

MAGICAL REVIVAL: OCCULTISM AND THE CULTURE OF
REGENERATION IN BRITAIN, c. 1880-1929

Jennifer Walters

A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English Studies
University of Stirling

2007

Abstract

This thesis is a cultural study of the Magical Revival that occurred in Britain, 1880-1929. Magical Revival denotes a period in the history of occultism, and the cultural history of Britain, during which an upsurge in interest in occult and magical ideas is marked by the emergence of newly-formed societies dedicated to the exploration of the occult, and into its bearing on life. Organisations discussed are the Theosophical Society, the Golden Dawn, and the less well known Astrum Argentum. 'Magical Revival' has further significance as the principal, but overlooked, aim of those societies and individuals was regeneration.

Scholarship on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century occultism is influenced by a longstanding preference for the esoteric over the exoteric aspects of occultism. It has tended to emphasise themes of abstraction, the psychological, and the esoteric, and has promulgated a view of occultism as static and impervious. From the outset, however, this thesis argues that approaching the Magical Revival from the purview of the esoteric is limiting, and that it screens its own significant themes and affinities with mainstream culture. It suggests that what needs to be prepared is a study which reads occultism with a close attention to its own terms of engagement and description. This is the aim of this thesis.

The thesis offers a way of reading the occult activity of the period that privileges its exotericism. It seeks to pursue the links between an identifiable culture of occultism and conventional cultural discourses and activities towards an

understanding of the movement as one actively constituting itself and producing, rather than obscuring, knowledge in relation to the social and cultural moment from which it arose. The occult topics and tendencies identified include evolution; ceremonial magic and astral travel; the body in occultism; and the nature of the occult experience. Others include the life and medical sciences; the philosophy of religion; and physical culture. The following questions underpin the thesis: In what ways did the Magical Revival connect with contemporary concerns? What does its activities, written records, literary and other material productions reveal about the nature of those connections? What does a closer attention to the textual and lived culture of the Magical Revival contribute to existing understanding of its place in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century culture?

In answering those questions the thesis proposes that, in its systematic identification and addressing of cultural and social needs, general and specific, the Magical Revival should be viewed as closer to the social mainstream than is presently appreciated. Moreover, that the occultists' efforts towards individual and cultural regeneration, take place within a broader cultural movement away from social thought dominated by degeneration, towards thinking directed towards regeneration.

Contents

Abstract	i
Table of Contents	iii
Acknowledgements and Declaration	v
Introduction	1
Esotericism and occultism	16
Recent cultural scholarship on the occult	22
1880-1929	31
Chapter outlines	35
I. THE MAGICAL REVIVAL, 1880-1900	
1. ‘the science of life’: Theosophical Thought in the Late Nineteenth Century	41
Theosophical Thought: Between spiritualism and initiation	51
Nordau’s ‘cardinal mark’ of degeneracy	57
Theosophical Evolution	66
2. ‘the art of living’: <i>Fin-de-siècle</i> Occultism and Ceremonial Magic in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn	81
Nineteenth-century occultism	86
Fin de siècleism, initiation, and occult therapeutics	89
A new constitution	108
II. THE MAGICAL REVIVAL, 1900-1929	
3. Rejuvenating the Occult Body	113
i. The body before 1900	118
Treatment of the body in occultism	118
Medical ideas of life, death and the body	124
ii. ‘The first symptoms of regeneration’	135
iii. The occult body in the age of regeneration	142
Embodying ‘the earthly pedigree’	144
Physical Culture and the Astrum Argentum	148

4. ‘The Method of Science, The Aim of Religion’:	
<i>The Equinox</i>, a Testament to the Occult Experience	169
i. The aims of the A.A., and description of <i>The Equinox</i>	175
ii. The ‘wisdom’ texts	184
William James and <i>The Varieties of Religious Experience</i>	184
The Influence of <i>Varieties</i> on Scientific Illuminism	193
iii. ‘a finely unpopular magazine’	208
Conclusion	235
Appendices	
1. ‘Drawings of comparative skeletons’	252
2. ‘Darwin’s scheme showing the evolution of the species’	253
3. <i>Punch</i> cartoon ‘An old lady asking her doctor about “Violet Ray”’	254
4. ‘(a) Seventy year old patient before the Steinach Operation; (b) Two Months after the Steinach Operation’	255
5. ‘Power in Repose’	256
6. Before-and-After ‘physical condition of the youth of the nation’	257
7. ‘Life of the Author as told in Photographs’	258
8. Farnese Hercules and Eugen Sandow	259
9. ‘Photo of the Author in Semi-Relaxed attitude’	260
10. ‘Pramayama Properly Performed’ asanas 1-3	261
11. ‘Pramayama Properly Performed’ asanas 4-7	262
12. ‘Supplementary Instruction in Asana’ positions 1-3	263
13. ‘The Four Positions’	264
14. Notes on the publication details of <i>The Equinox</i>	265
15. Title page from <i>The Equinox</i>	267
16. Title page for ‘The Rites of Eleusis’, <i>The Equinox</i>	268
Bibliography	269

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the Faculty of Arts, University of Stirling, for funding this doctoral thesis. The basic research work could not have been undertaken had it not been for the generous decision of the Faculty to provide financial assistance for three years. I would also like to acknowledge, with thanks, three separate Faculty of Arts, and Department of English travel grants that supported archival research in London.

For access to archival and written sources, I am grateful to custodians and staff of the Warburg Institute, University of London; the Wellcome Library, London; Senate House Library, University of London; the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; University Libraries in Stirling and Glasgow.

I am greatly indebted to my supervisor, Professor Glennis Byron, for her support, advice, and encouragement.

I would like to thank the staff and research students of the Department of English Studies at Stirling who have supported and encouraged my research. Special thanks must be offered to Dr Dale Townshend; Dr Marilyn Michaud; Jessica Dyson; Jennifer Bann; and Andrew Sneddon, all of whom listened to my ideas and offered kind advice.

Finally, my most grateful thanks go to my family, most especially my parents, whose moral support is always the greatest comfort.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all critical and other sources (literary and electronic) have been specifically and properly acknowledged, as and when they occur in the body of my text.

.....6 October 2007

If we want to penetrate into the deeper issues of occultism it is not enough that we should approach it out of intellectual curiosity; this will reveal us no more than its outer form. The Occult Path is not so much a subject of study as a way of life.

Dion Fortune, *What is Occultism?*

Introduction

On 10 November 1892, two people, referred to in records as S.S.D.D. and, F., made the preparations necessary for entry to the astral plane. Their aim was to converse with the goddess Isis. In order to focus their minds on the figure of Isis, S.S.D.D. and F. took the tarot trump card depicting the Empress and contemplated the image until it became, 'spiritualized, heightened in colouring, purified in design and idealised'. They considered Isis to be properly envisaged when inessential aspects of her pictorial representation had dissolved and only her essence remained. Once S.S.D.D. and F. were content that this had occurred, they pronounced, 'in vibratory manner', 'Daleth', and passed, together, into the astral realm. What follows is an extract from their account of the event:

Then, in spirit saw a greenish blue distant landscape, suggestive of mediaeval tapestry. Effort to ascend was then made; rising on the planes; seemed to pass up through the clouds and then appeared a pale green landscape and in its midst a Gothic temple of ghostly outlines marked with light. Approached it found the temple gained in definiteness and seemed a solid structure. Giving the signs of the Netzach Grade (because of Venus) was able to enter; giving also Portal signs and 5 = 6 signs in thought form. Opposite the entrance perceived a Cross with three bars and a dove upon it; and

beside this, were steps leading downwards into the dark, by a dark passage.¹

The clear statement of aims, the use of coded initials, and the explanatory working note, ‘because of Venus’, suggest that the astral explorers have prior knowledge, experience, indeed, expertise in the procedure described, and that this astral excursion is part of a larger venture. This has been confirmed. Antiquarian scholars and historians of the occult have revealed for twentieth and twenty-first century researchers, that such pursuits were characteristic of an occult milieu active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Britain, and particularly in England.² As Alex Owen says of the records which those documenters have brought to light, ‘the codes have been cracked’ and the identity of magicians, and their allegiances with the societies that emerged to accommodate and advance their explorations have been traced.³

Thus, it is known that S.S.D.D. is the abbreviated magical motto of Sapientia Sapienti Dono Data, Florence Farr. Farr is better known in another right as an actress, *New Age* columnist, and the one-time object of the affections of W.B. Yeats. The other astral explorer, Donorum Dei Dispensatio Fidelis, is Elaine Simpson of whose extra-magical life less is known. The shortening of the latter’s

¹ [Florence Farr, and Elaine Simpson,] ‘Flying Roll No. 4’, *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic and Alchemy...Being Hitherto Unpublished Golden Dawn Material*, ed. by Francis King (Wellingborough: Aquarian, 1987), pp. 57-59 (p. 58).

² A number of texts have been written by amateur and professional scholars who secured access to private collections of occult material, particularly pertaining to the Golden Dawn, and duly published their findings. On the whole they are focussed on the personalities involved in occultism, describing the structure and activity of the Golden Dawn, and accounting for its collapse. They have proved indispensable in plotting a general sense of the late nineteenth-century magical order, see: R.A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians, The Rise and Fall of A Magical Order* (Northants: Aquarian, 1983); Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of The Golden Dawn: A Documentary History of a Magical Order, 1887-1923* (Northants: Aquarian, 1985); Francis King, *Modern Ritual Magic: The Rise of Western Occultism* (Dorset: Prism, 1989).

³ Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of Modern* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), p. 2.

rightful magical name further confirms the familiarity of the event. Their magical *alma mater* was the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, to which Yeats is widely-known to have belonged, and the establishment of which is accepted as the peak of the Magical Revival. Their account of 10 November 1892 is preserved in the Order's 'Flying Rolls' which members were free to apply to access, and to which Adepti, the higher-level initiates, were required to contribute.⁴ The extract is supplied here as an aperture into the magical activity that this thesis takes as its subject. And the analysis that follows as an introduction to the three broad thematic and critical concerns regarding the place of occultism in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century culture that this thesis addresses, and in relation to which it is positioned.

⁴ Co-founder of the Golden Dawn, S.L. MacGregor Mathers, edited and translated occult wisdom texts such as, *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra Melin the Mage* (1883: Author; and, London: J.M. Watkins, 1900); *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (1887: Author; and New York: Theosophical Publishing House, 1912); and *The Key of Solomon the King* (London: George Redway, 1889). These acquainted members of the Golden Dawn, and others, with the broad philosophical and traditional context of their work. However, more precise and practical instruction was supplied by manuscript master-documents. As neophytes progressed through the grades of attainment they became eligible to apply for access to documents which increased in complexity, with the hierarchy. The documents would be supplied and the students could loan them for an agreed period. Only with the expressed permission of the Cancellarius (secretary) were they allowed to transcribe them for themselves. Furthermore, they were required, along with all correspondence and material pertaining to the Order, to be kept in a box dedicated to the purpose and 'kept out of reach of outsiders'. See: 'Isis Urania Temple of the G.D. in the Outer (May 1900) – Bye Laws', Warburg Institute, London, Yorke Collection, NS 7. All subsequent references to documents in the Yorke Collection will appear: 'Yorke Collection, Folder Number'. All documents in the collection have been accessed, and are referenced, with the kind permission of Librarian Dr. Jill Kraye. In *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of Modern Alex Owen* draws on the Yorke Collection, although her referencing of the material differs to mine here. It is my understanding that the collection has been re-classified since she accessed the material, although there is considerable duplication of documents within the collection because Yorke transcribed and typed much of the material, this might account for the differences too. Most of the material is in loose bound folders, I reference a document title, some of which are supplied and some of which I have deemed descriptive, and the folder number that relates to the electronic catalogue of the Yorke Collection available for access in the Warburg Library.

Putting aside for the time being the sense in which this thesis uses key terms such as occultism, the occult, and magic, the technique described assumes the primacy of psychological and spiritual experience over material existence. Elements of both content and composition convey this, the passage's ostensible theme. Described as hazy and transient, and reminiscent of a mediaeval tapestry, the landscape is constituted of fantasy qualities consistent with the clairvoyance methods of the Adepti. Muted colours, ethereal scenery, and textual gestures 'in spirit saw', 'in thought form', and 'seemed to', reinforce that the adepts are seeing and moving in spirit and in psyche. Accordingly, the absence of pronouns, and the lack of discernible personal narrative voice causes a sense of detachment as if this account itself is dictated from the astral plane. The nature of their undertaking, likewise, imitates the mythic quest.

In this passage, however, what is carefully established about the ethereal features of the astral realm, and the experience of exploring it, is summarily confounded. The allusion to the mediaeval tapestry introduces a conflict between the astral and the material by rooting this scene in another manufactured scene. While psychological interaction is apparently sustainable, representation of the event depends on material comparisons. The central icon of the Gothic temple reinforces this tension in two ways. Firstly, its style, stipulated, complicates the privileged position of the spiritual over the material that astral travel suggests. Gothic design is unique in its liberal attention to architectural and ornamental detail and, most significantly, in its rejection of the traditional relationships between solid and void, material and space. Its very construction deconstructs architectural imperatives to

encourage a spiritual reaction. Its physical structure *is* its transcendentalism; what the Gothic temple is materially is what it is spiritually. In one sense, it is well-placed in the scene, and in another incongruent in its materiality, ‘it gained in definiteness and seemed a solid structure’. Consequently, it signals the pointed issue of the relationship between the material and spiritual upon which magic is predicated. However, as this thesis argues, scholarship has been responsible for promoting the view that the non-material, that is the spiritual and the psychological, defines the work of the Magical Revival. If not erroneous exactly, that view is at least incomplete. As with the Gothic temple, acts of magic, and the occult worldview by which they are engendered, are as much directed to the material everyday as to the astral eternal and universal. The bearing of the one upon the other is, in the broadest sense, the line of enquiry suggested by the occultists’ writing and practical pursuits, and the one this thesis seeks to describe.

The second way in which the Gothic temple gestures towards the method of the thesis involves its context, moreover, its uncertain historicity. Although the passage invokes the middle ages, the Gothic temple cannot be distinguished as mediaeval with any certainty. Rather, it straddles two, even three, eras of the Gothic: the twelfth century and the origins of Gothic architecture on the one hand; the Gothic Revivalist architecture of the late nineteenth century on the other; and in the interim, the Late Gothic *c.*1500 which Ethan Matt Kavalier shows to have been consistently viewed by art historians in terms of a ‘lithic’ remnant ‘trespass[ing]’ on the Renaissance.⁵ What the temple’s uncertain origin means here is that the issues

⁵ Ethan Matt Kavalier, ‘Renaissance Gothic: Pictures of Geometry and Narratives of Ornament’, *Art History*, 29: 1 (February 2006), 1-46 (p. 3). For more general discussions of Gothic architecture, see: Graham Ovenden, ‘Gothic Art’, *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*, ed. by Marie Mulvey-Roberts

of authenticity and imitation, continuity and contemporaneity, are raised, highlighting the same in respect to the Magical Revival. Occultism underwent renaissances of its own that were coterminous with both the Late Gothic, and the Gothic Revival. Court physician for Elizabeth I, Dr John Dee (1527-1608), and his collaborator in occult matters, the self-proclaimed alchemist and medium Edward Kelley (1555-1597), developed a system of Enochian magic influenced by the Hermetic doctrine inherited from the Egyptian Theurgists. Hermetic thought held, at that time, widespread interest for philosophers, and it was magic developed from Hermetic instruction that the Golden Dawn was formed to practice over three-hundred years later.⁶ Should then, the temple be understood as an example of the original mediaeval Gothic, as the Late Gothic, or as the Revivalist Gothic successor of both? Historians William de Blécourt, Ronald Hutton, and Jean la Fontaine identify this question, cast more broadly, as central to interpretation of magic and witchcraft movements from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Of the magical practices of the twentieth century they suggest that they

display again the same two features that seem to have characterised witchcraft and magic, more than most cultural phenomena down the ages – a capacity to adapt to and reflect contemporary needs and aspirations and yet, at the same time, an identity based on what are perceived to be highly traditional forms.

Speculating further on the reason for the resilience of varieties of occultism:

It is as though they have survived for so long by being simultaneously responsive to the present and tied to the past; again

(London: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 266-267; and, Robert Branner, *Gothic Architecture* (New York: Braziller, 1961) <<http://www.columbia.edu/~eer1/branner.html>> [accessed 12 June 2004].

⁶ In the early 1900s a number of interest groups formed within the Golden Dawn. Members grouped together according the particular strands of magical activity they favoured. One such was the Sphere Group, in which Florence Farr and W.B. Yeats were active. Between 1900 and 1901, the group carried out a series of investigations into the efficacy of Dee and Kelley's Enochian system.

and again, they are re-invented to provide answers to immediate problems, yet always with reassurance – or perhaps threat – of a supposed continuity.

‘Witchcraft and magic, then’, in their words, ‘are marked by contemporaneity and by timelessness’. de Blécourt and others place this twin concern, perhaps a dialectic, at the heart of cultural manifestations of occultism, and therefore to scholarly approaches to it.⁷

This introduction will, shortly, expand on those methodological points raised by the intrusive Gothic temple. Before doing so, however, what happens to S.S.D.D. and F. after they ‘perceive[d] a Cross with three bars and a dove upon it’, and ‘steps leading downwards into the dark, by a dark passage’ introduces the experience of regeneration which, as it is replicated and represented throughout the period 1880-1929, is the central idea which this thesis examines. S.S.D.D. and F., ‘passing on in the dark emerged from the darkness on to a marble terrace brilliantly white, and a garden beyond’ where they encounter ‘a woman of heroic proportions’, the goddess Isis, who confirms for them the success of their quest. That S.S.D.D. and F. are ‘passing on’ is repeatedly emphasised, in contrast to, for instance, the enclosures described and reproduced in narrative and syntax in the Gothic narrative, with which the subterranean passage calls comparison.⁸ S.S.D.D. and F. sense no

⁷ Willem de Blécourt, Ronald Hutton, and Jean la Fontaine, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Twentieth Century* (London: Athlone Press, 1999), p. vii.

⁸ For dedicated discussions of Gothic narrative and metaphoric conventions see: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1976); and, Elizabeth R. Napier, *The Failure of Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-century Literary Form* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). It is in the works of the first wave of Gothic writing, 1764-1840, that the subterranean passage fetters associations with imprisonment and containment. The motif is highly suggestive of a plethora of issues turning on a fear of enclosure, these include, politics, gender, questions of history, nationalism, and subjectivity. Later Gothic finds its discursive power equally relevant and finds equivalents of the subterranean enclosure in the psyche, metropolis and institutions.

risk of being halted in the passage, earlier a dragon ‘meaning no harm’ moves aside for them, so that the Gothic suggestiveness of the subterranean passage is disabled; they will not fall foul of the claustrophobia it has brought to Gothic heroines, or cede to its deathly connotations, they will not submit to being buried alive, metaphorically or otherwise. Rather, their quest is light, life, completer, truer, and in reality. Isis tells them that they are justified in their quest, that they are welcome, and that they follow in the footsteps of countless others. Their final comments express fulfilment, they understand

that man’s hopes lay in following her [...] we solemnly gave our hearts [...] then, instead of feeling death, as our human imagination had led us to expect, we felt an influx of the highest courage and knew our own hearts were to be henceforth in touch with the strongest force in all the world.

Here, imagined on the astral plane, is the achievement of regeneration. They have forestalled the degeneration and death that the natural human imagination is conditioned to expect by willing entry into the cosmic consciousness. They describe their attainment as one involving holistic empathy with the forces of nature, and they indicate the expected durability of that state. Presently they depart, and issue their final message. It confirms the completion of their astral quest, and enjoins the amateur magicians for whom their record is partly prepared: ‘we went away, feeling glad that we had learned that he who gives away his life, will gain it’.⁹

This was the essence of hoped-for regeneration that stimulated the occult-minded to give over a large measure of their ordinary life to absorbing occult philosophy, to sign-up to societies which would instruct them in this, and magical

⁹ ‘Flying Roll No. IV’, p. 59.

orders which would facilitate its practical implementation. In meeting this need, no fewer than eleven organisations emerged. Three of them will be discussed in detail here: The Theosophical Society (f. 1883); The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (f. 1888); The Astrum Argentum (f. 1906), and selected others will be discussed in reference.¹⁰ The Theosophical Society differs from the other two in that it was not a magical order. It is included here, however, because its theoretical approach had an important bearing on the subsequent orders. It also must be recognised as the

¹⁰ A number of Orders are understood to have grown out of the Golden Dawn either as provincial satellite orders, more or less under its jurisdiction, or formed of members who left the original order following the leadership debacle of 1900. A document in the Yorke Collection, typed by Yorke but otherwise of uncertain origin, lists the official G.D. temples as: Isis Urania Temple No 3, London (this, it appears, is the Order known as the Golden Dawn); Hermes Temple No 4, Bristol; Horus Temple No 5, Bradford; Amen-Ra Temple No 6, Edinburgh; Ahathoor Temple No 7, Paris; and, not allocated a temple number on this list, Osiris, Western-Super-Mare. Of these a number appear to have stayed in existence after the disintegration of the Golden Dawn. The Amen-Ra is generally known to have been run by J.W. Brodie-Innes under the auspices of Berridge's The Rosicrucian Order of the Alpha and Omega which was originally founded by Mathers (and made up largely of his supporters in the leadership contest). Others were established after the Golden Dawn, including: The Stella Matutina (The Star of the Morning) started by Dr. R. W. Felkin in 1902 and attended by J. W. Brodie-Innes before he went to the Amen-Ra; A. E. Waite's Holy Order of the Golden Dawn (which is not listed in Yorke's record, but, again, is widely known of) emphasised mysticism over magic and re-Christianised the Golden Dawn rituals, members of this included Charles Williams and Evelyn Underhill; finally, recorded by Yorke in the first reference to it I have come across is the Martin Temple founded by Carnegie Dickson. Not on Yorke's list, probably because of its later founding date, is the Fraternity of the Inner Light (f. 1922), which is still at work under the name Society of the Inner Light. It was founded by Dion Fortune (Violet Firth) after she left the Golden Dawn and was modelled on the Freemasonry degrees. Fortune's biographers provide an introduction to this order, in Alan Richardson, *Priestess: The Life and Magic of Dion Fortune* (Northants: Aquarian, 1987), pp. 66-143; and, Janine Chapman, *Quest for Dion Fortune* (Maine: Weiser, 1993), pp. 6-22, & p. 122. Two others should be noted, firstly, The Hermetic Society (f. 1884) which was established by former members of the T.S. Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland following a clash between themselves and A.P. Sinnett over the direction of the order. Under the Society Kingsford taught an 'individual theology' of 'religious occultism' that was 'drawn from Christianity, Renaissance magic, Eastern mysticism, and late Victorian feminism', and was, as Janet Oppenheim considers, 'resoundingly her own', Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 187; for more information on this order see, Edward Maitland, *Anna Kingsford: Her Life, Letters, Diary and Work*, 2 vols, ed. by Samuel Hopgood Hart (London: John Watkins, 1913). Secondly, the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (the Rosicrucian Society in England) of which the (disputed) foundation date is 1867. Its establishment precedes those discussed in this thesis, but discussion of it is omitted because the organisations selected are more firmly 'exoteric', that is, were concerned with broadening the appeal of their philosophy, the S.R.A. by contrast assumed itself an elite organisation and offshoot of freemasonry. For more detail on this order, see, Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 72-73, and Ronald Hutton, 'Modern Pagan Witchcraft', *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, vol. 6, The Twentieth Century* (London: Athlone Press, 1999), pp. 3-79, (pp. 3-13).

organisation that brought occult thought to the attention of the British public. A vast amount of literature was produced on the occult and the abundance of interests that umbrella term encompassed. Occult ideas found their way into periodicals with mainstream readerships and popular fiction, signalling a widespread general interest. The nature of that interest was general but fervent and considered to be of the highest importance. The occult's possible bearing on life was a central question of the age, even where it obliged debunking, it obliged engagement. Likewise, the demand was gratified by the launch of a surfeit of specialist titles. It was truly a surfeit: many fell away after a short run unable to compete in a flooded market, but the principal titles, such as *Lucifer*, *Occult Review*, *Theosophical Review* enjoyed relatively lasting existences.¹¹ But, at the centre of this generic interest was a core of organisations and practitioners who must be distinguished from the common curiosity by their desire to act on what they had learned. And they did act, in writing, in lectures, in public, as well as *in camera*, and it is with them, and the evidence of their engagement that this thesis is interested. These people, in pursuit of individual revival by means of magic, were constitutive of what is now termed the Magical Revival.

