T Clark: London. 2005.
- Partridge, Christopher. *The Re-Enchantment of the West. Vol. 1. Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture*. London: T&T Clark International. 2004.
- Pseudo-Dionysios Areopagita. *De Coelesti Hierarchia*. Surrey: Shrine of Wisdom. 1935.
- Raine, Katleen. *Yeats: The Tarot and the Golden Dawn*. Dublin: Dolmen. 1972.

- Redford, Donald B, ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001.
- Redford, Donald B. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt I*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001.
- Regardie, Israel. *The Eye in the Triangle: an Interpretation of Aleister Crowley*. Phoenix, AZ: New Falcon Publications. 1982.
- Regardie, Israel. *What You Should Know About the Golden Dawn*. Phoenix, AZ: Falcon Press. 1983.
- Reitzenstein, Richard. *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur*. Leipzig: Teubner. 1904.
- Saddlemeyer, Ann. *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs. W. B. Yeats*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2004.
- Scholem, Gershom. *Kabbalah: A Definitive History of the Evolution, Ideas, Leading Figures and Extraordinary Influence of Jewish Mysticism*. New York , NY: Penguin Books. 1978.
- Shafer, Byron E. ed. *Religion in Ancient Egypt*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1991.
- Spence, Richard B. *Secret Agent 666: Aleister Crowley, British Intelligence and the Occult*. Port Townsend, WA: Feral House. 2008.
- Strudwick, Nigel, John Taylor, ed.. *The Theban necropolis: Past, present, and future*. London: British Museum Press. 2003.
- Strudwick, Nigel. *Masterpieces of Ancient Egypt*. London: The British Museum Press. 2006.
- Sutin, Lawrence. *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley*. New York: St Martin's Press. 2000.
- Symonds, John. *The Beast 666: The Life of Aleister Crowley*. London: Pindar Press. 1997.
- Taylor, John H., Daniel Antoine. *Ancient Lives New Discoveries: Eight Mummies, Eight Stories*. London: The British Museum Press. 2014.
- Traunecker, Claude. *Les Dieux de L'Égypte*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 1992.
- Turner, Frank M. *Contesting Cultural Authority. Essays in Victorian Life*. 2008. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2008.

Ucko, P. Champion, T. edd. *The Wisdom of Egypt: Changing Visions Through the Ages*. London: UCL Press. 2003.

van der Broek, R., Wouter J. Hanegraaff. (edd.) *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to the Modern Times*. New York, NY: SUNY. 1998.

van der Broek, Roelof, Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ed. *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*. New York: State University of New York Press. 1998.

von Stuckrad, Kocku. *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge*. London: Equinox Publishing. 2005.

Webb, James. *Flight from Reason*. London: MacDonald&Co. 1971.

Webb, James. *The Occult Establishment: The Dawn of the New Age and The Occult Establishment*. Peru, IL: Open Court Publishing. 1976.

Yates, Francis. *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. 1964.

**Articles:**

Arnstein, Walter, Michael Bright, Linda Peterson, Nicholas Temperley. "Recent Studies in Victorian Religion" *Victorian Studies*. 33. (1989): 149-175.

Asprem, Egil. "Magic Naturalized? Negotiating Science and Occult Experience in Aleister Crowley's Scientific Illuminism" *Aries*. 8. (2008): 139-165.

Bevir, Mark. "*The West Turns Eastward: Madame Blavatsky and the Transformation of the Occult Tradition.*" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 62.3 (1994): 747-767.

Bogdan, Henrik. "New Perspectives on Western Esotericism" *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*. 13. 3. (2010): 97-105.

Brier, Bob. "Egyptomania!" *Archeology*. 57. 1. (2004) 16-22.

Butler, Alison. "Magical Beginnings: The Intellectual Origins of the Victorian Occult Revival" *Limina*. 9. (2003): 78-95.

Dan, Joseph. "Jewish Influences III: "Christian Kabbalah" in the Renaissance." *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*. Ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff. Leiden: Brill. 2006. 638-642.

Dobson, Eleanor. "Introduction: Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century Culture." *Nineteenth Century Context*. 40. 4. (2018): 311-315.