S.S.D.D. and F.'s record of astral projection brings to the fore three concerns central to the nature of magical practice as it was conducted during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: the problem of the material; the question of

¹¹ See: Douglas G. Ellson's research cited in Robert Galbreath 'The History of Modern Occultism: A Bibliographical Survey', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 5: 3 (1971), 98-126, (p. 99). Ellson surveys publications on Spiritualism and Psychical Research and counts 1216 titles published in America and England in the period 1891-1940. Both countries experienced a peak of interest in both subjects in the four year period, 1916-1920. The nature of the relationship between those subjects and Theosophy, and by extension, occultism and magic is described in Chapter One of this thesis.

context; and the pursuit of regeneration. Before proceeding, in the next section, to describe how these topics have been treated in existing accounts of occultism and the bearing of those on the approach and content of this thesis, the close of this introductory section will recapitulate those topics and outline their broader associations and significance. The question of the material is shown to be important in two ways, both initiated by the presence of the Gothic temple. What the temple places at the centre of the magical or occult experience is a confrontation between the material and the spiritual. Theosophy, and all magical practice in the period between 1880 and 1929 is based upon the distinction between the spiritual and the material, firstly, inasmuch as the choice to embark upon a lifestyle ‘dedicated to the spiritual development of the practitioners and the discovery of the inner workings of the universe’, as Hutton summarises it, represents an identification with the significance of the spiritual as the determining category of existence, over the material.¹² However, the nature of that embarkation has not yet been properly considered according to the terms of engagement imagined and prescribed by the occultists. To be sure, S.S.D.D. and F. make their passage through the Gothic pathway *en route* to a mystical ascension, but they depart and become again Florence Farr and Elaine Simpson. Their magical endeavour is determined by a desire for fulfilment on the material plane; the astral is a place from which to retrieve the knowledge, not a diversion from the ordinary life. It is important to emphasise that their record is made for the purpose of informing others in matters of method, and astral etiquette. Although their meeting Isis and their recorded feeling

¹² Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, p. 93.

of illumination is a positive result inasmuch as it confirms the completion of their astral quest, the task remains to inform by it, the everyday.

This leads to the second point. What this emphasises, moreover, is the attention that participants in the Magical Revival paid to their methods. Attendant to all magical acts were systems of attainment, progression, other acts of description, re-inscription, recording and re-enacting which each have different explanatory, confirmatory and initiatory roles. These aspects of occultism are largely ignored by critics, or rather, are taken as evidence of activity and philosophy, but are not subject to interpretation as documents of cultural interest. Scholarship has made them incidental to the essence of occultism which is found elsewhere, in the esoteric ideas which lie behind it, or in the sociological meanings of engagement, rarely historically defined. However, as the Magical Revival progresses, personalities accept or decline to matriculate with certain societies, new orders are established, an old order re-drafts and re-issues its constitution, in each case driven by points of method and operation, over points of philosophy. Exoteric concerns involving the nature of curricula, and objects of study, played a more than equal role in determining the Magical Revival; what emerges as a defining internal narrative of the Magical Revival is a pattern of aspiration for practical and individualised study increasingly. The emphasis placed by this thesis is on the value of directing attention towards the material aspects of the culture of the Magical Revival, the textual, the literary, and the performance and so forth. Scholarship has attended more consistently to the spiritual, the psychological and

ontological aspects of the Magical Revival and thereby has obscured the history of its interaction with contemporary culture, society and ideas.

This leads to the précis of the second two points: context and regeneration. As suggested, when the focus of interpretation is made the revealing cultural productions of the Magical Revival what is militated against is the view of the occultists as participants in a simplistically anachronistic project. It redirects attention away from the extent of their involvement in a tradition of magic, and opens the view to the nature of their involvement in the contemporary. Where the documentary history of orders insists on their being representatives of an intact tradition, such instances function instead to highlight their responsiveness not to tradition but to contemporary matters. What this also calls into question is what is at stake in the blending of the arcane and the contemporary. In this way, magical culture appears representative in a number of ways of broader culture, even functions as a prism through which to observe the condition of that culture. What is found by pursuing the external influences cited explicitly and integrated implicitly in the culture of the occult, is a broader cultural movement encompassing diverse theories and movements, arguing for, and attempting to facilitate regeneration by methods, and with recourse to principles akin to those of the Magical Revival.

This thesis is a study of the Magical Revival. It approaches the subject with a method different to those of the significant existing accounts of occultism, and through it, seeks to uncover an, as yet, unappreciated view of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century occultism. The terms of that method are suggested by

aspects of occultism evident in the writing and other activities of occultists from their explicit referencing of medical research, and developments in philosophy towards a science of religion, to a less obviously conscious textual negotiation of materialist-scientific writing. Such detail has not yet been the subject of interpretation, but is essential to a full understanding of the cultural event in its social and cultural context. In general, the thesis attends to the culture of occultism with the view to highlighting the practice and culture of occultism as a ‘lived’ movement in the broadest sense, in the manner described by Raymond Williams: ‘not only knowledge [...] in cultural production [...] the true range is from information and description, or naming and indication, to embodiment and performance’.¹³ Such a view has been elided by over-attention to the philosophy, at the expense of the arrangements put in place ‘on the ground’ so to speak, and by the concern to deduce the bearing that philosophy has had on more widely-recognised cultural and literary movements, for example, on modernism, psychoanalysis, feminism. While these readings have been immeasurably beneficial in calling scholarly attention to the place of occultism in the cultural scene, and to challenging the assumption that occultism represents an anachronistic fault line in civilisation and modernity either best glossed over, or needing to be exposed and condemned, there remains to be prepared a study which reads occultism with attention to its own terms of engagement and description. This is the aim of this thesis. What it offers is a view of the movement as one actively constituting itself, and producing knowledge in relation to, and for, the social and cultural moment from which it arose. The following questions underpin the thesis: In what ways did the Magical

¹³ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 139.

Revival connect with contemporary concerns? What do its activities, written records and literary productions reveal about the nature of those connections? What does a closer attention to the textual and 'lived' culture of the Magical Revival, contribute to existing knowledge of its place in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century culture? In answering those questions the thesis proposes that, in its systematic identification, and methodical addressing of cultural and social need, general and specific, the Magical Revival should be viewed as closer to the social mainstream than is presently appreciated. Moreover, the movement shows itself to be concerned with subverting degeneration and pursuing regeneration, a trend which is also detectable in wider culture. H.P. Blavatsky's description of occultism is the definition with which this thesis works: 'Occultism is the science of life, the art of living'.¹⁴ It captures the essence of the project of the Magical Revival. The occultists were engaged in reconstructing the category of 'life', both in broadest evolutionary terms, and in more local attentions, to physical health, and a critical examining of the role of the religious life in the twentieth century, on terms different to those presently lived and conditioned by dominant knowledge. Notions of regeneration inform all aspects of occultism at this time, yet the term, and the occultists' stated pursuit does not feature in existing accounts of the movement. By making their stated aims, and the methods they create for its realisation, the focus of attention, British culture at large is shown to be engaged along similar lines.

¹⁴'Editorial', *Lucifer*, I: I (September 1887), 1-7, (p. 7).

Esotericism and occultism

In order to reach a fuller understanding of the lived culture of occultism this thesis challenges the trend for privileging the background philosophy of occultism, the esoteric, above its working culture and practice. The traditional approach has its roots in the recognition of esotericism and occultism as different concerns. Previous attempts to define the terms demonstrate this. For example, in *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religions* (1976) Mircea Eliade cites Edward A. Tiryakian's essay 'Toward the Sociology of Exoteric Culture'. Tiryakian explains his understanding of 'occult':

I understand intentional practices, techniques, or procedures which: a) draw upon hidden or concealed forces in nature or the cosmos that cannot be measured or recognized by the instruments of modern science, and b) which have as their desired or intended consequences empirical results, such as either obtaining knowledge of the empirical course of events or altering them from what they would have been without this intervention...To go on further, in so far as the subject of occult activity is not just any actor, but one who has acquired specialized knowledge and skills necessary for the practices in question, and insofar as these skills are learned and transmitted in socially (but not publicly available) organized, routinized, and ritualized fashion, we can speak of these practices as occult sciences or occult arts.

Further, Eliade quotes Tiryakian's 'somewhat more delicate' definition of 'esotericism'. 'Tiryakian understands, by "esoteric," those'

religio-philosophic belief systems which underlie occult techniques and practices; that is, it refers to the more comprehensive cognitive mappings of nature and the cosmos, the epistemological and ontological reflections of ultimate reality, which mappings constitute a stock of knowledge that provides the grounds for occult procedures.

Both Tiryakian's initial definitions, and Eliade's confirmatory citation of them, place the 'occult' and 'esotericism' in a hierarchical relationship. The occult's practical application of occult knowledge means the term denotes a more vigorous, but, indelicate pursuit (extending Eliade's logic) as compared with esoteric which is privileged on account of its claims to ontological wisdom, again compared with the more lowly empiricism of the occult.¹⁵

The distinction has organised, implicitly and explicitly, all interpretation of occultism conducted by scholars across a number of disciplines. With some exceptions, articles published in journals *Aries* and *Esoterica* retain a close focus on the esoteric which affords the opportunity there to examine points of contact and divergences between mystery religions, and their bearing on western culture, with importance placed on understanding in terms of tradition.¹⁶ Where occultism has been made the subject of sociological enquiry, the social meaning of the appeal of being party to knowledge defined as marginal, especially at points in the history of cultures understood to be sustaining intellectual or technological renaissances, is, understandably, the pertinent question. Again, however, the 'surface manifestations' of the esoteric, that is the aspects of it that are publicly visible, are attended to as the evidence of deeper strains of thought at work, rather than for their relation to wider thought and other, non-occult, surface manifestations of cultural thought.¹⁷

¹⁵ Edward A. Tiryakian in Mircea Eliade, *Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religions* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 48.

¹⁶ See: *Aries*, first published in 2000; and less prestigious, but nonetheless indicative of the esoteric focus, *Esoterica*, first published in 1999. See, also: Anton Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition*, trans. by Christine Rhone (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

¹⁷ Edward A. Tiryakian, 'Preliminary Considerations', *On the Margin of the Visible: Sociology, The Esoteric, and The Occult*, ed. by Edward A. Tiryakian (New York: John Wiley, 1974), pp. 1-15, (p.

Mirroring the related tendencies to pursue the deeper drives, or elucidate perennial meanings, where occultism has been discussed in relation to literary culture, it has been to the psychological conduct, spiritual and metaphysical results pursued by occultists, and the philosophical import of those pursuits and their ideals, again, the esoteric, that the major share of criticism and interpretation of occultism has been dedicated. Historians and literary critics have been encouraged, it seems by the involvement of prominent figures such as modernist poet W.B. Yeats, and by the evidence of esoteric thinking in the work of further poets, T.S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound, to devote attention to the symbolic and mythopoeic meaning of occultism, and the ways in which it supplements and inspires other interpretations of history.¹⁸ In a prominent example of this approach with respect to modernism, Leon Surette's *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats and the Occult* (1993), the introduction begins with a synopsis of the literary-historical view of modernism current in 1993. It is so resonant of the general view of the occult that the reader is fully prepared, by the time it arrives, for the thesis statement regarding the 'occult provenance' of modernism (the prefiguring, it should be said, is assuredly the point). Expressing what it is to be "modern" in the modernist sense', Surette is close to expressing what might be imagined an Adept's definition of magical attainment, or at least describing the meanings motivated by the image and idea of the magus. 'To be "modern" [...] is to have transcended

2); see also, in the same publication, Marcello Truzzi, 'Definition and Dimensions of the Occult: Towards a Sociological Perspective', pp. 243-255.

¹⁸ See, for example: Leon Surette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats and the Occult* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); and, Dorothea E. von Mücke, *The Seduction of the Occult and the Rise of the Fantastic Tale* (California: University of Stanford Press, 2003).

history, it is to have climbed out of history into an unmediated, incorrigible realm of knowledge, and in that sense to have fulfilled history'.¹⁹ According to E.M. Butler, the myth of the magus, similarly, is one ostensibly 'sealed and set apart' which returns this survey to the esoteric.²⁰ Likewise, in the work of Yeats scholars in tracing the influence, particularly of Theosophical thought and the Golden Dawn system, on Yeats' writing, and its ideological significance for the composition of an Irish nationalism which drew heavily on symbolism, the preference is, of necessity, for the esoteric undertow of the magical systems.²¹ The assiduous work of Yeats in writing and disseminating open letters and position pieces towards the reformation of the Golden Dawn during the 1900 leadership debacle, and the features of those changes in relation to the Magical Revival, has gone unnoticed.²²

The inattention to the material shaping of the Magical Revival is one trend that this thesis is written to address. However, in addition to supplying research to redress the absence in existing readings, this thesis attempts to make a related suggestion that the weight of attention to the esoteric has given rise to an erroneous view of occult wisdom. For instance, to return to Surrette's argument, although the argument is that esoteric knowledge is being reformulated, and given a precarious secondary existence in the modernist aesthetic through expressions of the impossibility of embodiment, and the 'incorrigibility' of knowledge, which, says

¹⁹ Leon Surrette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats and the Occult* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), pp. 4-5.

²⁰ E.M. Butler, *The Myth of the Magus* (1948) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 2.

²¹ See: George Mills Harper, *Yeats and the Occult* (London: Macmillan, 1976).

²² See Yeats' letters to the Adepts, in: Yorke Collection, NS 7. Yeats was a fundamental force in securing the official acceptance of the study groups into which certain adepts formed themselves with the purpose of following narrower, dedicated work into areas in the company of others whom shared the interest.

Surrette, is explicitly occult, this is to abstract the theory and the philosophy from the practice. It is, therefore, to interpret esoteric philosophy in terms of a pool of knowledge to be tested on an ideological, discursive and aesthetic level. It is also to cast it as static, a perennial, context-less, impervious wisdom retrievable by an elect able to penetrate the veil of abstraction and allegory. William De Blécourt, Ronald Hutton and Jean la Fontaine also make this point within their introductory discussion, earlier cited, regarding the dual compulsion of occultism and witchcraft towards heritage as to the present: ‘The magic of the magus has never ceased to appeal for its solutions to problems of power and knowledge and yet its literature, too, has been remarkably canonical and static’.²³

This is, in one respect, the case as regards the occult movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; founding occultists at this time were at pains to confirm their insights antediluvian and themselves privy to a spiritual truth that was essentially a-historical, and the claim in respect to the Golden Dawn will frame the discussion to be had in Chapter Two of this thesis. However, in another way it is quite divorced from the culture of the Magical Revival as it is sensed through such texts as the Flying Rolls and other working and repository documents, texts and publications. The occultists of the Magical Revival viewed the knowledge with which they worked as set apart only insofar as it had been forced to be so from the Enlightenment onwards, and as orthodox religious doctrine and materialist science suppressed it. Neither was it for them static. Their central texts were not to be filtered through the clergy and were not sources which inspired in them

²³ de Blécourt, Hutton, and la Fontaine, p. vii.

unquestioning reverence. They were the products of pre-eminent magicians' experiences; accordingly they approached them as working documents, containing mystery and truth for sure, but not demanding automatic obedience. Rather, the knowledge was coming direct from secret chiefs, and from Hermetic philosophy and the Golden Dawn, and Astrum Argentum orders were instituted to elaborate working systems to bring about magical achievements and updating the received knowledge where appropriate, and producing new versions of the accounts of their predecessors.²⁴

Tiryakian's delineation of the esoteric and the occult has prescribed approaches to occultism across disciplines. It does so for this thesis, with the opposite focus, however, as it is to occultism defined exactly as Tiryakian has it that this thesis attends within the purview of the Magical Revival. Scholars working within the relatively recently emergent field of cultural history have found themselves well-placed to analyse the meaning of engagements with occultism within the broad context of culture. This thesis aligns itself with their work whilst maintaining its focus on the Magical Revival as a movement with a discrete narrative in relation to its cultural context, which the thesis seeks to add to the place

²⁴ An article published at the end of 2006 in *Modern Intellectual History* raises a number of questions regarding the historical/modern nature of occultism in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, its recent publication serves to highlight the originality of the way of reading the Magical Revival that this thesis is setting out. I footnote the article at this point in the Introduction in relation to a discussion of the occultists' updating of magical knowledge because Thomas Laqueur poses the following questions: 'Why was it [the occult] so attractive to great artists and ordinary people? What is modern about its modern forms and psychologized language of modernity; what is reactive and what genuinely creative; what constitutes a genuine new relationship between science and empiricism on the one hand and religion and metaphysics on the other [...]?' The first half of Laqueur's paper reviews Alex Owen's *The Place of Enchantment* (2004), and Corinna Treitel's *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (2004). Among his suggestions for reading the occult at this time is the importance of the research of William James, see: Thomas Laqueur, 'Why the Margins Matter: Occultism and the Making of Modernity', *Modern Intellectual History* 3:1 (2006), 111-135, p. 114 & 131.

they have demarcated for the historical study of occultism. Three central texts require comment in this introduction: Alex Owen's *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (2004); Ronald Hutton's *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (1999); and the earlier, *Theosophical Enlightenment* (1994).

Recent cultural scholarship on the occult

Alex Owen's monograph is, in a number of ways, an extension of the sociological studies of Tiryakian and Truzzi, although she takes a wider and more detailed view of the cultural scene in which occultism was present, and aligns it with intellectual life. Owen seeks to understand the meanings of magical practices at the nineteenth-century *fin de siècle* from the starting point of the Weberian theory of 'entzauberung', or disenchantment. The era surveyed is 1880-1914. Owen finds in it a triumphant and optimistic sense of modernity on the one hand, and, on the other, finds that modernity tinged with anxieties regarding a countering force of cultural decay. The two conditions frame her discussion of the occult, is it to be understood as evidence of a modern spirit, or of cultural decadence? Weber had divorced enchantment from modern society which is aligned rather with the secularising hands of 'rationalization and intellectualization'. Nonetheless, Owen, drawing on the work of historians H. Stuart Hughes, José Harris, and Owen Chadwick, describes a "rising tide" of a new spirituality' before 1914.²⁵ While she confirms

²⁵ Owen, p. 10, & p. 6.

that this surfacing, at this time, must be understood as ‘part of a narrative of changing religious sensibilities in Britain’, Owen explains that the Weberian sense of enchantment has broader ramifications: ‘The evocative term *enchantment* neatly captures the sense of the magical, the numinous, and a state of mind seemingly at odds with the modern outlook’, and not restricted to the question of religion.²⁶ What Owen argues for is a fuller sense of ‘a recuperated irrational’ that she finds to be in line with ‘developments in the understanding of mind and consciousness, developments that were themselves positing a dynamic relationship between the rational and irrational’.²⁷ Such diverse developments occult and otherwise turned on the sense that beyond the everyday landscape understood to constitute reality was another, the ‘ultimate’ one, which with its expansive view threw into sharp focus the minuteness of intelligence regarding human existence. Such terms seemed vague, but as Owen shows they were set to specific uses. In particular she notes the confluence of occult ideas with social objectives encapsulated by Holbrook Jackson’s ‘Transcendental View of Social Life’ and under which occultism and the broad remit of reformist politics should be understood to be in force.²⁸

Owen’s thesis is constructed with reference to the intellectual debates circulating at the *fin de siècle* and through the first decade of the twentieth century. She demonstrates how the occultists’ astral experiments, and their ‘fictionalising’ outlook, within the new occultism of the age are interpretable as experiments in formulating a new subjectivity. The occultists’ held themselves to be in tune with,

²⁶ Owen, p. 12.

²⁷ Owen, p. 13.

²⁸ Owen, p. 19, & p. 23.

or at least closer than others, to the newly apprehended abiding reality and were therefore central to the intellectual avant-garde in locating and describing a subjectivity fitting for the modern. In so doing she argues for the presence of the occult mind in the centre of pre-war British intellectual life, and therefore the irrational, ‘recuperated’ at the heart of the modern British mentality.

Turning more directly to the nature of the new occultism, which she terms it, the important factor of science is, in Owen’s study filtered through the intellectual and sociological approach she takes to the new occultism. The result is an important contribution to the growing study of the occult in culture, and it also serves to demonstrate further the nature of the refinements and redirection of approach in this thesis. Owen observes that its forging an affinity with science was one crucial way in which the new occultism gained cultural currency in its project of ‘refashioning spirituality’: ‘The new occultism in particular co-opted the language of science and staked a strong claim to rationality while at the same time undermining scientific naturalism as a worldview and rejecting the rationalist assumptions upon which it depended’. Among other things, she suggests, that this ‘indicates that there had been no straightforwardly triumphal march of scientific rationalism in the modern period’.²⁹ One of the aspects of the science-occultism contract which this thesis seeks to elucidate more thoroughly is the points of contact in that relationship, as it is represented textually and in embodiment, and the question of embodiment, the material again, is the further aspect of Owen’s new occultism which requires further discussion. Intellectual and sociological themes

²⁹ Owen, p. 13.

explain much about the largest ideological contacts between occultism and intellectual culture. Textual, and more closely cultural, and social readings are invited by Owen's study, and contribute important texture regarding, for instance, aspects of textual and physical culture. This thesis pursues those and considers attention to the literary and the textual detail to be essential to reaching a more closely-read sense of occultism.

The value of attending to textual detail and of examining the writing of occultists for more than their evincing of occult philosophy is demonstrated by Ronal Hutton and Joscelyn Godwin's publications. Each places the question of the construction of occultism (modern pagan religion more specifically in Hutton's case, and Theosophy in Godwin's) at the core of historical accounts of magical groups. Theosophy and theosophists are revealed to have been at work in Britain from c. 1750 and in Europe from c. 1540, with Blavatsky's Theosophical Society designated as the accepted apogee of the theosophical movement, and are consistently described in terms of its, and their, radical intellectualism. The affinities and outright connections that are traced between theosophical activity and designs for political or social reform have led to conclusions that place theosophy squarely in view, in, for example, the emergence of post-Enlightenment natural history via the amateur projects of the Richard Payne Knight milieu, and late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century reformist politics and feminism via personalities such as Annie Kingsford and Annie Besant.³⁰

³⁰ The first is Joscelyn Godwin's, the second is the subject of Joy Dixon's monograph *The Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) which is drawn on in more detail in Chapter One.

Enlightenment is the pre-eminent philosophical concept against which theosophy is judged here. Joscelyn Godwin's phrase 'theosophical enlightenment' is a direct challenge to what remained an established view in academia in the early 1990s, that esoteric religions were interpretable only in terms of naïve spirituality. *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (1994) was the first major contribution to what I have identified as a new type of writing on the occult. It was the first publication to confront the general distaste for such topics of study, and, importantly, it broke with what Anton Faivre has termed the 'perennialist attitude' within the (largely American) contingent of practicing and 'writing' theosophists. Although Godwin's Preface that introduces the book as, 'an intellectual history of occult and esoteric currents' suggests that a continuation of some kind was found to be traceable, its implied refutation of perennialist interpretations, and its disturbing of academic consensus, is achieved by its reclamation of 'Enlightenment'.³¹

For the theosophists and scholars of mystery religions enlightenment is the state of, or process of, to take the Middle English origin, being made, or being 'luminous' and luminosity features in some way in the iconography and doctrine of all occult religions, in turn with their origins in Eastern religions.³² The later conception of enlightenment 'to give intellectual understanding to' and its associative intellectual movement in seventeenth century Europe, The Enlightenment is the first signification in academia.³³ The interest of Godwin's approach lies not in any simple insistence that the other enlightenment is worthy of

³¹ Godwin, p. xi.

³² Glynnis Chantrell (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Word History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 178.

³³ Chantrell, p. 178.

study, but in his taking both definitions to one another and suggesting their correspondences at particular historical moments. A current of sorts is indeed found, but this is not a pure strain of wisdom pertaining to the achievement of spiritual enlightenment, rather it is a current in which both enlightenments are compounded. In this version the ‘spirit’ of The Enlightenment is found to be put to work for, and be worked for by its etymological relation, thereby suggesting a closer ideological relationship than previously supposed.

On repeated occasions from the early Romantic period to the early twentieth century the circumstances of this relationship are made apparent. For example, Godwin notes ‘the revisionist approach to myth’ apparent in ‘the seventy years around 1800’, an approach in line with Enlightenment enquiry and in one discussion of such highlights the appeal of the Orphic and Eleusinian Mysteries to those researching ancient religion.³⁴ During the years in focus a number of publications appeared with a common methodology. The first, by ‘Baron’ d’Hancarville (the pseudonym of Pierre François Hugues), a four-volume annotated catalogue of a collection of vases acquired by the newly established British Library appeared 1766-1767, and concluded that the vases depicted the Eleusinian Mysteries which were believed to dramatise the principle of the Unity of God. In 1772 *L’Antiquité dévoilée par ses usages*, attributed to the Mythographer Nicholas Boulanger and re-written by Baron d’Holbach, a philosopher known for his extreme atheistic views, again, arrived at a similar interpretation this time emphasising the Orphic belief in the soul’s survival after death. The significance of these researches is, for Godwin,

³⁴ Godwin, p. xi, see particularly Chapters One-Four.

the process of relocation of origins. Monotheism and the principle of life after death were not to gain cultural currency until Christian doctrine became established, and in the re-writing of their origin as pre-Christian and pagan Godwin finds ‘a strategic move in the Enlightenment’s campaign to strip Christianity of its pretensions to uniqueness’.³⁵

More obviously connected to the central tenet of Theosophy as promoted by Blavatsky, and to be the subject of discussion in Chapter One, d’Hancarville’s *Recherches sur l’origine, l’esprit, et les progress des arts de la Grèce* (1785) argues for the study of antiquity along scientific lines. Founding what he and Godwin emphasise was perceived to be an “entirely new method” on a series of “principles”, d’Hancarville identifies the first: in prehistory the world possessed “one cult, one theology, one religion and very likely a language.”³⁶ This theme appeared simultaneously in Sir William Jones’ essay ‘On the gods of Greece, Italy, and India’ whose thesis was predicated upon the assumption of initial contact between religions. Thus, Godwin emphasises a systematic project in which non-belief in orthodox religion is ‘mobilised’ through Theosophical scholarship, and suggests that the late-Victorian ‘search for new modes of spiritual enlightenment’ began with ‘the moral and philosophical “Enlightenment” that began in early eighteenth-century France.’³⁷

³⁵ Godwin, p. 4.

³⁶ Baron D’Hancarville , *Recherches sur l’origine, l’esprit, et les progress des arts de la Grèce* (1785), I, xxiv, in Godwin, p. 6.

³⁷ Godwin , p. 24.

The movement and survival of Theosophical thought is conceptualised and expressed in terms of ‘currents’, ‘discourses’ and ‘languages’. This affords the opportunity to describe a sense of its presence as it survives through time and geographical space, but also to pause and historicise particular moments when there occurs a discernible condensing and amelioration of thought, and likewise it allows for the identification of the times and places of confluence between theosophical thought and its contemporary cultures. In these cases the model serves to highlight the processes of invention and manufacture involved in fashioning *tradition*, rather than the more *traditional* view of theosophy, and the occult sciences, as subordinated but perennial.

Hutton has been of further importance in asking questions of the perennialism of magic, and particularly witchcraft, and in so doing has subtly brought to account the same attitude in scholarship of the occult. His research on the emergence of modern pagan witchcraft revealed how its claimed intact tradition has been formed and conditioned by wider cultural ‘languages’ (his preferred term for discourses) prevalent between 1800-1940, of which he identifies four. The first was the popular notion of pagans as ‘people who bow down to idols’ and ‘represent the religious aspect of human savagery and ignorance’ which was fuelled by the mid-nineteenth-century’s ‘combination of imperialism and evangelism’ and related in mind to exotic tribes.³⁸ Geography separated the first from the second and prevented any conflict, as history did the same for the second; language two turned on the image of the ancient pagan associated with the high culture of classical

³⁸ Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 5.

civilisation. Where these two were conservative and sat comfortably with existing cultural biases, the second pair confronted orthodox religion and custom. The first was Theosophy that propounded a religious synthesis with its roots in ancient civilisation, and furthermore the theosophists suggested that the original unity extended to language. Fourthly is the language of paganism, which Hutton shows to have been identified with liberty and infused with free associations with rural idyll and the Romantic ideal.³⁹ The significance of Hutton's reading for this present thesis is that it, like Godwin and Owen's, introduces such subjects to scrutiny from an a cultural-historical perspective. Furthermore, each, in different ways suggests responsiveness to the cultural context that ranges from a cultural conditioning to construction for political ends.

This thesis finds that each stage of the Magical Revival spurs a renewed effort to react to the social and cultural pressures of their moment, via the purview of magic. It is the aim therefore, with reference to the themes established in the opening section of the introduction, to demonstrate where the occultists found those needs and examine how they resolved to address them. The final two sections of this introduction provide firstly, a synopsis of the cultural concerns which appear not only to have attracted their therapeutic endeavours, but must also be viewed as having provoked the emergence of an exoteric occult movement in the first place, and secondly an outline of the chapter contents and the primary activities and texts upon which their readings are based.

³⁹ For discussion of the four languages, see: Hutton, pp. 3-31.

1880-1929

In his retrospective account of the nineteenth-century *fin de siècle*, *The Eighteen Nineties* (1913), Holbrook Jackson identified the burning question of the decade: “‘How to Live’”. The decade is one of great interest, he writes, ‘because it was a time when people went about frankly and cheerfully endeavouring to solve the question’:

The experimental life went on in a swirl of song and dialectics. Ideas were in the air. Things were not what they seemed, and there were visions about. The Eighteen Nineties were the decade of a thousand ‘movements.’ People said it was a ‘period of transition,’ and they were convinced that they were passing not only from one social system to another, but from one morality to another, from one culture to another, and from one religion to a dozen or none!⁴⁰

Amongst the confrontations between viewpoints, philosophies, tendencies he observed in the closing decade of the nineteenth century are those of ‘decadence’ and ‘renaissance’; heterodoxy and orthodoxy’; ‘materialist and mystic’; ‘Christian and Pagan’, and exacerbating the profusion he suggests that they were ‘fought from a great number of positions’.⁴¹ The impression given by Jackson is one of endless social space for the toleration and exploration of all manner of cultural currents.

In the half-century preceding the 1890s, however, the sense of space, intellectual, cultural, geographical and cosmological, was being felt more cautiously, not as a contented jostling, rather as a series of series of expansions and

⁴⁰ Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties* (1913) (London: Penguin, 1939), p. 26, p. 27.

⁴¹ Jackson, p. 20, & p. 12.

contractions as science demonstrated the mechanisms behind life. Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844), for instance, introduced the theory of transmutation and shattered biblical ordering, and Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) confirmed the thrust of the former, adding the mechanism of selection, and demanding to share the ground that Christian doctrine commanded; expanding life in every direction for some, and squeezing all meaning from it for others. A corresponding increasing and hardening of infringements were then also felt, for wherever the view of humanity was broadened, it was simultaneously reduced, to ratios, for instance, by the grimmest of the evolutionary theories outlined by T.W. Malthus.⁴² At the start of Victoria's reign the major share of the population was still homed in rural Britain, by 1850 half the population lived in urban settings, and by 1901 urban Britain held seventy-seven percent of the population.⁴³ The shift from rural to urban gave rise to the image of the sprawling metropolis and found further resonance, Philip Davies has demonstrated, for the confrontation between science and the rest of intellectual and spiritual ideation: 'the human, philosophical, and theological implications of Darwin's work were, though thoroughly various and ambiguous, irresistibly uncontainable [...] Science-city could not restrain itself'.⁴⁴

⁴² T. R. Malthus, *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1789 & 1803). Malthus's contribution to evolutionary theory was the rule of ratio. As Philip Davis explains, 'population always tended to increase in geometric ratio (2, 4, 8, 16) whereas the means of subsistence could only be increased in arithmetic ratio (2, 4, 6, 8). Thus population would always outstrip resources', see, Philip Davis, *The Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 59.

⁴³ Wilfrid Mellers and Rupert Hildyard, 'The Cultural and Social Setting', *The Cambridge Companion to the Arts in Britain: Volume 8, The Edwardian Age and the Inter-War Years*, ed. by Boris Ford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 3-44, p. 6.

⁴⁴ Davis, p. 70.

Likewise, in the first decades of the twentieth century, geopolitical territory shifted radically and brought its weight to bear upon a Britain startled by the shattering of historical precedent, once with the Great War, and again with the Second World War. While ‘the imperial sun was at its zenith’ still in the first years of the twentieth century and continuing to have its nourishing effect on the British psyche, the geopolitical reality of its economic and power base had weakened, and conflicts both within and out with the Empire were pressing an unnerving message on Britain. Furthermore, as Mellers and Hildyard explain, the industrial nation that had been the ‘British advantage’ in the Victorian era, was anachronistic in the new century and the pinch was felt, among others, by the military.⁴⁵ By 1918, the most pertinent sign of the nation’s health, economic, military, and social was embodied, poorly, in the figure of the returning soldier.

The question that Holbrook Jackson cites as being ‘of the age’, overflows the decade to which he attributed it, but it is instructive to view the period 1880-1929 as one in which ‘life’ as the subject of science and documentation, is replaced by ‘life’ as object. Accordingly, what is witnessed is the supplanting of degeneration, in many ways the heir of evolutionary theory, as the dominant force in social and scientific thought, and its replacement with regeneration. While the influence of degeneration on late nineteenth century culture is well-documented, as evolution before it, regeneration is less so, but, as contemporary commentators noted, regeneration was present everywhere that degeneration was found. This thesis finds it discussed, examined, advertised even, in a range of cultural documents, scientific,

⁴⁵ Mellers and Hildyard, p. 4, & p. 5.

and popular philosophical writings, manuals and movements. Consequently, the secondary aims of this thesis is to reveal, through the Magical Revival, the important terms of the transition from degeneration to regeneration, and the places where mainstream culture appears to adopt strategies that are themselves occult in nature.

On this point it is appropriate to pause and clarify that the thesis takes Britain as a national context, but does not attend to the question of nationalism. Deferring to Joscelyn Godwin's justification of his focus in *Theosophical Enlightenment* on the English speaking world, he cites three reasons: the first is that a wider focus would make for too a large a book to be insightful; second, that the occult movement in France has been well-treated by French scholars; thirdly, and most importantly, 'the two crucial events in the period happened in America (the birth of Modern Spiritualism in 1848 and the founding of the Theosophical Society), while their fullest intellectual consequences were worked out in Britain'.⁴⁶ The national focus here is similarly dictated by the fact of the location of the outbreak of magical activity. Where Godwin is attracted to the British context because he detects its fullest intellectual impacts therein, this thesis explores the British context, again for its obvious moment of flourishing interest, but also because here particularly, the viability of applied occultism was tested.

⁴⁶ Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. xi.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter One, contextualises the Theosophical Society in two ways: firstly, in relation to the nineteenth-century occult movements that precede it, Spiritualism and the Society for Psychical Research (SPR); and secondly, in relation to social thought on the psychopathology of degeneration that defined it as deviant. In both of the discussions the question of the use to which esoteric theory is put is key. Although largely working with the same anti-materialist premise in mind, the Spiritualists defined themselves against the Theosophists on the grounds that Theosophy merely reproduced old knowledge where they, by contrast, were in the business of establishing a new branch of science. Likewise, Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (trans. 1895) identifies a proclivity to mysticism and occultism as the 'cardinal mark' of degeneracy, and as evidence of an anti-modern mindset. In the course of the chapter I challenge this idea by comparing Theosophical writing with degeneration and evolutionary writing. What is revealed is the way Theosophy negotiated evolutionary ideas in the construction of an alternative science of life, Theosophical Evolution.

The second chapter focuses on the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. It begins by arguing that the trend in historical accounts of the order to challenge and refute claims made by its founders to the Order's authentic and ancient antecedents mask the meaning in its, more likely, contemporary construction. That the order

identified a cultural need and set about supplying a remedy, places it firmly in line with similar bodies seeking to offset, or cure, the prevailing degeneration, and more acute *fin de siècleism* marked by suicides and depressed wills. With this established, the chapter suggests how ceremonial observances reveal how the magicians addressed themselves to the conditions, specific and general, associated with *fin de siècle* declension. The richly ornamented observances that constitute the core of the Golden Dawn ritual system, and the rigorous system that underpins them, explore the art of living at the *fin de siècle*. Crucially, the chapter also presents the Golden Dawn era as a hinge, and in so doing the chapter suggests an alternative way of interpreting the historical detail of the Order that histories repeatedly present. In the Golden Dawn it is possible to see taking hold the preference for increasingly personalised magical endeavour that marks the post-1900 phase of the Magical Revival.

Chapter three explores the new attention given to the body in twentieth-century occultism. The Golden Dawn magicians had enlisted their surrogate astral selves to go forth on the astral plane and subvert and reconstruct the worst aspects of *fin de siècle* life. However, the magicians of the Astrum Argentum found that the nimble ethereality of the astral body only served to highlight the obstructive materialism of the everyday body. With reference to comparable non-magical movements which appeared in the interwar period, and developments in medical science, this chapter documents how the body was newly conceived of as the generator of its own life force. The thesis conclusion picks up on this development and describes how the body (and it is, I argue, a notably ‘occult’ body) was utilised

as a metaphor for the ideal organisation of society. As occult and mundane bodies alike appeared to prove that reconstruction of old materials was possible, they responded to a resounding question of the age: from whence was regeneration to come?

Chapter four, organised into three parts, examines the meanings and process of religious regeneration as it is set down in the A.A.'s official publication, *The Equinox*, and in the context of contemporary developments in the philosophical study of religion. Overall, the publication can be read as a response to the question regarding the problematic space between experience and description. Part i provides an introduction to the aims of the A.A. Order, and a description of the *The Equinox* with reference to comparable publications. The point highlighted is the apparent contradiction between the A.A.'s reforming ideals, and *The Equinox's* anachronistic appearance. Part ii draws on William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) in two ways. Firstly, it suggests that *Varieties* is an example of the shift from degeneration-led thinking, to regeneration thinking. In its sympathetic questioning of the nature of the role to be played by religion in the twentieth-century life, James is seeking an answer to the question, how to live? That James is quoted at some length in the preface to the first wisdom text published in volume one, number one, of *The Equinox*, suggests that the A.A. saw their project as sharing the logic of James. The category and contours of experience is central to this discussion, and to understanding the occultists' construction of, and participation in a 'science of religious life'. Secondly, in James' identification of a number of varieties (his use of this term rather than 'types' signifies clearly that the

project is distinct from Degeneration), and the characteristics of those types, James supplies valuable terminology with which to read the regenerations recorded in *The Equinox*. Part iii is a close reading and interpretation of the non-technical elements of *The Equinox* from its design and dimensions, which place it at odds with the economies of modern printing practices, to its poetry contributions, which seem simplistic and hackneyed. This part, drawing on printing history and criticism of the occult 'manner' in poetry, suggests that these non-technical elements of *The Equinox* are designed to compliment, even facilitate the A.A. goal of initiation and regeneration. By examining *The Equinox* as a complete cultural artefact, and by paying due attention to the context of its production, intellectual and material, this closing chapter extends the line of enquiry begun by chapter three's discussion of the Liber Documents' programme of bodily reconstruction. Finally, it suggests that *The Equinox* exemplifies the maturation of the Magical Revival in the twentieth century.

*

While the study that follows focuses on the progress of the Magical Revival from the viewpoint of its affiliates, that is, as I have described above, it pursues the links suggested by a variety of modifications and omissions, textual, theoretical and practical, it begins and ends with the question of how late nineteenth- and early-twentieth century occultism was perceived by outsiders, firstly by Nordau, and lastly by the newly emerging socialist milieu. This contrasting perspective underscores the argument that the internal narrative of the Magical Revival is one marked by a desire for modernisation. Moreover, that though a complex, and at

times, thorny matter, as a modernising force, the Magical Revival must be deemed in no small way, a success. At the *fin de siècle* the concerted distinctive individual tendencies that occultism encompassed and encouraged were pathologised. The language, terms, and ideas that signified the allure of occult engagements in the first place, became instead part of the lexicon of degeneration and its diagnostic vocabulary. By 1929, however, Beatrice Webb, the prominent Fabian, was speaking of the ‘modern mystic’ as possessing a quality sorely needing to be recovered and realised in social reform. Thus, in the space of two decades, the occultist goes from being a portentous presence detrimental to the very fabric of modern social and cultural life, an enemy within, to an emissary of the future life, particularly a socialist one, from whom much could be learned.

The perceptual development of treatment of the occultist is one in which degeneration is supplanted by regeneration. Where the occultist is placed figuratively on the fringes of desirable social conditions, someone and something against which to define normative or prevailing states of mind and matter, the magician is nonetheless taken to the heart of problem. Occultism, therefore, assists other’s diagnosis, and assists them in their articulation of social and cultural remedies. This thesis attempts to describe the place of occultism in society between 1880-1929 with respect to a wider shift in attitude that occurred between Nordau and Webb. While the focus of this thesis is at every point to offer a view of the overlooked practical and textual culture of occultism, this focus suggests only increasingly plain connections between the priorities of the occultist and wider culture and society. Thus, it is hoped that this thesis will further highlight the

importance of subjecting the period 1880-1929 to continued research, paying particular attention to the terms of its own engagements rather than viewing it through sociological questions of modernity.

I. MAGICAL REVIVAL 1880-1900

Chapter 1

‘the science of life’: Theosophical Thought in the Late
Nineteenth Century

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky was the major proponent of the modern Theosophical movement at its inception. She published a prodigious catalogue of works of which the key texts are the two-volume *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern* (1877), and its sister text, the six-volume *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy* (1888).¹ Both are pseudo-scholarly works written to demonstrate, via comparative study of symbols and ritual, the principal organising features of Theosophy: the universality of world religions. Above and beyond the academic exercise the texts are informed by the aim of the Theosophical system ‘to reconcile all religions, sects and nations under a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities’ which equated to the founding of a modern brotherhood. Monthly journal *Lucifer* (1887-1897), succeeded by the *Theosophical Review* in 1897, and *The Key to Theosophy* (1889) form, with in excess of forty additional titles, a secondary body of writing, complementary to the denser core publications offering commentary apology and position pieces.² Fringe texts such as these, frequently produced by the Theosophical Publishing House

¹ H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern*, 2nd edn. (New York: J.W. Bouton, 1877); and, H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy* (1888), (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1952).

² The full title of *The Key to Theosophy* is: H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy, being a clear exposition, in the form of question and answer, of the ethics, science, and philosophy for the study of which the theosophical society has been founded* (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1889).

(originally based in London, but soon operating simultaneously out of Adyar London and New York) and written by Blavatsky and her closest colleagues, are suggestive of the interest that Theosophy and its major personality drew in late-Victorian Britain, but they are also indicative of the particular nature of that contemporary interest.

The Key to Theosophy, for example, is structured in question-and-answer form whereby an unnamed Theosophist interviews Blavatsky. It was compiled partially in response to the quantity of enquiries put to Blavatsky, both privately and via the correspondence pages of *Lucifer*, regarding the details of Theosophical teaching. Questions of varying degrees of rigorousness such as ““What is the meaning of the name?””, ““Who are Those who Know?””, and ““What is Memory according to Theosophical Teaching?””, suggest that there existed an attentive and inquiring readership keen to absorb Theosophical ideas.³ Within this spirit of enquiry, a related but distinct line of questioning evinces a separate appetite for clarification, more fervent in tone and direction. Concerned with the exact bearing of the Theosophical Society (established in 1883) to Theosophy, and relationship of both to other associated movements, such as Spiritualism and Occultism, as well as to social institutions, these questions ask the precise ethical and political position of Theosophy, and, yet more specifically, its stance in relation to marriage, education, charity and social reform.

³ *Key to Theosophy*, pp. vii-x. Responses to the questions ‘Who are Those who Know?’ and ‘What is Memory according to Theosophical Teaching?’ are too elaborate to include here in full. To summarise, however, the first question refers to the supposed Secret Chiefs that feature in Theosophy as enlightened beings and the possessors of the ancient truth. The second pertains to the integration, in Theosophical wisdom, of elements of the Buddhist belief in re-incarnation. In the theosophical view the individual cannot possess a stable personality and is encouraged to think of himself as an actor passing across a stage and playing a succession of roles. Importantly this process pre-dates the individual’s awareness of himself as he is in his present life, as he understands it, that is, at ‘birth’ he will already have passed through several other incarnations, pp. 123-126.