Eliot, Simon: "Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing 1880-1919". *Bibliographical Society: Occasional papers*. 8. (1994): 22-25.

Esposito, Donato. "From ancient Egypt to Victorian London: the impact of ancient Egyptian furniture on British art and design 1850-1900" *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society 1850-The Present*. 27. (2003): 80-93.

Fergusson, Christine, Andrew Radford edd. *The Occult Imagination in Britain, 1875 – 1947*. Abingdon: Routledge. 2008.

Gange, David. "Religion and Science in Late Nineteenth-Century British Egyptology" *The Historical Journal*. 49. 4. (2006): 1083-1103.

Gilbert, R. A. "Magical Manuscripts: An Introduction to the Archives of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn." in Warwick Gould (ed.). *Yeats Annual no. 5*. Basingstoke:Palgrave Macmillan. 1987. 163-177.

- Gilbert, R. A. "Magus Incognito: Was Swedenborg responsible for the 'Occult Revival'?" *Things Heard and Seen, the Newsletter of the Swedenborg Society, London*. 15. (2004): 44-51.
- Gist, Noel P. "Culture Patterning in Secret Society Ceremonials" *Social Forces*. 14. 4. (1936): 497-505.
- Gould, Warwick. "The Music of Heaven': Dorothea Hunter" in Deirdre Toomey (ed.). *Yeats Annual No. 9: Yeats and Women*. Houndsmills: Macmillan Press. 1997.
- Hamvas Endre. "Athanasius Aegyptius. Athanasius Kircher és a hieroglifák hermeneutikája." *Ókor*. 2012. 4. 51-57.
- Hamvas Endra. "Time and eternity. Some remarks on the connection between astral powers and magic in the Hermetic literature." in. Kérchy Anna, Szőnyi György Endre, Kiss Attila. *The Iconology of Law and Order*. Szeged: JatePress. 2012. 7-16.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. "Some Remarks on the Study of Western Esotericism." *Theosophical History*. 7: 6 (1999): 223-232.
- Hassan, Fekri A. "Imperialists Appropriations of Egyptian Obelisks" in Jeffreys, David, ed. *Views of Ancient Egypt since Napoleon Bonaparte: imperialism, colonialism and modern appropriations*. London: UCL Press. 2003.
- Holmyard, Eric John. "The Emerald Table" *Nature*. 2814. 112. (1923): 525-526.
- Hooek, Holger. "The British State and the Anglo-French Wars over Antiquities, 1798-1858" *The Historical Journal*. 50. 1. (2007): 49-72.
- Hutton, Ronald. "Modern Pagan Witchcraft." in Bengt Ankarloo, Stuart Clard (edd.). *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe in the Twentieth Century*. Athlone Press: London. 1999.
- Jarsaillon, Carole. "Modern Egyptomania and Early Egyptology: The Case of Mariette's 1867 Egyptian Temple." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*. 40. 4. (2018): 359-376.
- Jeffreys, David. "Introduction – Two Hundred Years of Ancient Egypt: Modern History and Ancient Archeology" in Jeffreys, David, ed. *Views of Ancient Egypt since Napoleon Bonaparte: imperialism, colonialism and modern appropriations*. London: UCL Press. 2003.
- Kupperman, J. S. "By Names and Images: Golden Dawn Egyptian Mythology" *Journal of the Western Mystery Tradition*. (1) 2001.
- Lewis, T. Hayter. "Masonry and Masons' Mark." *Ars Quatour Coronatorum*. 3. 69. (1890): 69.

McIntosh, Christopher. "Fräulein Sprengel and the Origins of the Golden Dawn: A Surprising Discovery" *Aries*. 11. 2. (2011): 249-257.

Morgan, Mogg. "The Heart of Thelema: Morality, Amorality, and Immortality in Aleister Crowley's Thelemic Cult" *The Pomegranate*. 13. 2. (2011): 163-183.

Morrison, Mark S. "The Periodical Culture of the Occult Revival: Esoteric Wisdom, Modernity and Counter-Public Spheres." *Journal of Modern Literature* 31. No.2. (2008): 1-22.