This type of questioning suggests three things: the first that interested individuals gave a degree of thought to the compatibility of various branches of occult thinking with their own political predisposition, and related, secondly, that the general appetite for occult thinking in late-Victorian Britain that is demonstrated in part by the concurrent emergence of occult organisations such as the Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn and recognised by critics including Ronald Hutton and Alex Owen, was understood by its participants to be relatable to a formative social consciousness. Scholars have examined these points in detail, as will be seen. However, a third point has not yet featured in analysis of Theosophical thought. That requests for further information feature so heavily in Theosophical texts, indeed, that texts were produced with the specific aim of publishing them, suggests on the one hand the responsiveness of the Theosophists to their audience, on the other, it betrays an absence in the Theosophical project in the first place. Unlike other contemporary occult organisations that built experiential systems around their theory, the Theosophical Society published copiously but supplied no practicable framework for its ideas. At a loss for the bearing of Theosophy, as presented in its key texts, on day-to-day life, Theosophists were forced to seek assistance. Registering this disjunction between theory and practice, André Nataf's occult dictionary entry for Theosophy gives the aphorism 'Between Spiritualism and Initiation'.⁴

'Between Spiritualism and Initiation' problematises the place of Theosophy in the late nineteenth-century magical moment. Reflecting Blavatsky and Olcott's

⁴ André Nataf, *Dictionary of the Occult* (1988) (Herts.: Wordsworth, 1994), p. 94.

own transferral of interest from the spiritualist domain to the occult, it places Theosophy between the passive mediumship associated with Spiritualism, and the willed and active seeking of initiatory experience for which the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn is known. In so doing Nataf foregrounds the question of method and technique. Exactly in what ways Theosophy falls between Spiritualism and Initiation Nataf does not expand, but the aphorism is a constructive one around which this chapter is broadly structured.

Theosophy has an uneasy relationship with the initiatory practices associated with the magical orders with which chapters two, three and four are concerned, and which are generally better known. For instance, W.B. Yeats' association with the Theosophical Society was dissolved when he refused to desist in his explorations into occult phenomena.⁵ In several cases the Theosophical Society appears to have been the starting point for the magical careers of many who went on to practice magic with the Golden Dawn and other orders. Frustrated with the lack of practical involvement the society afforded, would-be magicians pass through having acquired a sound grounding in occult philosophy, and an appetite for more strenuous engagement. Yeats himself went on to the Golden Dawn.

What such circumstances (of memberships and loyalties transferred into and out of the Theosophical Society) suggest is that the Magical Revival is formed of a number of phases. In itself, this represents an unremarkable claim; three major occult organisations appeared at intervals between 1880 and 1929 making a degree of substitution and progression across those societies expected. In all probability

⁵ Margaret Mills Harper, 'Yeats and The Occult', *The Cambridge Companion to W.B. Yeats*, ed. by Marjorie Howes and John Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 144-166, (p. 154).

the periodic emergence of replacement societies provoked and sustained the period's interest as each defined its work against, or in light of, that of its predecessor. However, the evidence suggests that firmer conclusions can be drawn; within the Magical Revival a definite progression in magical preferences is discernible, reflected by the individual magical pathways of Yeats, and others. Indeed, Blavatsky's abandoning of her Spiritualist medium role in order to channel and promote the wisdom of Theosophy suggests that she found in Theosophy the answers to weightier issues. But, the Society's stance on occult phenomena reveals a hostility to rehearsed magical activity, and the production of 'results'. In being at odds with magical orders and with Spiritualism on these points, the Theosophical Society not only highlights this hitherto unobserved development in magical activity which the thesis as a whole pursues, but it also prompts a new reading of Theosophy.

My introduction to this thesis included a précis of the central scholarly texts (by Alex Owen, Joscelyn Godwin and Ronald Hutton) on occultism and Theosophy. Here I acknowledged in the first instance my debt to Alex Owen's *The Place of Enchantment*, the first work to make the Magical Revival squarely its subject. In it, Owen describes a 'new' occultism that fuses 'diverse' and 'ambiguous processes' in a language and attitude of 'occult spirituality' through which, she argues, 'cultural modernity was constituted'.⁶ Following a similar line of enquiry, although not discussed in the introduction, Joy Dixon's *The Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (2001) explores the way in which the possibilities inherent in Theosophical heterodoxy were put to discursive use in the early twentieth century.

⁶ Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), p. 16.

Dixon highlights the frequency of real co-operation between Theosophical and feminist activities and describes Theosophy as ‘one of the sites at which feminist politics [...] was constituted and transformed’. Theosophy’s popularisation of esoteric religions and philanthropic ideals ‘provided a crucial space for the articulation of this unorthodox vision’. It should therefore be understood to have made a ‘contribution to utopian socialism [...] through its claim to speak on behalf of forms of knowledge that were otherwise devalued: the bodily, the spiritual, the feminine, and the eastern’.⁷

Although each author privileges a different term, Owen ‘occult spirituality’ and Dixon ‘Theosophy’ more directly, both concepts and treatments of new occultism embrace the range of Theosophical, ceremonial and initiatory leanings. While the Theosophical Society, the Golden Dawn, and the Astrum Argentum are undoubtedly united in a broad quest to discover and define new modes of life, they are also distinguishable on a number of points: how they proposed to make use of this new material; what it meant for everyday existence; the more formal traditions within which each was working; the specific social and cultural conditions which, it was deemed, made their reappearance necessary. Dixon and Owen suggest ways in which the intellectual implications of occultism and Theosophy are worked out in relation to increasingly politicised socialist ideas as they gained currency in the twentieth century.⁸ As such, the broader ramifications of the occult worldview have been thoroughly described to the point that aspects of British socialist thought can be viewed to have originated in occultism. Theosophy is shown therefore, to enjoy

⁷ Joy Dixon, *The Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 123, & p. 3.

⁸ On this point my own research has led in the same direction, as I discuss in the Conclusion to the thesis.

a significant secondary existence, but what initiated its appearance in late nineteenth-century cultural life in the first place? Readings such as those offered by Owen and Dixon can suggest retrospectively that the enthusiastic reception in 1877 of *Isis Unveiled* is one signal of a shift in British intellectual and political attitudes. Likewise, ‘The Theosophical Society’, writes Margaret Mills Harper ‘was a magnet for disaffected members of the educated public’. Following ‘profound changes in European society, coming in the wake of scientific discoveries and technological advances’, many ‘foundational beliefs’ were shaken: ‘beliefs in God as well as materialist paradigms, and in such divergent concepts as progress and tradition, social position and individual identity, in any number of ways’.⁹

But Ronald Hutton and Joscelyn Godwin, in *The Triumph of the Moon* and *The Theosophical Enlightenment* respectively, have demonstrated the value of attending not only to the wider associations forged by and for Theosophy, but to the circumstances of its construction and re-introduction, in this case in Britain in the 1870s. Thomas Laqueur too, urges a similar approach in his review of *The Place of Enchantment* and Corinna Treitel’s *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (2004), entitled ‘Why the Margins Matter: Occultism and the Making of Modernity’ (2006).¹⁰ In it he asks what constitutes the appeal of occultism. ‘Treitel’s answer’, writes Laqueur, ‘is [...] that the occult is

⁹ Mills Harper, p. 153.

¹⁰ Laqueur’s article takes the form of a review essay. To reiterate, among the questions raised by occultism’s indisputable appeal that Laqueur finds only partially addressed in *The Place of Enchantment* and Corinna Treitel’s, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (2004) are: ‘What is modern about its modern forms and what is merely a translation of earlier esotericism into a thinly disguised and psychologized language of modernity; what is reactive and what genuinely creative; what constitutes a genuine new relationship between science and empiricism on the one hand and religion and metaphysics on the other and what is a re-working of relationships that go back to ancient critiques of astrology and the hard-headed scepticism of classical and medieval thinkers who were every bit as anxious as modern psychical researchers to sort the real from the fake?’, ‘Why the Margins Matter: Occultism and the Making of Modernity’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 3: 1 (2006), 111-135 p. 113.

attractive and modern because it articulated so forcefully the experience of modernity'.¹¹ Both Owen and Treitel's readings of turn-of-the-century occultism find its attractiveness to be bound up with modernity. Expanding further, Treitel (quoted here by Laqueur) explains that 'various aspects of the occult are embedded in the fabric of [Germany's] modern institutions and practices': 'It was [...] there at the creation [of modern Germany's history]', a fact understood to demonstrate its modernity.¹² In his account of Owen's work, Laqueur finds a similar insistence on subjective appeal in answer to the question of occultism's attractiveness: 'intensive, psychological, subjective, introspective', occultism is therefore the "apotheosis of the sovereignty of the [modern] self". Having 'close ties to science' occultism 'assimilated into psychology and science' a 'fulsome repertoire' (including 'angels and spirits and interconnections between the micro- and the macrocosm') that constituted "secularized strategies of self-construction in pursuit of spiritualized goals".¹³ Yet, Laqueur suggests that 'neither author [...] takes seriously enough the ways in which the occult rehabilitated ancient wisdoms and cosmologies'. And the point he emphasises concerns occultism's enthusiasts, 'those who had lost faith in Christianity or the very idea of a divinely ordered world'. In a summary comparable to, but striking further than Margaret Mills Harper's, Laqueur highlights the 'uneasy compromise' between 'the increasingly hegemonic science of the day' and 'the desire for a God, or at least a godhead, who would save creation from the meaninglessness of Darwin's "tangled bank", and much else'.¹⁴

¹¹ Laqueur, p. 113.

¹² Laqueur, p. 113.

¹³ Laqueur, and Laqueur quoting Owen, pp. 113-4.

¹⁴ Laqueur, p. 114. What follows in Laqueur's review anticipates the substance of my own analysis of the nature of the magical practice in the *Astrum Argentum*, in Chapter Four: 'In other words it was religion, or at least a Jamesian sort of "variety of religious experiences," that mediate between modernity and the occult', p. 114. Incidentally, Laqueur also points out that neither author supplies much quotation from the original texts: 'Treitel and Owen both take Blavatsky at her word when she said that theosophy was not a religion because it did not make any particular claims about any particular God. And they accept its self-proclaimed congruence with, if not quite foundation in,

This chapter focuses on the presentation of Theosophy in the late nineteenth-century, before such time as Theosophy acquired the political angle that Blavatsky initially declined and when it was setting out its philosophy in relation to evolutionary theory.¹⁵ Critics have tended to focus on Theosophy's ideas in relation to religion, and although they register the evolutionary context implicitly, they do not go into detail (see Mills Harper above, for instance).¹⁶ Yet, of the two volumes of *Isis Unveiled* the *second* set out the eclectic synthesis as it related to religion, the *first* dealt with science. The chapter attends therefore to the question of how Theosophy operates 'between Spiritualism and Initiation' and how it thereby proposes to 'untangle' Darwin's bank and advance an alternative science of life. It should be remarked that science (particularly evolutionary) and religion are inextricably linked in debate about human provenance at this juncture in late nineteenth-century culture.¹⁷ As such, I am not proposing an artificial distinction between the two, only that Theosophy on science supplies significant substance to present understanding of the place of Theosophy in late Victorian culture, indeed, the question of spirituality re-enters the equation, as will be seen. The kind of debate in which I wish to place Theosophy is not the "death-grapple" in which Blavatsky felt science and theology were locked, then, but, as Blavatsky's assertion that she could 'illuminate a middle way' suggests, one in which a range of parties

science. But since neither author actually gives more than a few words from any of Blavatsky's writings it is worth quoting a bit', p. 132. This chapter goes on to suggest that the process of reading Theosophy is a key part of the Theosophical experience.

¹⁵ See, *The Key to Theosophy*: Blavatsky is asked, 'Do you take any part in politics?' her reply is 'No lasting political reform can ever be achieved with the same selfish men at the head of affairs as old', p. 231.

¹⁶ For a full analysis of the religious ideas synthesised in Theosophy, see: Dan Merkur, 'Reflections of the Meaning of Theosophy', *Theosophical History*, VII: I (January 1998), 18-34.

¹⁷ See: Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1983), *passim*; and, Laura Otis, *Literature and Science in the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

and persons were considering and incorporating its implications.¹⁸ As Gillian Beer points out, even following the publication of *Origin of Species* (1859), evolutionary theory remained known as ‘the Development Hypothesis’ into the 1860s, and, as Angelique Richardson has shown, it was still very much in the cultural spotlight into the twentieth century.¹⁹ Accordingly, Theosophists and others are ‘living, in relation to evolutionary theory, in the phase when “a fact is not quite a scientific fact at all” and when “the remnant of the mythical” is at its most manifest’.²⁰ Furthermore, in the 1880s and 1890s, evolutionary theory (along with ‘Pre-Freudian modelings of the unconscious’) fed into degeneration theory which concerned itself with the ‘disastrous’ and ‘traumatic’ implications of Darwinism.²¹ The chapter highlights Theosophy’s attempt to outline an alternative science of life at a time before evolutionary facts had become assumptions, and, at a time in which degeneration was exploring the underside of evolution ‘insofar as this was understood as a synonym for “progress”’.²²

Specifically, the chapter describes the features of Theosophy’s version of evolution and in this offers a reading of Theosophy in its own right. But it also offers a frame through which to approach the Magical Revival, keeping in view the idea that the points of variance between Theosophy and other forms of occultism assist description of the Magical Revival as actively and internally modifying itself. The chapter establishes the context for the establishment of the Theosophical

¹⁸ Blavatsky quoted in Owen, p. 35.

¹⁹ Gillian Beer, p. 2; and, Angelique Richardson, ‘The Life Sciences: “Everybody nowadays talks about evolution”’, *A Concise Companion to Modernism* ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 6-33, *passim*.

²⁰ Beer, p. 2. Here Gillian Beer is quoting Thomas Kuhn, and Robert Mackay (Mackay is quoted in turn by George Eliot).

²¹ Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 6.

²² Hurley, p. 10. See also Beer: ‘Evolution has within itself the concomitant ideas of development and energy, and has loosely acquired those of improvement and progress’, p. 14.

Society in late nineteenth century: firstly, in relation to Spiritualism and Psychical Research, the first of which pre-dates the Theosophical Society and the second of which enjoyed its main period of activity in tandem with Theosophy; secondly, in relation to the cultural myth of degeneration prevalent during the first phase of Theosophy. The first is significant because Spiritualists and Psychical Researchers, like Theosophists, gave a degree of thought to questions of method. The second is significant because *Isis Unveiled* and *Secret Doctrine* can be seen to evidence the degenerate tendencies that Nordau's psychopathology described, and because the narrative logic of *Degeneration* (trans. 1895) can be traced back to the evolutionary texts which are the antecedents of degeneration.²³ Scholars investigating the interface between science and literature have argued persuasively for the value of attending to the structures of 'scientific' texts, particularly of the nineteenth century. Working within this broad methodology this chapter is able to describe how the magical thinking that Nordau defines as deviant is in fact attempting to incorporate aspects of scientific thought that he defines as progressive.

Theosophical Thought: Between spiritualism and initiation

Just as the Theosophical Society differed on technical points to the magical orders which followed it, the Society's approach to the occult world differed in crucial and illuminating ways from Spiritualism and the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). In the first place, each was clearly and broadly sympathetic to the notion of an occult world. Each was in agreement too regarding the idea that this realm (be it

²³ Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, 2nd edn (London: Heinemann, trans. 1895). The edition cited is the first edition published in English, translated from the second edition of the German version.

physical or psychological, ultimately) when fathomed, would prove instructive for the ordinary world, indeed, for some Evangelical Christian Spiritualists, the other world held the key to salvation. Each was, therefore, as Janet Oppenheim establishes, anti-materialist. However, Oppenheim points out a difference in self-perceptions: ‘spiritualists and psychical researchers insisted that their inquiries were part of the mainstream of modern thought, not remnants of magical mumbo jumbo from bygone ages’.²⁴

Nonetheless, as Oppenheim explains, ‘Such declarations were easy to make, but difficult to implement’, and the ‘questions’ to which both occultists and Spiritualists sought answers, as the ‘vocabulary’ they employed in explanation, frequently betrayed ‘close affinities’. Such affinities were based on the rejection of the primary characteristic of materialist science to define and explain ‘Life’ by ‘qualitative measurement’. She quotes Sinnett and explains that the distaste for calculation was more widely felt as a wrong appraisal of life, and a fear of “‘Dense materialism’”, an ‘omnipresent threat’ at this time.²⁵ Thus, the movements that are more firmly the subject of Oppenheim’s enquiry are linked to Theosophy, as each were fundamentally united in the ‘goal’, “‘to shake off this great pall of gross matter that shuts men off into separate prison cells of personal egoism’”.²⁶ Further,

²⁴ Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 159. Oppenheim is clear that the success of the Theosophical Society was due to Blavatsky’s having ‘capitalized on modern spiritualism’. ‘Indeed’, she says, ‘it is difficult to conceive of the Theosophical Society meeting with much success at all had it not followed some of the trails already blazed by the spiritualists’. In making this statement, Oppenheim cites Warren Sylvester Smith, “‘Theosophy could not have made a serious bid for attention among Londoners – or elsewhere – if a revival of Spiritualism had not preceded it’”, *The London Heretics 1870-1914* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1968), p. 42; and, Frank Podmore (a confirmed Psychical Researcher), in *Studies in Psychical Research* (London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1897), p. 40, who ‘refers to the Theosophical Society as “that vigorous offshoot of the spiritualist movement’”, p. 431.

²⁵ Sinnett, in Oppenheim, p. 161.

²⁶ William Ashton Ellis, in Oppenheim, p. 161.

however, as Oppenheim's more judicious language signals, the occultists and Theosophists, felt 'the lure of the occult' to lie 'in its antipathy to the strictly rational, empiricist outlook that was increasingly the hallmark of Victorian thought'.²⁷

Although argued through the prism of the Psychological Researcher-view of Theosophy, Oppenheim's book *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychological Research in England, 1850-1914* (1985) makes available a sense of the prospects that interested parties appear to have found to be inherent in Theosophy. The non-Theosophical point of view is in the end conducive in illustrating the significance of the stake Theosophy claimed in occult territory. Theosophists strongly rejected the Spiritualist belief, upon which the whole movement and the more formal Psychological Research approach were founded, in 'the reality of communication with identifiable spirits of deceased people'. The Theosophist dispute on this matter was, however, not a query of the *possibility* or the reality they proclaimed (and it is worth recalling that Blavatsky had, at one, time been a Spiritualist medium); in this the Theosophists were quite content. Their objection was to do with the *appropriateness* of contact. Less a moral point though, this was more an ethical stance: Why 'force the "Ego of the departed...back into earthly conditions" when it should be allowed to progress to higher planes of spirit existence'.²⁸

On this key point of Theosophical thought, a question-and-answer exchange from *The Key to Theosophy* assists in explanation. 'I was told', says the interviewer, 'that the Theosophical Society was originally founded to crush

²⁷ Oppenheim, p. 161.

²⁸ Oppenheim, p. 165; and Oppenheim quoting Kislingbury, p. 165.

Spiritualism and belief in the survival of the individuality in man?’ Blavatsky’s reply explains how the questioner’s confusion arises out of a misunderstanding of the concepts of personality and individuality, or rather a compounding of the two. Furthermore, the distinction ‘gives the key-note to the understanding of Eastern philosophy’. Simply, the Theosophical theory held that the individual passes through innumerable rounds of existence. All spirit being ‘*potential* matter’, and all matter ‘crystallized spirit’ the *individual* spirit belongs to the ‘eternal condition’ of ‘*meta-spirit*’, it utilises spirit and matter as required as it evolves through its lives. The interviewer is encouraged to think in terms of true individuality playing numerous different parts ‘as in a play’, thus pressing him to relinquish the notion that individuality is owned in the way psychologists conceived of personality.²⁹ Thus, there is no small amount of cruelty in the Spiritualists’ infatuation with summoning the spirit of the dead individual back to the realm of matter from whence it had just, mercifully, departed.

Importantly, the pejorative stance of the Theosophists towards the Spiritualists on this matter is the product of a wider argument regarding the uses to which the respective knowledge systems each had, or were in the process of acquiring, were directed. Many Spiritualists, especially in the early days of the British movement, saw only correspondences between their Orthodox religion and new interest in Spiritualism. Rarely, it seems, was Spiritualism adopted in place of a previously held religious conviction or observance. The information they gleaned at the *séance* was understood to constitute a sort of moral guidance complementary, on the whole, to their Christian lives.³⁰ Or, as Oppenheim more expansively

²⁹ *The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 33-34.

³⁰ See Oppenheim Part II, ‘A surrogate faith’, for a fuller discussion of Spiritualism and Christianity including anti-Christian Spiritualism and Christian Spiritualism. She is clear from the outset that the

summarises of those for whom Spiritualism was either negating or confirmatory of religious faith: ‘They embraced it, rather, as an unequivocal statement about the human condition, and one that, like religions throughout history, allayed their most fundamental fears of death and loss’.³¹ As their title suggests, the Psychological Researchers, who formed and operated in association with the SPR, approached the subject with a scientific zeal. By making the supernatural the subject of their investigations they felt themselves to be addressing ‘universal question marks’, penetrating the mystery of matter, and calling to account the scientific errors perpetrated and perpetuated by materialist science. In respect to the question of religious faith, however, this struck in another way: ‘It would not be an exaggeration to say’, writes Oppenheim, ‘that the early leaders of the SPR zealously explored the terra incognita of telepathy with the aim, whether purposeful or subconscious, of providing new, unassailable foundations for religious beliefs’.³² The more formal undertakings of the SPR are most appositely expressed as agnostic, embracing both the earlier sense as a philosophical position denoting an insistence on proof, therefore denying the idea of First Cause, and the more general position of religious doubt that was the natural extension.

Of Theosophical knowledge, Oppenheim’s forthright expression of the abiding Spiritualist-Psychical Researcher estimation of their reluctantly-acknowledged colleagues in Theosophy and occultism, earlier quoted, has already

Spiritualists did not adhere to a ‘single creed’ and that geographical and theological factors had their impact. Nonetheless, and in general, ‘Many highly diverse people embraced it for highly different reasons’ and took pride in the ‘variety of opinions that were free to take shelter under their capacious umbrella’, p. 59.

³¹ Oppenheim, p. 110.

³² Oppenheim, p. 111.

raised the salient point.³³ Where the Physical Researchers considered themselves to be making fresh inroads into scientific knowledge, and correcting its materialist direction in so doing, the Theosophists were not contributing new knowledge, and their writings were not revelatory. Blavatsky reiterates this fact in almost every publication with which she had involvement. In the Preface to the first edition she explains, ‘These truths are in no sense put forward as a *revelation*; nor does the author claim the position of a revealer of mystic lore’, rather, writes Blavatsky, ‘What is now attempted is to gather the oldest tenets together and to make of them one harmonious and unbroken whole’.³⁴

In *The Occult World*, Sinnett reproves those, like the Spiritualists, who see in ‘the identification of the occult system with the doctrines of the initiated organizations of all ages of the world’s history’ nothing more than ‘a mere archaeological interest’.³⁵ Theosophy emerged at this time in order to ‘knit[s] together some apparently divergent systems’, and ‘its startling knowledge turns on the manner in which it affords exact and experimental knowledge concerning spiritual things which under all other systems must remain the subject of speculation or blind religious faith’.³⁶ By writing and publishing Theosophy, Blavatsky and her colleagues in the Theosophical Society were reinstating latent truths regarding ‘the life-principle’ that resided in palimpsest in the history of the world overlaid by the detritus of materialist accounts of that history and obscured by the doctrines of Orthodox religions. In the broad anti-materialist view they were working in

³³ The quotation, again: ‘spiritualists and psychical researchers insisted that their inquiries were part of the mainstream of modern thought, not remnants of magical mumbo jumbo from bygone ages’, p. 159.

³⁴ *The Secret Doctrine*, pp. 7-8.

³⁵ A. P. Sinnett, *The Occult World* (London: Trübner, 1881), p. 6.

³⁶ Sinnett, p. 7.

accordance with the principles of the Spiritualists. In their certainty that that knowledge already existed they differed. Where Psychological Research offered a deductive view of the same latent powers of man with the aim of constructing a new body of knowledge, the Theosophists offered ancient knowledge as inductive for life in the present, for the individual. On this point, however, it was not only the SPR who would dispute Theosophy's relevance on the very points by which it defined itself progressive.

Nordau's 'cardinal mark' of degeneracy

Between 1880 and 1900 the concept of 'de-generation' gathered momentum and cultural significance. Its particular meaning for the nineteenth century started out aligned to Darwinism which turned, in all its related fields, on the newly discovered precariousness of the human order in nature. Variations of the basic question repeatedly asked following the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), and *The Descent of Man* (1871) had at root a doubt: if the human animal had, via a series of pre-historical and historical confrontations evolved to its present state of civilisation, could the process reverse?³⁷ Darwinism and in particular the theory of natural selection dismantled for many the authority of Christian explanations of human existence. Darwinism reduced Christianity's

³⁷ Full title, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, and subtitled, *The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. Darwin's theory emerged the standard expression of the evolutionary process but earlier contributions were offered by Herbert Spencer, and the Rev. Thomas Robert Malthus. Although *Origin of Species* did not theorise the human condition in respect to natural selection its was precisely this removal of the human from the centre of so crucial a theoretical narrative that, in Gillian Beer's words 'was a silent and intense challenge to the reader's assumptions', Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (1959), ed. by Gillian Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. ix.

moral claim to only one among many competing views regarding the organisation of society, and in its place Darwinism provided the raw metaphorical material for an interim conviction. By the *fin de siècle*, having in its association a plethora of theories, and having inspired a number of powerful fictive representations, ‘degeneration’ functioned less as a statement of scientific hypothesis and more, as William Greenslade puts it, as a ‘fully fledged cultural myth’.³⁸

Greenslade accounts for degeneration’s predominance as the organising principle of the late nineteenth century in socio-economic terms, whereby rapid industrialisation changed the shape of social organisation in profound material and psychological ways. Its potency lies for Greenslade in its fittingness to explain the contradiction between the ‘rhetoric of progress’ that was espoused by market economics, and the contrasting ‘facts on the ground’. Thus degeneration offered up a seemingly endless array of explanations regarding the possible sites and signs of degeneration (be they racial, medical, sexual, physical, psychological, psychical, gendered, preventative or hereditary in symptom or cause) and was, in turn, augmented by the very new claims and findings it had inspired. Likewise a sense of its urgent timeliness gave degeneration greater cultural weight as, and exerting its own psychological trauma, the calendar carried the century of expansionism inexorably towards its end. Consequently, as Greenslade summarises, a sense of extreme cultural foreboding characterised the age finding expression in the degeneration theory of the late 1800s that ‘seemed to identify the sources of rot’.³⁹

³⁸ William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel: 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 15.

³⁹ Greenslade, p. 15.

For Max Nordau, the notorious observer and interpreter of European degeneration manifest in works of art, the ‘cardinal mark’ of degeneration was a proclivity to mysticism. Mysticism is his generic term denoting an interest in the occult in the widest sense, and in this chapter stands in for Theosophy. Approaching the end of *Degeneration* it is written that the discussion of mysticism he ‘has reserved to the last’, and the tone of the signpost suggests that he has a certain relish for the task.⁴⁰ All degenerates, according to Nordau, have in common a pathological need to seek the answers to metaphysical questions that are, categorically, ‘inaccessible to us’. In a passage representative in expression and organisation of Nordau’s entire text he explains how, in meditating on such subjects, the degenerate is vulnerable to the onset of full-blown mysticism or occult-mindedness, thus the degenerate ‘is ever supplying new recruits to the army of system-inventing metaphysicians, profound expositors of the riddle of the universe, seekers for the philosopher’s stone, the squaring of the circle and perpetual motion.’⁴¹ Viewed very broadly as a morbid inwardness of character likely to tend towards the religious or cultish, mysticism is predominant in Nordau’s exposé of the degeneracy manifest in the art and literature of the period. Quoting Legrain, Nordau explains that the only possible output of the mystic, whose condition inclines him to ‘inane reverie’, will be abortive, and Legrain notes the ““peculiar contrast”” in his excessively developed imaginative powers and his incapacity for ““great thoughts and prolific ideas””.⁴² According to Lombroso, and enthusiastically embraced by

⁴⁰ Nordau, p. 22.

⁴¹ Nordau, p. 21. To corroborate his assertion Nordau cites the case notes of Magnan, a degenerate patient who, ““thought of seeking for the philosopher’s stone, and of making gold””. The source of the case notes cited is referenced in a footnote as follows: ‘Magnan, ““Considérations sur la Folie des Hérititaires ou Dégénérés,” *Progrès médical*, 1886, p. 1110 (in the report of a medical case)’, p. 21.

⁴² Legrain, in Nordau, p. 24. Paul-Maurice Legrain (1860-1939) was a major contributor to the pool of theories describing the process of degeneration, and hence, was one of the most extreme advocates of the temperance movement that emerged in late nineteenth-century France.

Nordau, the mystic's intellectual and creative output is always anachronistic and shallow. If they are artistic "their predominant attribute will be the colour-sense", and writes Lombroso, "they will be decorative"; "If they are poets, they will be rich in rhyme, brilliant in style, but barren of thought", and he adds, "sometimes they will be 'decadents'."⁴³ Whatever his artistic inclination if he has one, the mystic can produce nothing of practical or intellectual interest to any person beyond those of his immediate degenerate milieu.

Nordau's treatment of the mystic, compared with his treatment of other degenerate tendencies and types, suggests that the mystic attracts the most severe criticism on account of his perceived complicity in his own degenerate state and by implication in the *fin-de-siècle* crisis as a whole. *Degeneration* develops a theory of causality based on the adverse effects of the experience of modernity on the neurological faculties, forging, as John Stokes puts it, 'close ties between biological behaviour [...] social conduct, technology and psychology'.⁴⁴ For example, the hysteric is represented as suffering an unfortunate mental condition that is nevertheless inevitable given the feeling of oppressive saturation caused by the emergence of networks of mass communication. In a passage fitting in its pace of delivery in which Nordau traces the multitude of interactions required daily of a person living in the late nineteenth century, he makes the hysteric the victim of the

⁴³ Lombroso, in Nordau, p. 24. Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) is the Italian criminologist to whom Nordau dedicates *Degeneration*. Central to his particular theory of degeneracy was the conjecture that criminal impulses were inherited, were manifested physically and were therefore detectable. For Lombroso, that criminal degeneracy was traceable in this way suggested that the criminal was degenerate and atavistic, that is, he had not evolved beyond the stage of primitive savage and upon this premise Lombroso developed his empirical system for the classification of criminal types. His major work on the subject is, *L'Uomo Delinquente* (1876). The work to particularly influence *Degeneration* was *L'uomo di genio in rapporto alla psichiatria* (1889) which was translated into English in 1891 as *The Man of Genius*. In this Lombroso formulated a theory arguing that artistic genius was a form of insanity, again hereditary.

⁴⁴ John Stokes, *In the Nineties* (New York & London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 12

force of progress in concluding, ‘Its own new discoveries and progress have taken civilized humanity by surprise. It has had no time to adapt itself to its changed conditions of life.’⁴⁵ Where the increase in instances of hysteria afflicting men and women is seen to be a consequence of rapid modernisation and technological advance, mysticism, by contrast, is understood by Nordau to be ‘the habitual condition of the human race’ and, emphasising the contrast, ‘is in no way an eccentric disposition of mind’.⁴⁶

To minimise the effects of the natural human mindset, and to stave off its likely declination into the acute and indulgent degeneracy of ‘the mystic’, the individual requires ‘rare gifts’ that are, paradoxically, also those of the mystic. Nordau writes, ‘A strong brain which works out every presentation to its fullest clearness – a powerful will, which sustains the toiling attention – these are rare gifts.’⁴⁷ André Nataf summarises the characteristics associated with the mystic: ‘The initiate loses himself in his work [...] sacrifices his life so that his work can appear’, but he emphasises, ‘That is not to say that he becomes alienated and sinks his identity into it,’ rather the sacrifice is seen ‘symbolically’.⁴⁸ The mystic has misdirected his efforts and has therefore wilfully ignored the need to adapt, preferring to become adept, and to indulge singly in metaphysical quests.

Finally, in the concluding chapter of *Degeneration* Nordau offers a ‘Prognosis’ for the future of European civilization that seals the position of the mystic as the ultimate degenerate, and from the ‘Prognosis’ emerges the first of

⁴⁵ Nordau, p. 40.

⁴⁶ Nordau, p. 67.

⁴⁷ Nordau, p. 67.

⁴⁸ Nataf, p. 104.

several links to be made with the texts developing the theory of natural selection that appeared in the 1850s and after. The mystic's 'condition' is repeatedly placed at variance with the attitude of Nordau and in the 'Prognosis' he is placed at odds with the whole of Nordau's implied readership:

The 'freedom' and 'modernity', the 'progress' and 'truth' of these fellows are not ours. We have nothing in common with them. They wish for self indulgence; we wish for work. They wish to drown consciousness in the unconscious; we wish to strengthen and enrich consciousness. They wish for evasive ideation and babble; we wish for attention, observation, and knowledge.⁴⁹

And in this vein it continues. Here Nordau pits the mystic against a prevailing force for change of which he appoints himself spokesperson. Although, it should be pointed out that this curative view is somewhat belatedly expressed, and that, up to page 560 *Degeneration* is a diatribe that introduces, establishes, and evidences its argument by heaping example of degeneracy upon example of degeneracy. Nevertheless, here Nordau opposes the 'babble', implying idiocy and immaturity, of the degenerates, against empirical research, and their philosophising against scientific classification, and consequently undermines the claims of the mystic to relevant knowledge. Importantly, modern culture and society is to be newly motivated by the principles of energy and activity and in failing to respond and adapt to this spirit of modernity the mystic is called an anti-modern.

Nordau's positioning of the mystic at the final frontier of the scale of degeneration and his observation that the mystic's passive involvement with metaphysical ideas is, in intellectual terms, reactionary, and, in practical terms,

⁴⁹ Nordau, p. 560.

indolent, is the main argument against which this thesis reads the occult movement from the *fin de siècle* and into the twentieth century, as a whole. The resilience of this view is seen, in the mid-twentieth-century writing of Theodor Adorno.⁵⁰ The occult movement was active and, in its own terms, forward-thinking; however, the shape of that thinking, and the nature of that work is different to that which Nordau prefers, as the next section will demonstrate with reference to Theosophical writing. When Nordau offers a rule whereby the degenerate ‘They’ can be distinguished from the modern ‘We’, his ideation and expressive rhetoric of the social contract required of citizens if the deepening crisis is to be halted would not sound out of place in a *Lucifer* editorial:

The criterion through which true moderns may be recognised and distinguished from impostors calling themselves modern may be this: Whoever preaches absence of discipline is an enemy of progress; and whoever worships his ‘I’ is an enemy to society. Society has for its first premise, neighbourly love and capacity for self-sacrifice; and progress is the effect of an ever more rigorous subjugation of the beast in man, of an ever tenser self-restraint and ever keener sense of duty and responsibility.⁵¹

The difference between ‘They’ on the one hand and ‘We’ on the other, hinges on Nordau’s conception of individualism. This opposition he expresses in social-Darwinist terms whereby an interrelationship based on charity and a mutual view to progress requires of the individual the perpetual suppression of anti-modern tendencies, which registers *Origin of Species* (1859) and *Descent of Man* (1871) in its reference to ‘the beast in man’. It is the invocation of *Degeneration*’s antecedent texts through textual and structural allusion that suggests a pre-existing ‘model’

⁵⁰ Theodor Adorno ‘Theses Against Occultism’, *The Stars Down to Earth* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 128-134.

⁵¹ Nordau, p. 560.

scientific shape of thinking that is, in Nordau's terms, modern. Implicit in Nordau's point is the impossibility of the integration of mystical modes of thinking into progressive, that is, evolutionary, ways of thinking.

In the following section I argue that the structural differences in Theosophical thinking, evidenced in Theosophical writing and read in comparison with evolutionary writing and with further discussion of degeneration, demonstrates the appeal of Theosophy at this time. Although, the consequences of which subsequent chapters will examine, the Theosophical project *lost* its appeal for those whose magical careers favoured the magical and the actionable over the theoretical, Theosophy nonetheless articulates an account of existence which was, initially at least, highly compelling. Through it, detail that Laqueur complains is presently missing from the history of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century occult thought, particularly regarding occultism's role in the creation of meaning in the light of Darwin's 'tangled bank', is made available. This involves the way in which Theosophical writing makes a radical revision of human spiritual history, how its ideas are manifested structurally in its key texts, or, how the structure of its writing reproduces aspects of its key tenets in ways that, for instance, Psychical Research could not. For Alex Owen, a crucial element of occultism's proto-modernity involved its utilisation of scientific methodology. Psychical Research was, in this sense, a forerunner of the occult engagements that she examines as it applied materialist principles to material traditionally beyond (or beneath) its remit. In the subsequent activities of the Golden Dawn and the Astrum Argentum the same spirit of scientific enquiry is detectable. Theosophy, however, poses a problem. Like Mysticism, examined by Nordau, it appears to work against modern science, as

against later occult orders, by failing to test and quantify its findings. What too, to restate the question of method raised by Nataf that is of importance in appreciating Theosophy's place in the Magical Revival, was the role of its early adherents if they were not engaged in a *practice* in the manner of their magician successors, or if they were not reading Theosophy from a scientific perspective?

Little is understood about the way evolutionary Theosophical ideas were absorbed in the late nineteenth century, but frequent asides throughout *Isis* and *Secret Doctrine*, recall the reader, the amateur Theosophist to mind. 'All this', writes Blavatsky following an account of the Book of Dzyan 'will very likely provoke a smile of doubt'.⁵² And again:

One of the greatest and perhaps the serious objection to the correctness and reliability of the whole work will be the preliminary STANZAS. How can the statements in them be verified? [...] This is, of course, a great drawback to those who follow methods of research prescribed by official Science; but to students of Occultism, and to every genuine Occultist, this will be of little moment.⁵³

On no point, however, does Blavatsky directly allay the reservations that she anticipates. She appeals instead to her readers' innate appreciation of an unofficial scientism to which occultism, she implies, is tantamount. In spite of this, however, her texts utilise certain discursive structures by which Theosophical ideas are absorbed. Importantly, these structures, like the ideas that they are employed to promote, occupy an ambiguous place in late nineteenth-century thought regarding degeneration and evolution. Analogy, for example, is the sole tool of Blavatsky's occult scientism, and in the decades surrounding the acceptance of evolutionary accounts of universal development its cultural function was under scrutiny.

⁵² *Secret Doctrine*, p. 48.

⁵³ *Secret Doctrine*, p. 46.

Nonetheless, Blavatsky elects to present her case this way and advertises the fact, and is, in this sense, presenting her material in a way appositely marrying form, idea and context. Consequently, her texts highlight both *how* Theosophical ideas were absorbed, before they were overlaid by political and social discourse, and, make it possible to account for the subsequent hardening applied magical interests which define the Magical Revival more broadly.

Theosophical Evolution

When Greenslade explains the place of Nordau's text within the body of work that perpetuated and augmented the narrative of degeneration, he suggests that the success of its contribution can be accounted for by its couching its thesis in 'terms appropriate for the *fin de siècle*'.⁵⁴ The clearest example of this for Greenslade is evidenced in Nordau's wedding of symptom and cause in the discussion of the impact of city dwelling on the mind. Greenslade sees Nordau transpose the 'map' of the physical layout of the city, a place he describes at the nineteenth century as 'a territory of immanent breakdown', onto the symptoms of degeneration demonstrable in its inhabitants.⁵⁵ Thus the terminology that Greenslade finds effective is so as a result of its historical specificity, that is its forging a corollary between the experience of the then and now, and degeneration as the predominant modifier of that experience. Nordau's reasoning throughout *Degeneration* is, as

⁵⁴ William Greenslade, p. 18.

⁵⁵ Greenslade, p. 18. The metaphoric power of the city is informatively treated by Philip Davis in his chapter on 'Nature' in *The Oxford English Literary History, Volume 8: 1830-1880, The Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 55-97: Davis draws on social commentary to describe how science was being felt as a cityscape encroaching on the surrounding open and debatable lands, and seeming, with the economic logic of Adam's Smith's political economy, that all had been mutually produced by 'secularizing conditions' (p. 58).

Greenslade points out, circular: *Degeneration* exposes the degeneracy inherent but dormant in late nineteenth-century European society thereby feeding the anxiety, but by supplying the citizen with a number of identifiable and classifiable ‘degenerate’ figures the threat of such figures is, in Greenslade’s words, ‘neutralised by the charge of degeneracy’.⁵⁶ The broader feature of the ‘appropriate’ language of *Degeneration* is therefore its dialectical compulsion to apocalypse as to stabilization. It is no wonder, then, that Glennis Byron remarks that *Degeneration* is a Gothic text.⁵⁷ While this pattern of reasoning circles and effects the simultaneous exposure and containment of the threat of degeneracy, an underlying narrative structure that is unmistakably linear is further identifiable. It does not so much contain the perceived threat to progress that is posed by the mystic, but it appears to strategically preclude the mystic’s association with that progressive, scientific, point of view.

In the following passage, isolated although the point is applicable to the whole, the linearity of Nordau’s conceptualisation of degeneration is perceptible. It is placed for comparison here alongside a passage from Herbert Spencer’s ‘A Theory of Population, Deduced from the General Law of Animal Fertility’:

Every line we read or write, every human face we see, every conversation we carry on, every scene we perceive through the window of the flying express, sets in activity our sensory nerves and our brain centres... the perpetual noises and the activity our sensory nerves and the various sights in the streets of a large town, our suspense pending the sequel of progressing events, the

⁵⁶ Greenslade, p. 18. Greenslade lists Nordau’s ‘manifold referents’ of the ‘city “condition”’ as the ‘men of genius, anarchists, lunatics, hooligans, prostitutes’, p. 18.

⁵⁷ Glennis Byron, ‘Gothic in the 1890s’, *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 132-142, (p. 132).

constant expectation of the newspapers, of the postman, of visitors, cost our brains wear and tear.⁵⁸

Nature secures each step in advance by a succession of trials, which are perpetually repeated, until success is achieved. All mankind in turn subject themselves more or less to the discipline described; they either may or may not advance under it... for as those prematurely carried off must, in the average of cases, be those in whom the power of self-preservation is least, it unavoidably follows, that those left behind to continue the race are those in whom the power of self-preservation is the greatest – are the select of their generation.⁵⁹

The second passage provides a larger framework for the first. Analysed here in Nordau's passage is the experience of modern life as it pertains to the onset of degeneration in the nerve system. The details of that, however, are less important than the syntax. The structure is cumulative in that the multiple daily communications with people and print result only in the wearing down of brain tissue needed to process those interactions. It also registers the relentlessness of this process as the object envisages future replications pending. Fitting the subject, the pace of the writing is affected by the necessity of the sequence that is punctuated by the reoccurrence of the indefinite determiners 'each' and 'every'. These contribute to the sense of saturation, but also have the dual effect of halting the delivery of the sentence just as they signal its continuation and introduce additional instances. The pauses, as the argument as a whole, derive a broader discursive meaning in the context of Spencer's writing. They demonstrate in prose the succession of trials that are the basis of the logic of evolutionary theories discussed under 'The Development Hypothesis', the debate that engendered what was to be understood as

⁵⁸ Nordau, p. 39. Supplied here is the same quotation given by Greenslade (pp. 17-18), and also by John Stokes (p. 12).

⁵⁹ Herbert Spencer, 'A Theory of Population, Deduced from the General Law of Animal Fertility', in Davis, p. 60.

Darwinian evolutionary theory encompassing the central concept of natural selection.

It was Darwin's *Origin of Species* that was singled out from the broader collective of work extending the Hypothesis. Other central contributors included Jean Baptiste de Lamarck; George John Romanes; Thomas Malthus; Ernst Haeckel; and finally, Alfred Russell Wallace, the man who, independently of Darwin, reached the same conclusion regarding natural selection at the same time as his competitor and who prompted Darwin to publish his own abstract, shortly followed by *Origin*, sooner than he had planned. The Darwin-Wallace contribution to evolutionary theory, as it is known for the sake of parity, offered a version of the evolutionary struggle that revealed particularly the 'mechanism of *how* evolution proceeded'.⁶⁰ Itself a descendent of the eighteenth-century's Great Chain of Being, it turned the ordering implied in the chain into a process of change. The behavioural structure that Darwin and Wallace theorised, ordered the existential struggle into a sequence of confrontations, or trials, that challenge, and consequently check, the right to existence. Spencer's particular contribution to evolutionary theory was constituted by his application of the principles to sociological issues, in this case population, extrapolated from the laws devolved from the laws of reproduction in animal life. The race is the dominant metaphor through which Spencer articulates the mechanics of human evolution. Importantly, there is no escape from this starkly linear evolutionary race. Release comes only with death when the weak are 'carried off', a turn of phrase that suggests they are merely the waste by-product of the system. Although in the race metaphor, as the passage above suggests, Spencer

⁶⁰ Philip Davis, p. 60.

found an abundantly positive view of the progressive nature of the laws of evolution. Christian teaching envisaged in death salvation and a return to a Creator God, but this was in the process of being overwritten the emergent scientific worldview of Spencer, Darwin and Wallace in whose evolutionary system a person can only exit, that is step, or be forced, out of the chain of events into nothing but the state of abject cadaver.⁶¹ Christian doctrine turns on the belief in a future ‘upward’ release in salvation that motivates all earthly human activity and inspires, but the compulsion of evolution by contrast, is forward in a straight line only as shown by the early pictorial representations of evolution, such as those of T. H. Huxley.⁶²

The most significant and the broadest structure of Theosophical thought is cyclical, as the introductory passage to Volume One ‘Science’ demonstrates:

There exists somewhere in the whole world an old book [...] The most ancient Hebrew document on occult learning – the *Siphra Dzeniouta* – was compiled from it, and that at a time when the former was already considered in the light of a literary relic. One of its illustrations represents the Divine Essence emanating from ADAM like a luminous arc proceeding to form a circle; and then, having attained the highest point of its circumference, the ineffable Glory bends back again, and returns to earth, bringing a higher type of humanity in its vortex. As it approaches nearer and nearer to our planet, the Emanation becomes more and more shadowy, until upon touching the ground it is as black as night.⁶³

⁶¹ Gillian Beer outlines the possibilities (and impossibilities) of natural selection: ‘Darwinian theory [...] excludes or suppresses certain orderings of experience. It has no place for stasis. It debars return. It does not countenance absolute replication (cloning is its contrary), pure invariant cycle, or constant equilibrium. Nor – except for the extinction of particular species – does it allow either interruption or conclusion.’ Gillian Beer, (1983) p. 11.