Owen, Alex. "The Sorcerer and His Apprentice: Aleister Crowley and the Magical Exploration of Edwardian Subjectivity" *Journal of British Studies*. 36. 1. (1997) 99-133.

Pasi, Marco. "The Neverendingly Told Story: Recent Biographies of Aleister Crowley" *Aries*. 3. 2. (2003): 224-245.

Peckham, Morse. "Victorian Counterculture" *Victorian Studies*. 18. (1975): 257-276.

Raine, Kathleen. "Yeats, the Tarot, and the Golden Dawn" *The Sewanee Review*. 77. 1. (1969): 112-148.

Szónyi György E. "Myth and Magic: Victorian Enoch and Historical Contexts" in Peter J. Forshaw ed. *Lux in Tenebris. The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism*. Brill: Leiden. Boston. 2017. 269-295.

Thomas, Sophie. "Displaying Egypt: Archeology, Spectacle, and the Museum in the Early Nineteenth Century." *Journal of Literature and Science*. Vol 5. No. 1. (2012): 6-22.

Tully, Caroline. "Walk Like an Egyptian: Egypt as Authority in Aleister Crowley's Reception of *The Book of the Law*" *The Pomegranate*. 12. 1. (2010): 21-48.

Tully, Caroline. "Egyptosophy in the British Museum: Florence Farr, the Egyptian Adept and the Ka." in Christine Fergusson, Andrew Radford edd. *The Occult Imagination in Britain, 1875 – 1947*. Abingdon: Routledge. 2008. 131-145.

Tully, Caroline. "Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers and Isis" in Dave Evans, Dave Green (edd.). *Ten Years of Triumph of the Moon*. Harpenden: Hidden Publishing 2009.

Turner, Frank M. "The Victorian Conflict between Science and Religion: A Professional Dilemma" *Isis*. 69. 3. (1978): 356-376.

Urban, Hugh B. "The Beast with Two Backs: Aleister Crowley, Sex Magic and the Exhaustion of Modernity" *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*. 7. 3. (2004): 7-25.

Urban, Hugh. "Unleashing the Beast: Aleister Crowley, Tantra and Sex Magic in Late Victorian England" *Esoterica*. 5. (2003) online. [http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeV/Unleashing\\_the\\_Beast.htm](http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeV/Unleashing_the_Beast.htm) 4 April 2014.

Van Kleeck, Justin Scott. "The Art of the Law: Aleister Crowley's Use of Ritual and Drama" *Esoterica*. 5. (2003) online. <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeV/ArtofLaw.htm> 4 April 2014.

### *Summary*

The topic of my study is the reception of ancient Egypt in the turn of the century context of Western esotericism in Britain, through the examples of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and the early works of Aleister Crowley. This is done through close textual criticism, the examination of the available Golden Dawn primary sources: rituals, lectures, and other written materials, and a close reading of Crowley's *Liber AL*, being the foundational text of the religion of Thelema. Special attention is given to the Egyptian sources and motifs that were re-contextualized and re-interpreted in a syncretic fashion by the examined authors.

The dissertation is divided to six large sections. The Introduction and Method and Assumptions section details the reason for the choice of this field, the broader developments and conceptual foundations of the study of Western esotericism, as well as the methods and primary sources used in the study. The second part contextualizes the Golden Dawn and Crowley in the broader cultural developments of the late nineteenth century Britain, reexamines the so called "Occult Revival", and the shifting attitudes towards Egypt, and the general beliefs surrounding it. The third part examines the sources and influences of the highly syncretic system of the Golden Dawn, providing a concise overview of the most prominent influences found in the order's materials. The fourth section focuses on the full Golden Dawn material, written mostly by S. L. MacGregor Mathers, through a close reading of the textbooks of the rituals, lectures, and other written materials. The sources employed are both published material, printed in the twentieth century, and manuscripts from the Gerald Yorke collection, containing copies of rituals, Knowledge Lectures, and Flying Rolls as well. After the enumeration of the various Egyptian motifs found in the material I attempt to categorize them based on function and depth of embeddedness in the Golden Dawn beliefs. The fifth section contextualizes Aleister Crowley in the turn of the century cultural context, detailing his connection to Mathers and the events leading to the creation of the *Liber AL*, as well as the sources that influenced the book. The last section is a close reading of the book, cataloging the various Egyptian motifs present in the text.