⁶² See appendix 1 for illustration of ‘Drawings of comparative skeletons of the gibbon, orangutang, chimpanzee, gorilla, and man’ that featured as the frontispiece of T.H. Huxley’s, *Man’s Place in Nature* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863); Historical Images, L0027093, Wellcome Library, London. It should be acknowledged that this illustration is also reprinted in Davis, (2002), p. 64, although my source for the illustration is the Wellcome Library, London picture archive. See also appendix 2 for ‘Darwin’s scheme showing the evolution of species’ from Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 2nd edn. (1871), facing p. 91, Wellcome Library, London (Historical Images M0011261).

⁶³ *Isis*, pp. 1-2.

As well as emphasising aspects of Theosophical thought previously introduced (it reiterates, for instance, the non-revelatory nature of Theosophy through its description of an illustration from an ancient and unidentified text) the significance of the passage is its depiction of a life cycle. According to Theosophy, this is the immemorial and meaningful plan under threat from Darwinism and degeneration, and the basis of Theosophy's theory of evolution.

The cyclical thinking the passage exhibits is, in a sense, the degenerate's compulsive 'squaring of the circle' inverted. A key factor in degeneration theory's achieving predominance in late nineteenth-century thought (aside from its drawing nourishment from the concept of natural selection) is its replacement of 'human nature' with a model of normal and abnormal development that squared well with materialist modes of investigation. This was further in relation to changing environmental conditions, which Greenslade shows to be crucial, above. Theosophical thought, as in the 'old book' passage above, according to Nordau's diagnosis, would be viewed as evidence of failure to adjust to the new model and an outmoded preference for the idea of human nature. The Theosophist clings to a model akin to pre-destination in which, according to the image, humanity passes through a cycle determined by a heavenly influence elsewhere referred to as 'the Great Breath'. But, *Degeneration* also recognised that the mystical mindset is, to some extent, a natural human mindset, and reading Theosophy this way suggests that part of the appeal of Blavatsky's ideas is down to her reinstating Nature as a factor in development. Theosophy is, therefore, built upon a fundamentally

different self-perception that preserves an idea of design. At its most straightforward, this sees a universal life force propel humanity through a dark phase emblematic of degradation in religious terms and degeneration in socio-scientific terms (as it reaches ‘our planet’) and elsewhere, on reaching its peak, usher in a ‘higher type of humanity’.⁶⁴

Before proceeding to further discuss the theory that Blavatsky lays over the basic cycle vision, the means by which Blavatsky uses this image to direct the reader towards an appreciation of the relevance of such oppositional thinking requires attention. Exemplifying the non-revelatory nature of Theosophy, and its retrieval of pre-existing knowledge, the passage describes an illustration from an old, unidentified, spiritual text. That it remains unnamed is important, as is the information that it is the basis of the *Siphra Dzenitouta*: Theosophy purports to have access to original occult wisdom, not merely systems constructed from it, moreover, in apprehending the correspondences Theosophy distinguishes itself from being another occult scheme with discrete aims and constructed from a particular cultural, racial, or religious bias. The passage functions, moreover, to undercut, for Blavatsky’s typically British or American Christian reader, fundamental premises of both Christian teaching and morality, and of evolutionary science. An illustration is described, not supplied. Presumably there are practical reasons for this, given Blavatsky’s method of ‘astral research’ the document from which it originates is likely not available for the purposes of reproduction.⁶⁵ Yet, the image itself need not be supplied because the associations it generates, depending on the faith of the reader, communicate its essence. For late-Victorian British culture its principal

⁶⁴ *Isis*, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁵ Blavatsky claimed to view all her text on the astral plane and to simply transcribe it from astral tablets placed there for her by the Secret Chiefs.

feature of divine light ascending into earthly darkness would be viewed as emblematic of the Fall, and the figure of 'ADAM' will engender the biblical Adam of the Old Testament Book of Genesis. Just as Godwin's analysis of Theosophy in the early Romantic period revealed that its methodology undermined Orthodox Christian teaching on points such as the afterlife, here late nineteenth-century Theosophy undermines the figure of Adam. For Blavatsky, the narrative dramatised by the illustration can have no meaning in terms relatable to a stable category of religious faith. The figure of Adam is again the key as Blavatsky's footnote to the passage demonstrates: 'The name [ADAM] is used in the sense of the Greek word *ανθρωπος*'.⁶⁶ That is, according to E. A. Sophocles' *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (1914): 'human being, man, woman'; 'what man soever, whosoever'; 'Man, in the sense of *servant, attendant*'; '*Anthropos, Man, the archetypal man of the Valentinians, an emanation from λόγος [God]*'; and '*ζωή life, or in the sense of archetypal man of the Valentinians it could mean woman*'.⁶⁷ Adam's everyman status is emphasised and his belonging to any one religious system is disallowed. That his image is readily translatable into a number of spiritual meanings suggests to the Theosophist the universality of religions and the central tenet of the Theosophical philosophy that there existed a pre-eminent enlightened culture who designed a properly spiritual religion which had a real claim to universal human truths. The passage's religious references mean it would be a perfect introduction to her volume on 'Religion' if it were not for the fact that Blavatsky uses it to introduce her volume on 'Science'.

⁶⁶ *Isis*, p. 1.

⁶⁷ E.A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1914), p. 170.

Adam as everyman further serves to redirect attention to the science of Theosophical Evolution. It is well-known that, in spite of the profound effect that *Origin of Species* had on narratives regarding man's inheritance and providence, it did not deal with the human species, only the 'Recapitulation and Conclusion' provoked a direct comparison. Darwin there predicted that there now laid in the 'distant future [...] open fields for far more important researches'; 'Psychology will be based on a new foundation', and 'Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history'.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, as Gillian Beer has said, 'by rais[ing] questions fundamental to the life of humankind without making humankind the centre of its enquiry' *Origin* mounts 'a silent and intense challenge to the reader's assumptions' by virtue of that same 'shift away from the centre'.⁶⁹ By describing Adam's representation as it appears in the old book, Blavatsky returns man to the centre from which Darwin had resolutely and irreplaceably excluded him and as if to emphasise this point, Adam's name, like other words with especial significance, is repeatedly capitalised.

Replacing man and Nature at the centre of her system of development, Blavatsky could persuade her readers of a system of development under threat from Darwinism's fundamentally linear view. And, by couching her description, in the first place, in the language and symbolism of orthodox religion, with which her readers would be familiar, she could both undermine the traditional meanings attached to them, and call up in the minds of readers a multitude of similar correspondences (whose meanings were to be subtly re-adjusted) that serve to further embed the truth she expounds. She was not, therefore, asking her readers to

⁶⁸ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (1959), ed. by Gillian Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press (1996), p. 394.

⁶⁹ Gillian Beer, 'Introduction', *Origin of Species*, pp. vii-xxviii, (p. ix).

un-learn whatever form of spirituality they had hitherto lived in relation to, rather she was encouraging them to appreciate their existing knowledge as a form of knowledge, rather than a faith, and to further appreciate that as partial and incomplete. Through this method of analogy and revision the core teaching of Theosophy is delivered. Students begin as more or less passive readers, but in the process of accessing Blavatsky's prompt-giving footnotes (and later, in the *Secret Doctrine* utilising her tabulated correspondences relating to colour, body parts, elements, and more) the reader of Theosophy *becomes* a Theosophist.

In her Preface to the *Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky explains how she made a number of crucial technical developments in putting together the successor for *Isis*, and these suggest that she apprehended a desire for more directed involvement. As a result of Blavatsky's decision to respond to the change in public interest, the production and publication of *Secret Doctrine* lagged behind the initial schedule for its appearance. The Preface apologises for the delay and emphasising the enormity of the new undertaking explains that 'even the two volumes now issued do not complete the scheme, nor do these treat exhaustively of the subjects dealt with in them'; 'A large quantity of material has already been prepared', she explains, the third volume is 'entirely ready', and the fourth 'almost so'. Blavatsky accounts for this reorganisation by pointing out that the original scheme was to 'enlarge[d]' that of *Isis Unveiled*. However, 'the explanations which could be added to those already put before the world, in the last named and other works dealing with esoteric science, were such as to require a different method of treatment'.⁷⁰ The material result of the new method of treatment is easy to see in the layout of the

⁷⁰ *Secret Doctrine*, p. 8.

documentation of *Doctrine*. Where *Isis* contained only long prose chapters of description, and presented its theory via a series of interlinked analogies each following a similar pattern of argument and length, *Secret Doctrine*'s sections and chapters are appended with tables, glossaries, and summaries, and are presented in a range of formats that appear designed to be of increasingly practical use throughout the volumes. *Isis Unveiled* presented a mass of information (largely unverifiable in any scientific, or religious sense) though dense argument and this density of information is one way of accounting for the failure, as Laqueur notes, in Owen and Treitel, to provide quotation from Theosophical texts.

Crucially, although Blavatsky introduces the substance of the new method, it is the method itself that remains of singular importance, rather than content. Of the material prepared for inclusion in subsequent volumes 'dealing with the history of the Aryan Race, and showing the bearing of occult philosophy on the conduct of life, as it is and as it ought to be' it is the latter, the clarification of the occult bearing on life, which constitutes the improved content. Although the final volume of *Secret Doctrine* contains papers dealing with this subject, these only serve practically as further description, rather than as instruction. Yet Blavatsky had understood the needs of her readers, and the real way in which they were to grasp the all important bearing of occultism on life is revealed later in the Preface:

Is it more than probable that the book will be regarded by a large section of the public as a romance of the wildest kind; for who has ever heard of the book of Dzyan?

The writer is fully prepared to take all the responsibility for what is contained in this work, and even to face the charge of having invented the whole of it. That it has many shortcomings she is fully aware; all that she claims for it is that, romantic as its may seem to many, its logical coherence and consistency entitle

this new Genesis to rank, at any rate, on a level with the ‘working hypothesis’ so freely accepted by Modern Science. Further it claims consideration, not by reason of any appeal to dogmatic authority, but because it closely adheres to Nature, and follows the laws of uniformity and analogy.⁷¹

In addition to the aims shared with *Isis Unveiled*, ‘to rescue from degradation the archaic truths which are the basis of all religions’ and ‘to show that the Occult side of Nature has never been approached by the Science of modern civilization’, *Secret Doctrine* added another, foremost ‘to show that Nature is not ‘a fortuitous concurrence of atoms’, and to assign to man his rightful place in the scheme of the Universe’.⁷² Blavatsky’s appeal here, in *Secret Doctrine*, is subtly changed to that in *Isis* where it revealed by virtue of its weight and extensiveness of coverage more than anything else, the original relation of all knowledge systems. The secondary idea of reconstructing a brotherhood of sympathetic world citizens is everywhere latent in the writing, as in the wider body of periodical and pamphlet literature and in the Theosophical Society’s later work interventions in campaigns, but this is moved up the list of priorities for the second key work. Man, it was to show, was not the arbitrary product of Darwinian evolution, but came into being, existed and evolved in accordance with complex spiritual structures, as suggested by the divine essence of the image earlier described. Onto this concept of regeneration the ‘coats of skin’ philosophy could further be placed. While Theosophy *did* reject much of the detail and the letter of natural selection, it also, in pursuit of the idea of brotherhood, positively adopted aspects of evolutionary thought. Blavatsky rejected the speciation of primate to human, for example, and somewhat unsatisfactorily reasons ‘while it is quite correct to say that Nature had, at one time, built round the human astral form an *ape-like* external shape, it is also correct that this shape was

⁷¹ *Secret Doctrine*, pp. 8-9.

⁷² *Secret Doctrine*, p. 8.

no more than a “missing link””.⁷³ Crucially though, the concept does not reject Darwinian theory outright, or the mechanism of natural selection. While Theosophy’s anti-materialist position cannot tolerate the notion that transmutation occurs *naturally*, that is via uncontrolled physical processes, at the heart of Theosophy is an essentially optimistic view of the progressive nature of the mechanism, although this mechanism is administered by Nature. Nature here is, in part, a traditional concept of Nature as overseer, and part an idea of a concept of consciousness. Complicating accounts of Theosophy that view it as fundamentally and simply opposed to Darwinian evolution, nineteenth-century Theosophy, audacious as it seems, argued for its application to the spiritual life of humanity. ‘If you accept Darwin’s theory’, wrote Blavatsky in *Isis*, ‘you must concede the strength of possibility that man is, or could be, advancing to higher spiritual life’.⁷⁴

Working with an inherently positive ‘spirit’ of evolution, Blavatsky writes back into a new spiritual evolution everything that Darwin had debarred. Just as Blavatsky replaced man at the centre of his destiny, she also fused this with a spiritual essence that breathes life (she frequently refers to this as the great breath) into material man and onto this scheme mapped coils and rounds that spiralled away from the terrestrial world (as if towards the apex of a cone) and through seven dimensions that function both as broad time dimensions for universal humanity, and as development dimensions for individual egos (the term is employed here in a pre-Freudian way). On the one hand, Theosophical rounds, functioning as ages, dictate the largest developmental cycles, or ‘planes of being’. Different races at any given time exist in one of these cycles, independently of others, and to this extent their

⁷³ *Secret Doctrine*, p. 192.

development is pre-determined; each racial grouping will follow through the same sequence of seven stages. On the other hand, however, the individual could effect its discrete developmental cycles, which, in turn could effect, in a sense, the quality and the permanence of the evolution of the race. This, it appears, is the sense behind the coil structure that carries the individual (defined not as a stable individual personality, but as a temporary concept of self) upwards through the planes of being as appropriate.

Analogy is again key to the process of Theosophical Evolution, and it holds particular significance for two further reasons. In nineteenth-century science writing analogy proved to be an ambiguous but vital tool in the advancement of new scientific hypothesis. Particularly in securing their reception as scientific fact. In setting out an alternative science of life, Theosophy not only utilises analogy in its writing, but encourages complementary analogy-forging thinking as the very method of Theosophy and creates a place for such thinking within the scheme of Theosophical evolution. Literally, the ability to recognise analogies led to familiarity that develops into a positive determinant that is fundamental in securing evolution; analogy produces a vital human *faculty*.

By honing the ability to appreciate theoretical linkages between historical accounts of faith and details of global spiritualities the individual Theosophist does more than previous scholars have allowed. More even than Margaret Mills Harper allows, for example, when she suggests that the appeal of Theosophy for Yeats is its provision of ‘historical and cultural depth’ and ‘the sense that his present-day acts, ideas, or images could be placed in the context of ancient and worldwide occult

knowledge'.⁷⁵ When Sinnett urged Theosophical readers to see beyond the 'archaeological interest' of Theosophy, he is hinting at its *living* significance and the ability to conceive of oneself 'in the context of ancient and worldwide occult knowledge' does not go far enough.⁷⁶ What the Theosophist was in fact participating in was a scheme of occult knowledge that sat on the cusp of theory and initiation. Present-day acts are trained through analogy on the level of ideas and theory until they become habitual and productive, until, that is, everyday acts become imitative and nourish a universal ethic, or brotherhood. Where, therefore, Theosophy opposed formal initiation, it nonetheless initiates a mode of Theosophical thinking that should be understood as meaning in essence, the displacement of degeneration and the anticipation of regeneration through Theosophical Evolution. As is known, however, many who were drawn initially to such ideas turned away from them in the light of the greater appeal of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Blavatsky's vision was a general one that prophesied a new spiritual-attuned age of civilisation, and, as I have attempted to demonstrate, she did give some idea of how to get there, or how to be worthy of this age when it arrived. And, although talk of aeons and cycles appear to have disappointed those who required a system of regeneration with more immediate promise, Theosophy, nonetheless, had a specific appeal that, positively or negatively, effects the development of the Magical Revival. As Margaret Harper Mill's summary of Yeats's relationship with Theosophy appositely suggests by recalling the evolutionary focus of this chapter, 'Theosophy [...] enables Yeats to "walk upright" into other phases'.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Mills Harper, p. 153.

⁷⁶ Sinnett, p. 6.

⁷⁷ Mills Harper, p. 154.

Chapter 2

‘the art of living’: the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Appeal of Hermetic Magic at the *fin de siècle*

It is a characteristic of historical accounts of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn that they mention the questions of authority and authenticity; specifically that they attend to the matter of the unclear origins of the magical order. Treatment of the subject ranges from an obligatory sentence or two to a chapter length discussion of ‘Suspect Documents’, but it is deemed a defining aspect of the Order’s history.¹ While there is nothing strange in this in itself, it would appear remiss to omit reference to this aspect of the Order’s history, there is a contradiction between the insistence on the subject as a point of historiographical importance for an understanding of nineteenth-century occultism, and the lack of interpretation regarding its significance for the same. The questions of authenticity and authority are central to reading the cultural role of the Golden Dawn in relation to late nineteenth-century socio-cultural life. They are also important in understanding in greater depth the place of the Golden Dawn, the foremost occult Order, in the

¹ The fullest treatment of the subject in ‘Suspect Documents’ is given in Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of The Golden Dawn: A Documentary History of a Magical Order 1887-1923* (1972) (Northants: Aquarian Press, 1985), pp. 1-25. Howe’s book is also the most detailed account of the whole history of the Golden Dawn and is the source of the description that follows in paragraph two. However, other histories of the Order include: R.A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians* (Northants.: Aquarian Press, 1983); and, R.A. Gilbert, *Revelations of the Golden Dawn: The Rise and Fall of A Magical Order* (Slough: Quantum, 1997).

Magical Revival of which it is taken to be the apotheosis. In both cases it is the attention given to authenticity that is most meaningful because that which is inauthentic in its history, turns out to be more meaningful than what is attestable. The story of the Golden Dawn, paraphrased, goes as follows.

In 1887 London coroner and freemason, William Wynn Westcott, acquired three documents: one, a piece of paper with the name and contact details of one Fräulein Sprengel; the second, a cipher manuscript; and, fortuitously, the key for deciphering the MS was the third. Having transcribed the cipher documents and finding them to contain details of Rosicrucian rituals, Westcott advised friend and fellow occultist, Samuel Lidell MacGregor Mathers, of his discovery and together they fleshed out the rituals so as to make them fully workable. In the meantime they contacted Fräulein Anna Sprengel applying for more information. Her reply granted Westcott and Mathers permission to establish an English branch of the German Order *Die Goldene Dämmerung* which duly brought into being the Order, known in full as the Isis-Urania Temple of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The details change slightly across the accounts. Some are more specific, and romantic, and have Westcott find the MS whilst browsing in an occult bookshop, but, as Ellic Howe summarises: ‘the salient features of the G.D. saga are the Cypher MS., Fräulein Sprengel and the Isis-Urania Temple’s link with a German occult Order’.²

² Ellic Howe, p. 1. Waite makes reference to the ‘bookshop’ version of events in his autobiography *Shadows of Life and Thought* that is quoted by Howe, p. 3.

Former member of the Order A. E. Waite, and scholar of the history of book printing Ellic Howe have questioned the authority of the claim of antecedence made by Westcott for the Order. Each has deconstructed copies of the original manuscripts and the findings of these investigations are summarised by Howe in *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn* (1985).³ Both men agree on the improbability of the MS's claimed Egyptian sources, and their physical falsification, and they suggest that this campaign of trickery extended to the circumstances by which the Golden Dawn announced itself to its public. For example, what Waite, an expert on the Tarot, could not reconcile with the supposed antiquity of the MS was its references to a series of correspondences between the twenty-two paths of the Cabbalistic Tree of Life and the twenty-two Major trumps of the Tarot; the earliest example of this system, suggested Waite, belonged to Eliphas Lévi's 1856 publication *Dogme et ritual de la haute magie*. Waite, therefore, dated the MS around 1870 or later. According to Howe's report, this conjecture is borne out by his and Waite's separate examinations of copies of the original. Among other things, Waite suggested that "Its concealed authors possessed also or contrived to secure a small sheaf of rag paper in large quarto, bearing the watermark of 1789", and warming to his theme he goes on, "and so long as this lasted they made their notes thereon, almost obviously with intent to deceive. When the leaves failed they used other paper, as nearly like as may be".⁴ Howe questions Waite's 1789 watermark; the paper he saw bore the date 1809, and had been written upon in a 'muddy shade of brown ink' helpfully, he explains, 'to make it appear as if the

³ As Howe explains, it was actually Mathers, who must have had some part in the whole affair, who accused Westcott of having "forged or caused to be forged" the Sprengel letters, see Mathers in Ellic Howe, p. 4.

⁴ A. E. Waite in Ellic Howe, p. 3.

manuscript was old'.⁵ In the next level of examination a cache of letters pertaining to Anna Sprengel is sent to a German graphologist. Howe reports that Herr Schlag found all of the German documents 'textually suspect' on account of the inappropriate 'jargon' used.⁶ Likewise, one letter, in which the death of Anna Sprengel is reported, gives the graphologist cause for concern as the conveyor of the news confuses the gender of Fraulein Sprengel. He lamented the death of "our learned friend" and used "*unseres*" (our: masculine) instead of "*unsere*" (our: feminine)'. From this evidence Howe concludes that every aspect of the authority of the Golden Dawn is spurious, 'There does not seem to be any reasonable alternative'.⁷

The debunked claim that the Golden Dawn is the heir to a mysterious German order is current and accepted among scholars to the extent that there is felt to be no need to readdress the question. That the Golden Dawn is, technically, illegitimate in terms of magical lineage is deemed unimportant. This is exactly right in one sense, however the contradiction between its cultivation of ancient roots and its late-Victorian beginnings is a valuable point of interpretation. The question is not the reality that Westcott's posturing attempted to cloak, but the way that posturing is read. When Waite and Howe suggest contemporary sources for the Golden Dawn MS they are explaining the several points on which the Order was not what it claimed to be, in magical terms; these points of subterfuge, however, show

⁵ Howe, p. 3.

⁶ Howe, p. 3.

⁷ Howe, p. 7. The arguments of both Waite and Howe are somewhat overstated. Waite complains, for example, of the impossibility of the claim that details of ritual had been drawn from ancient Egyptian papyri, on the grounds that hieroglyphics had been untranslatable until J. F. Champollion's revelation 1822. As the Introduction to this thesis discussed with reference to Theosophical Enlightenment, interpretations of ritual cultures were emerging that were based on iconography and images as recorded on artefacts. Such approaches probably provided the basis of these rituals.

Westcott to be making associations with more mainstream culture. The influence of Eliphas Lèvi in particular situates the Golden Dawn in a newly emerging strand of occultism that had no firm precedence in magical terms, but had a clear precedence in terms of its immediate mainstream cultural context. This new type of occultism functions firstly to supply practical aspects of occult teaching that the Theosophical Society did not and in so doing supplies a system of therapeutics that responds directly to contemporary needs. Whatever the verity of the Sprengel correspondence and cipher document the significance of the Golden Dawn lies as much in its contemporary establishment as the, it seems, spurious idea that Westcott and Mathers had been conferred a pristine system of occult knowledge.

This chapter will examine occultists' experimental responses to what Holbrook Jackson identified as the defining question of the age: How to live? The focus will be on the Second Order workings of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, particularly concerning ceremonial magic. The central texts of Chapter One were those given to elucidating the 'science' (or competing sciences) behind terrestrial existence and the chapter placed the work of the Theosophical Society in close relation the degeneration theories that were both result and factor of this. The central occult discussion of this chapter supplies evidence of the ways in which the science of life was made sense of in relation to life, and the living of it, in material terms, how an art to living at the *fin de siècle* was designed.

What the Theosophical Society failed to provide in terms of practical instruction, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn provided in abundance. While

the Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn shared a broad based platform of belief that involved the refutation of orthodox Christianity and natural science, the sense and circumstances of the practicability of their visions differed in crucial ways. Theosophy revealed to its students through careful comparative historical study the occult nature of man, and in doing so it posited a fundamentally intellectual challenge. That the acquisition of adept status is possible is certainly implied but the implication also is that this is a scholarly state of knowledge, not a religious enlightenment per se, but an attainment of an in-built spiritual refinement. There was a sense, however, in which the Theosophical Society had skipped an important step. Progress was indeed understood in terms of a universal social body, but the universe was itself only the sum of its parts. The practical role of the individual within this recuperating social body needed further exploration.

Nineteenth-century occultism

Although by the early 1880s the Theosophical worldview was well established within specialist circles, that which was termed ‘occultism’ was technically a new thing. The *OED* illustrates the terms of its emergence. Occultism is defined generally in the *OED* as ‘The doctrine, principles, or practice of “occult” science (magic, theosophy, etc [...]); mysticism’, and ‘occultist’ as ‘One versed in, or believing in, occultism; a mystic’. The publication dates of the sources of the three citations of ‘occultism’ in use have a noticeably narrow range of fourteen years, 1881-1895, and with the exception of one 1977 source, the same can be said of

those publications demonstrating the usage of ‘occultist’ which span 1881-1902. That the term entered into general usage in Britain and America at the *fin de siècle* confirms a growth of interest. Moreover, what is demonstrated is a movement away from an identification of occultism as a historically and geographically remote cultural practice to a current and local one. Theosophist A. P. Sinnett writes ‘The occultists have been a race apart from an earlier period than we can fathom’, and ‘It is chiefly in the East that occultism is still kept up [...]’ in *Occult World* (1881). In an *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry of 1902 this becomes, ‘Cabalistic, occultist, Indian, and modern spiritualistic ideas and formulas’.⁸ In addition, the development registers a replacement of the notion of the academic or ethnographic value of occultism as a subject offering information regarding the belief systems of other cultures, with, although the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is careful here, occultism as, if not belief, per se, it borrows one of its own terms, ‘formulas’, sense-making system, living and practiced.

The Introduction to this thesis described the theosophical-revisionist approach to the history of myth and religion that sought and found evidence in the vestiges of ancient civilisations of an unorthodox religious worldview that was ideologically expedient. The same compounding of philosophy and method is

⁸ *OED*, 2nd Edn., vol x, J.A. Simpson, and E.S.C. Weiner, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 681. Excluding etymological history, the full examples of term usage of ‘occultism’ and ‘occultist’ as they appear in the 2nd Edition of the *OED* are as follows: ‘occultism [...] 1881 A.P. SINNETT *Occult World* (1883) 3 It is chiefly in the East that occultism is still kept up – in India and in adjacent countries. 1886 *St. James’s Gaz.* 25 Sept. 6/ I Occultism was, indeed, a necessary concomitant of polytheism. 1895 *Thinker* VII. 541 Occultism deals with forces of nature not generally known’; ‘occultist [...] 1881 A.P. SINNETT *Occult World* (1883) 12 The occultists have been a race apart from an earlier period than we can fathom. 1886 *Forum* (N.Y.) Mar. 43 Our occultists and mystics had various...explanations of the higher significance of the sacred cross. 1902 *Encycl. Brit.* XXX. 275/ I Cabalistic, occultist, Indian, and modern spiritualistic ideas and formulas. 1977 R. L. WOLFF *Gains and Losses* iv. 316 Charles Maurice Davies[’s] book *The Great Secret* (1896) was published anonymously. His occultist leanings were, however, well known’ (p. 681).

present in nineteenth-century occultism more generally, but although closely related, occultism was different from Theosophy in the execution. In *Occult World* Sinnett is clear on the point of the relevance of occult philosophy for contemporary society, but it is a point he is unable to evidence, and it is tempting to re-appropriate his word choice for the purpose of describing those aspects of occult interest for which the Theosophical Society failed to provide. As highlighted in Chapter One, he writes, that there is ‘something more than a mere archaeological interest’, in the occult system, because ‘we are presented by the identification with the key to the philosophy of religious development’.⁹ However, for those Theosophists who deserted the Theosophical Society for the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, its meaning was, to re-appropriate Sinnett’s words, ‘mere[ly] archaeological’. These hopefuls were not satisfied to read the life histories of the adepts even if they, as Theosophy seems to have purported, were spiritually instructive in a very literal way. Rather, the people who called themselves occultists, rather than Theosophists, wanted to attain the state of adeptship for themselves.

Although adeptship is remarked upon in the *Occult World* its achievability for the ordinary man is not emphasised. Indeed, Sinnett associates himself not with the Adept whose enhanced faculties of consciousness he describes, ‘the adept has found the key of his prison [the prison of the body] and can emerge from it at pleasure’, but rather with the reader, ‘We can see merely what comes before its [the body’s] windows’.¹⁰ Later, he suggests that there are procedures for the attainment of adeptship in place but, ‘as [he] has been constantly assured’, ‘the process of

⁹ A.P. Sinnett, *Occult World*, (London: Trübner & co., 1881), p. 6.

¹⁰ Sinnett., (1881), p. 15.

becoming is mainly in his [the adept's] own hands'.¹¹ The same obliqueness on the subject of adeptship is characteristic of Blavatsky's publications, and her estimation of Theosophy's bearing on life involved adopting a new outlook on life in light of, and receptive to, the system's demystification of the puzzles of existence.¹² What emerges specifically as 'occultism' in the nineteenth century was understood by those attracted to it to take more seriously than had systems before it, the individual cultivation of magicians. Moreover, as the next section discusses, nineteenth-century occultism can be viewed to have a particular contemporary catalyst.

Fin de siècleism, Initiation and Occult Therapeutics

Linked to the prevailing socio-pathological mode of degeneration was, at the *fin de siècle*, a less easily quantifiable mood that was defined by the experience of living through the *fin de siècle* itself. '*Fin de siècle* implied', write Mikulás Teich and Roy Porter, 'a "go to the dogs" feeling that was thought to pervade European "civilized" society in the years around 1900': 'Underlying it was a cocktail of lamentations for the past and fears of the future countenancing the notion that human progress was being brought to a halt, if not to an end'.¹³ For David Trotter, beneath the idea of degeneration, lies a similarly formless fear of something like

¹¹ Sinnett., (1881), p. 25.

¹² 'To justify its claim to be considered a sound system of thinking, any given scheme of philosophy must fit in with the problems of life around us, as well as with theories of our spiritual future. [...] If our philosophical system gives us no help in reference to them [questions connected with politics and social organisation] it stands condemned as inefficient or delusive, however it may seem to cast light on the spiritual future. On the other hand, if a view of the spiritual future, which seems acceptable on its merit as such, is also found to clear up embarrassments on this plane of life, to offer an intelligible solution of enigmas that previously appeared hopelessly puzzling, it comes to us with a powerful *prima facie* claim on our respect', 'Theosophy and the Problems of Life', *The Theosophical Review*, XXI: 123, (Nov. 1897), p. 219.

¹³ Mikulás Teich, and Roy Porter (eds), *Fin de Siècle and its Legacy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 1.

devitalisation that he terms ‘declension’. In the work of Arnold Bennett, Trotter finds this state of negative transition in-between the dominant modes of ‘development’ on the one hand, and ‘degeneration’ on the other.¹⁴ Relaying Bennett’s description of the deterioration of one of his characters, Miss Gaily, Trotter quotes, “‘To Hilda Miss Gaily appeared no older; her brown hair had very little grey in it, and her skin was fairly smooth and well-preserved. But she seemed curiously smaller and less significant’”.¹⁵ ‘Declension’ Trotter suggests ‘involves a gradual loss of energy, will, presence, significance’.¹⁶

Likewise, John Stokes’ topic-led study, *In The Nineties* (1989), identifies a cluster of incidences of fatal declension, suicide, leading to a widely reported *fin-de-siècle* suicide craze. Citing the suicide letter of one Ernest Clark (submitted for inclusion in the Letters page of the *Daily Chronicle* when Clark had determined to take his life), Stokes highlights the description of depression that was common to numerous comparable contemporary cases:

‘I resolved long ago that life was a series of shams. That men have to create utopias and heavens to make it bearable; and that all the wisest men have been disgusted with life as it is [...] Only the transcendental and aesthetic in life are worth our thought. Only a life following beauty and creating it approaches any degree of joyousness, but the ugliness and vile monotony have crowded beauty out.

I consider this explanation due to my fellow, to those who care. I was not consulted when I became a sentient being. Having reached maturity I object to life. Will not have it. Hate and despise it.’¹⁷

¹⁴ David Trotter, *The English Novel in History, 1895-1920* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 137.

¹⁵ Arnold Bennett in Trotter, p. 137.

¹⁶ Trotter, p. 137.

¹⁷ Ernest Clark, writing in the summer of 1893, in John Stokes *In The Nineties* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 116.

Alongside Stokes' analysis of Clark's achievement of the disembodied voice so central to the literary decadent movement, there is the expression, as one commentator put it, of Clark's being "out of harmony with [his] surroundings". Clark's suicide, and his advertisement of it, became a morbid figurehead for what was worried over as 'an epidemic of "self-murders"'.¹⁸ Commentary abounded on the question of whether such acts constituted insanity. But, in spite of the proliferation of material on the subject of insanity, produced by the degeneration theorists, nothing adequately explained the compulsion. Degeneration theorists' analyses of insanity 'deprived the suicide of any real understanding of an act that was intentional by definition', and patently failed to explain Clark's condition, if condition was an appropriate term at all.¹⁹ Indeed, Stokes points out, some thought that suicide directed in "protest against the modern world" could, and should, be understood as a "rationally intended decision".²⁰ Debate continued over whether Clark, and the countless deceased like him, were 'supremely rational' and the 'master of [their] own fate', or 'pitifully weak, even to the point of insanity'.²¹ Tellingly, the by-line under which Clark's letter was published, and the heading under which subsequent debate was conducted was 'Tired of Life'.

In an interesting instance of real contact between occult and non-occult culture, the principal British authority on suicide and author of *Suicide, Its History, Literature, Jurisprudence, Causation, and Prevention* (1885) was the Deputy Coroner for Middlesex, William Wynn Westcott, otherwise known as a founder

¹⁸ Stokes, p. 120.

¹⁹ Stokes, p. 119.

²⁰ Stokes, p. 119-120.

²¹ Stokes, p. 119.

member of the Golden Dawn.²² In the report, Westcott discusses the range of causes that European experts had established as salient to investigation of the phenomena in their own countries, in the context of the British experience.

Introducing his report, and mirroring the reasoning above, he writes:

In every age of the world, and in the history of almost every country, we find instances more or less numerous of men and women who, preferring the dim uncertainty of the future to the painful realities of the present, have sought relief from all their troubles by suddenly terminating their own existence.²³

Westcott's report confirms the speculations regarding the epidemic proportions of the problem sensed, and probably encouraged, by journalism on the subject. He reports that incidences of 'self-destruction' have increased since the beginning of the century and 'still go on increasing', crucially, 'more rapidly than the increase of population, and to a greater extent than the general death-rate'.²⁴ But, Westcott cautions against the trend, also registered in the journalism discussed by Stokes, to view the problem solely in terms of statistics. In the past, suicide had been viewed 'from a narrative and sentimental point of view' that now, as a result of suicide becoming an object of scientific study, has led to the 'fact' of suicide being 'instituted' and its falling 'almost entirely into a statistical groove'. What sorely needed to be provided, he argued, was 'research into the mental state and emotions of the unfortunate individuals who become victims'.²⁵ In setting out a blueprint for such researches, Westcott identifies a range of afflictions likely to manifest themselves in a suicidal act. Third only to 'mental affectations' (including

²² William Wynn Westcott, *Suicide, Its History, Literature, Jurisprudence, Causation, and Prevention* (London: H.K. Lewis, 1885).

²³ Westcott, p. 1.

²⁴ Westcott, pp. 62-63.

²⁵ Westcott, p. 68.

spiritualism and insomnia), and bodily diseases (including terminal illness), was the category of *tedium vitae* which he described as follows:

Tedium vitae, disgust of life, is not often a simple weariness, not at least as a suicide cause; it is either profound sorrow produced by a very real and serious loss, or else it is the effect of satiety following the abuse of pleasure; still it is occasionally seen in men and women who have no object in life, and no need of exertion, and in whom even the daily task of finding something to pass away the time is too onerous.²⁶

Westcott's description of *tedium vitae* reads in two ways. It is firstly an account of causation as it might work upon the individual, but it can also be read in a broader context as a comment on the age. The theme is referenced again in this thesis in Chapter Four, and it concerns the experience, also articulated by Ernest Clark, Stokes, and Trotter, of being caught in-between two ways of ordering life. This can, as Westcott explains, be provoked by a profound loss, but also, 'occasionally' but more troubling, by comparison, for its apparent triviality, by a loss of meaning in life. Westcott cannot attribute a cause to this, and *tedium vitae* becomes its own cause, but Westcott's description carries with it a comment on life at the *fin de siècle*, post-Victorian (one meaning perhaps implied in 'satiety following the abuse of pleasure') but pre-modernity. One wonders whether Ernest Clark might have survived the influence of *tedium vitae* had a course of 'mental hygiene' therapy been available to him.

Stokes and Trotter have pointed out that embedded in the language of declension, is a corollary, which both describe as expansive, recuperative and

²⁶ Westcott, pp. 70-71 and, p. 142. Other influences include: 'violence of passions'; 'effect of vices'; 'domestic trouble'; 'financial losses'; 'misery'; 'fear, shame, remorse'; 'despair'; and, 'honourable' reasons involving an ultimate misdirection of conduct (pp. 70-71).

potentially replenishing. For Stokes, the idea is suggested by the linguistic function of declension: ‘I don’t know whether Bennett had the grammatical sense of declension in mind. That sense is appropriate, because the declensions he portrays are not merely disablements, but variations in the form a person’s life can take’.²⁷ For the commentators drawn upon by Stokes’ account of the suicide debates there is a similar possibility inherent in declension. Clark’s extreme demonstration of the fate of a person ‘out of harmony’ and ‘tired of life’ is, hopes one commentator, “‘a kind of first fruit of the new spirit that is abroad – a spirit which will one day be the world’s regeneration, but which is apt, as yet, to shrink from the world’s brutality – so hideous is the contrast often between the dream and the reality’”.²⁸ Into this context, I want to argue, the activity of the Golden Dawn is meaningful. Beneath the elaborate hierarchical structures of the Golden Dawn, which have led the order to be viewed as a quintessentially Victorian Order, its basic aim was to offer a scheme of self-help, therapy even. One way of reading the Order’s activity in this context is as an attempt to bring into closer relation the reality of life and its ideal, and to rescue the sacrificial ‘first fruit’ by teaching the art to living at the *fin de siècle*.

The central aspiration of achieving the godhead is a way of expressing a number of seemingly more mundane needs, just as those needs express the absence of the unity of being that the godhead represents. Either way, this is, I think, directly relatable to the problem of *tedium vitae*. For example, Eliphas Lévi’s *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual* (trans. 1896) was a key text for the

²⁷ Trotter, p. 137.

²⁸ Stokes, p. 120.

magicians of the Golden Dawn at this time, and Arthur Edward Waite's standard translation of the text introduces Lévi as the 'spirit of modern thought forcing an answer for the times from the old oracles'.²⁹ Just as Blavatsky set about revealing pre-existing knowledge in *Isis and Secret Doctrine*, Lévi's reputation in the history of occultism is based on his development of a purportedly workable system of magic out of the magical aspects of a range of mystery traditions, but particularly Egyptian Hermetic Theurgy. The relevance of Lévi's re-worked 'old oracles' for modern magic and thought lies in its description of attainment of 'the Universal Medicine'. Among the 'chief privileges' forthcoming to 'him who holds in his right hand the Clavicles of Solomon, and in his left he Branch of Blossoming Almond',

BETH – He is above all griefs [*sic*] and fears;
 DALETH – He rules his own health and life and can influence
 equally those of others;
 VAU – He knows the reason of the past, present and future.

And among the subsidiary privileges

AYIN – To force Nature to make him free at his pleasure;
 KOPH – To triumph over adversities;
 RESH – To conquer love and hate;
 TAU – Let us add to these [...] that the wise man rules the
 elements, stills tempests, cures the diseased by his touch and
 raises the dead!

The effect of embarking upon the 'Great Work' (the search for the Philosopher's Stone, the transmutation of metals, the squaring of the circle, and the Universal Medicine are all variations of the same quest) is the displacing of the elements of *tedium vitae*. Most straightforwardly, the Golden Dawn system, involving as it does

²⁹ Eliphas Lévi, *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual* (1896) trans. and introd. Arthur Edward Waite (London: Rider, 1984), pp. xxiii-xiiv.

‘abstruse and complex’ ‘study and experiment’, provided an object for the lives of its members by virtue of its requirements and codes. As Alex Owen has said, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn ‘became the beacon around which the lives of its most devoted initiates were organized’.³⁰ What the appeal of this beacon constituted was, in the first place, a reinstatement of goals with which to cast off the meaninglessness and inactivity associated with *tedium vitae*. Clark complained of life’s ‘series of shams’, commentators analysed the gulf between the ideal of life and its reality, and via Trotter, Bennett’s appreciation of a subtle diminishment of the signs of life is made clear. What Lévi’s work, upon which the Golden Dawn is predicated, promised was the cure, therefore, for a peculiarly contemporary malaise. The aspirant would achieve a certain emotional and intellectual balance, literally a regenerated reason to live, through an appreciation, among other things, of their place in the past, present, and future. Whereas those afflicted with *fin de siècleism* could only feel the risible hopelessness of the present, find injustice in their past, and surrender to unknowing in their future via the sole willed action that remained at their disposal. Down to the bold, if figurative, suggestion that the successful aspirant will ‘raise the dead’ Lévi’s inventory of benefits corresponds to the varieties of malaise recorded and speculated upon at this time. If ‘Beth’, ‘Daleth’, ‘Vau’, and the rest, were the promised outcomes of concerted involvement in the Golden Dawn, how did the system function to ensure their attainment?

Initiation was for the Golden Dawn, in its early phase at least, its principal magical method. Because of the general preference for unlocking the secrets of

³⁰ Alex Owen, p. 51.

esoteric teaching, as set out in the introduction to this thesis, it is also an absence in accounts of the Order's significance. However, at the centre of all ceremonial observances (ceremonial, ritual, and initiation refer to the same practice) there is a tension between the idea of the esoteric and the exoteric, its symbolic and its manifested function, that reveals much about Golden Dawn regeneration and highlights, specifically, its significance as an Order dedicated to active exploration of the occult. Alex Owen has focussed on, for example, the Order's work involving person-to-person clairvoyance, and while this is indeed an aspect of its work, such activity only comes to the forefront of the Golden Dawn provision when the initial focus on ceremonial initiation has broken down. Moreover, the *hermetic* designation of Golden Dawn teaching underscores the importance of attending to initiation. As Alex Owen points out, ritual is closely associated with hermetic magic that derives its name from Hermes Trismegistus, more fully discussed by Garth Fowden as the *Hermetica*.³¹ Drawing on A.E. Waite, she explains:

Arthur Edward Waite, the Victorian occultist and one-time member of the Golden Dawn, noted that the terms 'transcendental, Hermetic, Rosicrucian, mystical, and esoteric, or occult' were used 'indiscriminately' during the nineteenth century, and was careful to use *Hermetic philosophy* to mean 'an actual, positive, and realizable knowledge concerning the worlds which we denominate invisible, because they transcend the imperfect and rudimentary faculties of a particularly developed humanity'. Similarly, he viewed *Hermetic Science* as 'a method of transcending the phenomenal world, and attaining to the reality which is behind phenomena'.³²

³¹ Alex Owen, p. 52; and, Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: An Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), *passim*.

³² A.E. Waite in Owen, p. 52. André Nataf expresses the same idea when he identifies the two central components of the ceremonial, ritual and rite: rite, he says, 'is on the level of the archetype, whereas ritual is on that of the manifestation'. If initiatory transcendence is taken to mean that which occurs during ritual, it is unlike religious transcendence because the former 'always concentrates on its manifestations', *Dictionary of the Occult* (Herts.: Wordsworth, 1994), p. 74.

In emphasising a distinction between the multivalent terminology of the Magical Revival, and the more specific sense of hermetic philosophy and science Waite is accurate. But, his description of hermetic science glosses views he held, and elsewhere states, regarding the impossibility of ritual induction of transcendental states.

Waite's *Book of Spells* (1911) is an important study of ceremonial magic that actually argues against the authority of ritual. Waite, as Owen says, an early member of the Golden Dawn, makes a somewhat uneasy spokesperson for the Magical Revival, particularly its hermetic branches, because he described himself, first and foremost, as a mystic. The title 'occultist' itself tends to imply a practitioner, which Waite's membership of the Golden Dawn to some extent confirms that he was, for a time, however, 'mystic' denotes an occultist who privileges the psycho-religious experience that magic is deemed to unlock. Waite's mysticism, and in Waite's case it is an avowedly Christian mysticism, can be clearly seen in *The Book of Spells*.³³ His project in writing the book is an historical one: Waite addresses the question of the extent to which, and manner in which ritual magic can be seen to draw upon a past secret tradition of the Christian or pre-Christian era. In the very early stages of writing Waite gives away a dislike for the category of practical magic that dominates his book by referring to 'the last drift and scattermeal' that passed through the ages in magical grimoires.³⁴ He not only confirms the two-tier view of occultism (theoretical, or philosophical occultism and the separate practical occultism) but reveals his disrespect for the latter by outlining

³³ After leaving the Golden Dawn, Waite established the Holy Order of the Golden Dawn that emphasised analogous aspects of magical and Christian teaching.