These are followed by the last chapter, the Conclusions, where I summarize the key discoveries found during the study, and draw the conclusions about the reception of ancient Egypt in the two examined examples, and how Egyptians motifs and sources were used to fulfill numerous roles in the texts, from visual representations of legacy, through proofs of legitimacy to conveyers of cosmological beliefs. Finally I show some areas where future research, with the method used in this study, could be done to further broaden our understanding on the developments of Western esotericism, and the effect it left on contemporary occulture.



### Összefoglaló

Dolgozatom témája az ókori Egyiptom recepciója a századforduló Nagy-Britanniájának ezoterikus irányzataiban, a Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn és Aleister Crowley korai munkásságának példájának vizsgálatán keresztül. A vizsgált források a Golden Dawn rituális, tanító és egyéb írott anyagai, illetve a *Liber AL*, amely a Thelema vallás egyik alapszövege. A vizsgálat módszere szövegkritikán alapul, így fényt derítve a forrásokra és hatásokra, amelyek befolyással bírtak rájuk, különös tekintettel az egyiptomi forrásokra és motívumokra, melyeket új kontextusba helyeztek egy szinkretikus vallási közegben.

A dolgozat hat fő egységre oszlik. Az első rész tartalmazza a bevezetést, mely megadja a témaválasztás okát és kontextusát, a nyugati ezoterizmus kutatásának kurrens fejleményeit és elméleti alapvetéseit, valamint a dolgozatban használt módszertani alapokat és felvetéseket. A második rész megvizsgálja a tágabb történeti környezetet, a 19. század Nagy-Britanniájának kulturális fejleményeit, átértelmezi az úgy nevezett „okkult újjáéledés” időszakát és az ókori Egyiptom értelmezésének főbb kérdéseit. A harmadik rész a Golden Dawn világnézetének kialakulásáért felelős hatásokat és forrásokat gyűjti össze, elhelyezve így a nyugati ezoterikus hagyomány folyamataiban. A negyedik egység a Golden Dawn, és legfőképp S. L. MacGregor Mathers a legbefolyásosabb alapító tag, által hátrahagyott forrásokat vizsgálja. Ehhez nyomtatott és kéziratos források egyaránt felhasználásra kerülnek. Miután az összes azonosítható egyiptomi motívumot összegyűjtöttem kísérletet teszek ezek kategorizálására és annak meghatározására, hogy ezek az elemek milyen szerepet töltek be a Golden Dawn világképében és hitvilágában. Az ötödik rész Aleister Crowley életének áttekintése a *Liber AL* elkészültéig és publikálásáig, valamint az elkészítésében felhasznált források ismertetése. A hatodik egység a *Liber AL* kritikai olvasata és az abban megtalálható egyiptomi motívumok összegyűjtése és rendszerezése.

A dolgozat vége tartalmazza a végkövetkeztetéseket, amelyekhez a források vizsgálatán keresztül jutottam. Számba veszi, hogy milyen szerepeket töltek be ókori egyiptomi források a vizsgált korpuszban melyek az egyszerű vizuális reprezentációtól az önlegitimáción át a mélyebb kozmológiai és világnézeti elképzelések kifejtéséig terjedtek. Bár az önértelmezésben a vizsgált szerzők számára az utolsó kategória volt a legfontosabb, a vizsgálat során rávilágítok arra, hogy a legitimációs törekvések igen komoly hangsúlyt kaptak. Végezetül felvillantok néhány területet, ahol hasonló módszerekkel érdemes lenne megvizsgálni a rendelkezésre álló forrásokat, hogy még átfogóbb képet kapjunk a nyugati ezoterikus hagyomány fejlődéséről és arról, hogy mindez milyen nyomott hagyott a kortárs ellenkultúra bizonyos szegmensein.