³⁴ A.E. Waite, *The Book of Spells* (1911) (Herts.: Wordsworth, 1995), p. viii.

the ‘more inward purpose of the present investigation’ as ‘to place within reach of such persons who are inclined to such a subject the fullest evidence of the futility of Ceremonial Magic as it is found in books’. He goes on to condemn further the literature:

As to the things which are implied within and may lie behind the literature, they are another consideration, about which I will say only at the moment that, judged by the fruits which they have produced, they are not incomparable to the second death beyond the gates of perdition.³⁵

In Waite’s fervent opinion, the symbolism of ritual as illustrated in magical writing does not exist, and the failure of magicians to achieve spiritualisation through ritual is the proof. And perhaps, in light of Waite’s profound Christianity, his allusion to purgatory goes so far as to equate ritual with sacrilege.³⁶ In a later chapter Waite’s distaste for ritual resurfaces in a discussion of the ‘The Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage’. The author’s ‘elaboration of general *mise en scène*’, he worries, is evidence of ‘new modes and even new intentions in respect of “magical vanity”’, a worry that was to be exacerbated, in the eyes of Waite and others, by the rise of a magician with an acute magical vanity, Aleister Crowley.³⁷

³⁵ Waite, p. xi.

³⁶ Waite further denies the import of Ritual on the grounds that its true essence remains concealed: There is no extant Ritual, as there is no doctrine, which contains, or can possibly contain, the real secret of magical procedure or the essence of occult doctrine. The reason – whatever may be said in the excess of some self-constituted exponents – is not because there is, or can be, any indicible process, but because the knowledge in question is in the custody of those who have taken effectual measures for its protection: and though, from time to time, some secrets of initiation, belonging to this order, have filtered through printed books into the world at large, the real mysteries have never escaped. The literature of Magic falls, therefore, on this hypothesis, under three heads: (a.) The work of putative adepts, stating as much as could be stated outside the circle of initiation, and primarily designed to attract those who might be ripe for entrance. (b.) The speculations of independent seekers, who, by thought, study and intuition, sometimes attained veridic results without assistance. (c.) Travesties of occult doctrine, travesties of occult intention, travesties of occult procedure, complicated by filtrations from the superior source, pp. 11-12.

³⁷ Waite, p. 94.

By Waite's logic, the magic of Abra-Melin that influenced Aleister Crowley and other members of the Golden Dawn, both during and after the Golden Dawn's main period of activity, is evidence of all that is indulgent and ineffective in magic. However, as Chapter Four of this thesis, dealing with Crowley's magical order the A.A. discusses, Waite does Crowley and other like-minded magicians a disservice when he suggests that those exploiting the *mise en scène* of magic are impostors in a truer magical tradition. As will be seen in that chapter, Crowley's first act in establishing his successor order was to slough away any unnecessary ritual embellishments and can be seen as a defining action towards a modernised mode of occultism. However, Crowley's article for *The Occult Review* in 1910 returns a definite role to the ceremonial. The article is a promotional one designed to advertise and explain the significance of Crowley's Rites of Eleusis series that was conducted over the course of seven weeks, at Caxton Hall, London, in the autumn of 1910.³⁸ The Rites of Eleusis, performed in public in this way, would assuredly

³⁸ 'Note' appended to the article appearing in *The Occult Review* announcing the forthcoming performances of The Rites of Eleusis:

NOTE.

For the Rite of Saturn you are requested, if convenient, to wear black or very dark blue, for Jupiter violet, for Mars scarlet or russet brown, for Sol, orange or white, for Venus green or sky-blue, for Mercury shot silk and mixed colours, for Luna white, silver or pale-blue. It is not necessary to confine yourself to the colour mentioned, but it should form the keynote of the scheme.

The etiquette to be observed is that of the most solemn religious ceremonies. It should be particularly borne in mind that silence itself is used as a means of obtaining effects.

THE RITES OF ELEUSIS

will be celebrated at Caxton Hall, Westminster, S. W., as follows:

The Rite of Saturn	9 p.m. Wednesday, October 19.
The Rite of Jupiter	9 p.m. Wednesday, October 26.
The Rite of Mars	9 p.m. Wednesday, November 2.
The Rite of Sol	9 p.m. Wednesday, November 9.
The Rite of Venus	9 p.m. Wednesday, November 16.
The Rite of Mercury	9 p.m. Wednesday, November 23.
The Rite of Luna	9 p.m. Wednesday, November 30.

have been Waite's worst magical fear realised. Their purpose was to bring the uninitiated public in touch with the idea and possibilities of ritual initiation, which, Crowley held, was perfectly achieved through the ceremonial. As Crowley observed, 'True Ceremonial Magic is entirely directed to attain this end, and forms a magnificent gymnasium for those who are not already finished mental athletes'.³⁹

Ceremonial initiation, although controversial, was the important first stage on the journey to regeneration. And, in her concise further discussion of hermetic magic, Alex Owen herself makes reference to the concept, twice in as many lines, in relation to the Order's name:

Hermeticism as embodied in the Rosicrucian tradition was marked by an elaborate interplay of the philosophical or spiritual with the practical and magical, and it was this heady combination that found expression in the occultism of the new Order. The Golden Dawn's name referred to the seventeenth-century Rosicrucian promise of the coming of a new spiritually enlightened age.

The Order's name spoke to the realization of a Rosicrucian rebirth, the regeneration of the old, corrupt world and dawning of a new spiritually enlightened era [...] – timely notions for many at the fin de siècle.⁴⁰

Tickets will not be sold separately; the rent for the series is Five Guineas. Tickets are however transferable. The number of seats is strictly limited to one hundred. Early application is most necessary. Doors will open at 8.30; they will be closed and locked at Nine o'clock precisely. The ceremonies occupy from 1½ to 2½ hours.

See: Aleister Crowley [P], 'The Rites of Eleusis', *Occult Review*, 12: 4 (1910), 213-220. Crowley wrote this article under the abbreviated form of his Golden Dawn magical name 'Perderabo', meaning 'I will endure'.

³⁹ *Occult Review*, p. 213.

⁴⁰ Owen, p. 52.

While the Order's name undoubtedly speaks of its, and the Magical Revival's as a whole, projection of a vision of a world order re-born, its declaration of the Hermetic aspect of its teaching, over and above the Rosicrucian influence, is the focus here. Indeed, the Rosicrucian tradition is most closely linked at this time with Freemasonry and Westcott's note on the Order's work in his notification of its existence makes certain to deny this connection.⁴¹ That the titular hermeticism specifies the practical angle of the Order's magic is quite right, but the rituals and invocations that folders of documentation in the Yorke Collection suggest are the mainstay of the Order's early practices urge more detailed analysis of this aspect than Owen allows. For example, the voluminous notebooks of F.L. Gardiner describe in great detail the procedures for, among other things, the construction and consecration of a magic wand specific to the needs of the Golden Dawn magician. Hermeticism means for the magician of the Golden Dawn a personal scheme of regeneration through ascension, and initiation marks its starting point. In the discussion with which this section is brought to a close, I do not want to argue against Alex Owen's twice-emphasised point about the appropriateness of general ideas of rebirth for the *fin de siècle*. Rather, I think, that through an examination of

⁴¹ *Notes and Queries*, VII (9 February 1889), 116-117, p. 116. Westcott's note in full reads: The order of mystics which gave Eliphas Levi [sic] (Abbé Constant), his occult knowledge, and of which Johan Falk was at one time the Lecturer on the Kabbalah in London, is still at work in England. It is not a Masonic order, and there is no distinction between men and women students. The greatest privacy is maintained, and some knowledge of Hebrew is essential, but the whole course of study and experiment is so abstruse and complex that membership is very limited as to number, and the proceedings have no public interest. Its true name is only told to initiates, and the few outsiders who have heard of its existence only know of the society as 'The Hermetic students of the G.D.' To this note Westcott appended his name and correspondence address. Westcott submits his note in response to one posted by Gustav Mommsen. Under the heading 'A Society of Kabbalists' Mommsen writes: 'Johan F. Falk succeeded to the directorate of a secret society of students of the Kabbalah about 1810, in London, I believe. Its name was "Chabrah Zereh aur bokher," as nearly as Hebrew can be put into English. The late Eliphas Levi [sic], of Paris, was concerned in it later on. Is this society still in existence?', *Notes and Queries*, VI (8 December 1888), p. 448.

the mechanics and purpose of ritual as it was understood to function by magicians such as Crowley, and in the context of theorisation pertaining to the *fin de siècle*, the persuasive idea is further borne out.

It is perhaps helpful to indicate at this juncture that by reinstating the role of ritual in the present interpretation of the Golden Dawn the argument is also contextualising the well-reported crisis of 1900. Tensions such as those displayed in Waite's hostility to Crowley's methods were writ large and, I suggest, have a bearing on the direction that the Magical Revival would take in the twentieth century. This consideration makes it further appropriate to advance the idea that the Magical Revival might be thought of as being of two phases, of which the latter is characterised by a redoubled determination to bring out the bearing of occultism on day-to-day existence, in a number of ways. And, interestingly, it is Crowley, the scapegoat for the 1900 affair (the details of which will be given) who is found to be a key force in the second phase. The ultimate redesigning of the Golden Dawn is usually discussed in terms only of personal disputes however, where the future of the Order is concerned personality clashes betray deeper divides. Nonetheless, to restate the present concern, what is the significance of hermetic magic for *fin-de-siècle* magicians?

Historians of religion and esoteric traditions repeatedly emphasise the *material* focus of the hermetic tradition and thereby highlight the insufficiency in Waite's definition as it relates to the Golden Dawn. Indeed, Garth Fowden's key text on the Egyptian *Corpus Hermetica* is written to correct an erroneous view in

ancient history of the philosophic direction of teaching recorded therein. Quite opposed to the distinction between the philosophic hermetic and the occult (practical) hermetic, Fowden presents evidence that suggests that they are equal components of the hermetic world view, to which Dan Merkur adds the idea that ‘the philosophic texts of Hermetism can be understood as efforts by ancient theurgists to express themselves in philosophic terms’.⁴² Merkur further emphasises the material focus of Hermitism (Merkur uses Hermetism rather than Hermeticism) through a comparison with Gnosticism that ‘similarly originated in Egypt in roughly the same era’ and with which, he says, Hermetism is ‘often and wrongly confused’:

Like the God of Stoicism, the Hermetic God was omnipresent and omniscient through the material cosmos. In Gnosticism, by contrast, God was transcendent, and the physical universe was an evil place created by an evil Demiurge.⁴³

Furthermore, writes Merkur, ‘there were also differences in their valuations of visions’. What he proceeds to describe is a process of appropriation of the originally intended idea of ‘ascension’ as ‘objective reality’ into ‘an allegory of the mystical path’, a process which was complete by the second century. ‘For Hermetists’, by contrast, “ascension” was not a mere metaphor that could be used interchangeably with “resurrection” or “ransom from captivity”.⁴⁴ Golden Dawn tensions are therefore refigured by similar tensions that define its antecedent tradition: as Hermeticism and Gnosticism utilised the same metaphor in

⁴² See: Fowden, *passim*; and Dan Merkur, ‘Stages of Ascension in Hermetic Rebirth’ [electronic resource] <<http://esoteric.msu.edu/Merkur.html>> accessed 09 November 2005, 79-96, p. 81.

⁴³ Merkur, p. 81.

⁴⁴ Merkur, p. 82.

oppositional ways, so too did those members of the Golden Dawn with more mystical leanings and those for whom materialised magic held greater appeal.

The seeming absurdity, for instance, of the image of F.L. Gardiner, member of the London Stock Exchange, and his friend the Rev. Ayton, returning home from a day's work and setting aside precious hours in which to source suitable material with which to fashion a magic wand, and decorating them according to Golden Dawn mandate, cannot be ignored. In this case, according to diagrams in F.L. Gardiner's hand and notebooks, the lotus wand had to blossom into the form of the lotus flower at its point (evidencing the Egyptian hermetic influence); along the length of its stave display fourteen equally-apportioned strips of prescribed colours to be overlaid, in white paint on the black portion but black ink on the rest, with the signs of the zodiac; it should bear on its white segment the magical motto of its owner; and, finally, have fashioned for it a unique storage case. Once complete, every owner partook in a ceremony to consecrate the wand for magical work, a ceremony that was further designed to forge a bond between the wand and its owner.⁴⁵ What the wand most forcibly brings to mind is the question of the processes in which the magicians believed they were participating, particularly, as in this case, in their first contact with the Order and its system. It recalls, Laqueur's

⁴⁵ Yorke Collection, NS 63. For further description 'Concerning the Rod and Staff of the Art' see Waite, pp. 161-165. Waite explains (in withering terms, as might be expected) the central role that the magic wand plays in the magic of Lévi. Among the features he notes are the 'overwhelm[ing] [...] precautions concerning the secrecy which must be maintained in regard to it'; 'the difficulties of its consecration'; the preference for 'virgin' wood (hazel, if possible) of not more than one year's growth' and 'having no branches or offshoots'; and, the recommended method for collecting this wood involving cutting it exactly at sunrise and strictly observing the rule dictating that the uncut wood not be looked on unnecessarily and certainly not touched. Incidentally, the rather odd premise of Waite's book is aptly demonstrated here. Waite sets out to prove not only that ritual magic does not work, but that ritual magic doesn't exist, yet his sole tool in this project is the sarcastic tone in which he actually describes all manner of ritual encounters in great detail.

question regarding the meanings that occultism forged *for* and *by* its participants, and, as the wand shows, perhaps crudely, these were people concerned with the production of something material.

But, the example of the wand need not be thought of as simplistic when considered in light of its function in ritual as well as to the simple fact of the attention that Gardiner evidently afforded it in line with Golden Dawn instruction wider hermetic instruction. In ritual observances the wand, as with other magical talismans, became a channel between the magician and the cosmos, hence the need for an initiatory identification with its owner. After this consecration the new neophyte was required to perfect the technique of performing The Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram. Recalling the Order's general role in offsetting *fin de siècleism* this, the first ceremony to be mastered by the initiate, was designed to cleanse the magical space of unhealthy influences. The hermetic universe, as Blossom Feinstein describes, is one conceived of in material terms.⁴⁶ Moreover, it is one marked by chaos and dissolution that are to be embraced for their potentially transformative potential, and a desire to engage with that material power is registered in the otherwise routine housekeeping ritual of the Banishing of the Pentagram.⁴⁷ The Theosophical worldview contains elements of this also, but Theosophy manages to present the idea of potential in change appears romantic and, certainly, desirable, but it does not contain quite the same palpable lure as did the hermetic. Ritual is therefore, in the hermetic context an activity designed to

⁴⁶ Blossom Feinstein, 'Hermeticism', *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 2 [accessed electronically] <<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/DicHist/dict.html>> [accessed 20 December 2006], pp. 432-444, p. 432.

⁴⁷ Feinstein, p. 432.

produce a palpable and utilisable experience of stabilisation within an otherwise chaotic material existence.

For the magicians of the Golden Dawn, initiation was the act specifically designed as a performative induction of a kind of rehearsed and productive hiatus in the life of the initiate. It was sincerely understood to *produce* transition. In *The Sense of an Ending* (1966), and *Continuities* (1968), Frank Kermode analyses intellectual history of the question of temporal ordering.⁴⁸ For Kermode the predominant mode of thought in western intellectual history is apocalyptic. This, he writes, ‘belongs to rectilinear rather than cyclical views of the world’, and although this is not an absolute distinction ‘events derive their significance from a unitary system, not from their correspondence with other cycles’. Kermode calls this the ‘apocalyptic paradigm’ and identifies a number of elements within it: The Terrors and Decadence, and Transition’.⁴⁹ Terror and Decadence are the aspects of the cultural moment of the nineteenth-century *fin de siècle* to have received the fullest attention. Transition, by contrast, less so. However, the Magical Revival as a whole makes a virtue of its presence at a period of historical transition, and of the concept and possibilities (magically conceived) of transition itself. ‘Before the End’, writes Kermode, ‘there is a period which does not properly belong to either the End or to the *saeculum* preceding it’.⁵⁰ The ritual attention of the Golden Dawn

⁴⁸ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (1966), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and *Continuities*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968). The chapters that make up *The Sense of an Ending* were originally delivered as a series of lectures, and the chapters of *Continuities* first appeared in publications including *The Spectator*.

⁴⁹ Kermode, (2000), p. 11. In *Continuities*, Kermode’s terminology alters slightly: ‘the modern’ and ‘archaic apocalyptic’ replace ‘modernism’ and ‘apocalyptic paradigm’, but they have the same referents.

⁵⁰ Kermode, (2000), pp. 13-14.

can be viewed as an attempt to create, through magic, such a space of latent promise.

A New Constitution

By 1900 the Golden Dawn had reached a somewhat less productive hiatus in its affairs. A booklet issued by the Golden Dawn for its outer order members and included in File NS 7 of the Yorke Collection relays the correspondence and events pertaining to a leadership debacle that took place in 1900. The majority of the correspondence reprinted is between the Order's founder, MacGregor Mathers, and the challenger for the leadership, Florence Farr. What the pamphlet charts is Farr's mounting concern over the esteem in which the Order is held. This concern was, most likely, the motivating factor behind the London Adepts' refusal to initiate Crowley to the inner order. Rumours abounded that Crowley had been participating in Goetic sex magic that offended Farr from a magical point of view, and, possibly more damaging still was Crowley's close association at this time with Mathers. Serious doubts had arisen over the authenticity of the documents that Mathers claimed had sanctioned the establishment of the Order. Consequently inner and outer Order members fell into two camps: one, supporting Mathers' retention as the rightful head of the Order; and, the other, supporting Farr's challenge. Farr mounted her challenge on the grounds of Mathers' neglect of the London temple during which time as he was setting up the Paris Isis-Urania temple; his questionable integrity regarding the supposed decree from Secret Chiefs; and, his

frequent adoption of aristocratic personas that left himself and the Order open to ridicule. Farr by comparison, was a studious, committed, young alternative. The underlying principle of Farr's campaign was that the order was becoming a parody of itself and something must be done to re-connect it with the essence of magic.

Also worthy of note here is the studiousness of W.B. Yeats in support of Florence Farr's campaign. Yeats composed, typed and circulated a series of bulletins that kept outer order members fully briefed on the actions of the inner sanctum.⁵¹ He also used his bulletins as a means of putting forth the case for the Order's acceptance of working groups. Previously, all Order members were required to go through official channels when conducting magical business with fellow members and private workings were strictly prohibited. However, a clutch of magicians, including Farr, Yeats, and F.L. Gardiner, came to develop a strong preference for the more discrete and concerted workings what were, literally, magical working groups. They established the Sphere Group. Such groups eschewed the ceremony upon which the Order's reputation is largely founded and worked instead through series of magical studies seeking to determine the relevance and efficacy for the modern day, of various historical workings.⁵² By 1900, a wave of popular support was gathering behind those who preferred this non-hierarchical method of magic and the issue of the Sphere Group workings proved a contentious issue in the events of the New Year.

⁵¹ Yorke Collection, NS 7.

⁵² See, for example: Florence Farr, *The Enochian Experiments of the Golden Dawn: The Enochian Alphabet Clairvoyantly Examined* (1901) ed. by Darcy Küntz (Edmonds, WA: Holmes Publishing Group, 1996), p. 9.

As it happens, according to Farr's booklet, events reach an anti-climax on 16 January 1900. Crowley, dressed in the MacGregor tartan of his accomplice, wearing the mask of Osiris in an unsuccessful attempt to conceal his identity, and carrying, for protection against magical attacks a sword, endeavoured to seize the vault of the London temple. Once in control he and Mathers intended to collect signatures to a petition confirming popular support for Mathers' leadership. Instead Crowley was greeted by W.B. Yeats (a supporter of Farr), the premises' landlord, a police constable, and was asked to leave. With no further remonstrations or drama, this Crowley did. Mathers was subsequently replaced, and the heavily fragmented Golden Dawn gave rise to several splinter orders while its remaining initiates re-organised and drew up a new constitution.

The changes in the new constitution appear minor, but they signal a philosophical rejection of the extravagance and eccentricity with which the Golden Dawn had come to be associated and, moreover, a distinct narrowing and hardening of magical appetites. Florence Farr was installed at the headship of the Order, but eschewing her predecessor's passion for titles she modestly re-named the role 'Moderator'. Likewise, her two deputy leaders became 'Scribe' and 'Warden', suggesting they were to function as overseers rather than chiefs. Seven further formal 'Instructors' roles were created. These were in 'Divination'; 'Clairvoyance'; 'Tarot and Chess'; 'Ceremonial'; 'Symbolism'; 'Mystical Philosophy'; and, one 'General Instructor'. The announcement of the newly elected executive shows the Golden Dawn also seeking to redress an imbalance in favour of the practice of ceremonial magic. Seven formal Instructor positions for 'Adepti Litterati' the

restructured executive emphasises both the different facets of the Golden Dawn system of magic (instructors were created in ‘Divination’, ‘Clairvoyance’, ‘Tarot and Chess’, ‘Ceremonial’, ‘Symbolism’, ‘Mystical Philosophy’ and ‘General Instructor’).

What is seen, within the Golden Dawn, after 1900 is a brand of magic directed away from *initiatory* modes of magic, and towards instead the idea of magical *intuition*. Astral work and clairvoyance became the key-note of the Order’s new practices, as the regeneration aims of ritual magic become more thoroughly psychologised. In records of the Enochian Experiments of Florence Farr and a group of her associates, the subtle difference is displayed in the same preoccupation with suicide that is manifested in a concern over the residual negative energy retained by the lodgings the groups utilises for their work. ‘S.S.D.D. present’, it reads, ‘Vision continued. But difficulties at first owing to hostile influences w[hi]ch I.O. said were due to the day being anniversary of a suicide in my rooms.’⁵³

The Golden Dawn represents, therefore, a hinge period in the Magical Revival. Its earliest work, and that which attracted its members in the first place, required a literal acceptance of the possibility of material regeneration through magical ritual. The hermetic worldview is shown, in this respect, to have considerable contemporary relevance for the *fin-de-siècle* magician. During and after 1900 magical attitudes change. Alex Owen’s work describes in detail the psychologised magical work that is one side of this change, Part Two of this thesis

⁵³ Florence Farr, p. 9.

describes the still greater attention to the material effects of magic that can be seen in the later practices of Aleister Crowley.

II. MAGICAL REVIVAL 1900-1929

Chapter 3

Rejuvenating the Occult Body

‘The Magical Record of Ominia Vicram Probationer of A.A. in June 1909’ is the record of Victor Neuburg’s experiences during a magical retirement. It was submitted to Aleister Crowley for scrutiny in accordance with the order’s examination procedures, and is now kept in the Yorke Collection. More on the structures of the A.A. magical system will be supplied in Chapter four, but for now, it is the point of frustration that the record harbours that is of interest. On 20 June, a week or so into his magical retirement, Neuburg ‘burned incense’ assumed his preferred ‘Japanese posture’ for meditation and ‘attempted to rise in the planes’. He failed in this attempt ‘falling back twice or thrice’, but after chanting his mantra, which he supplies ‘(Aum, mani padme, hum)’, he duly achieves ecstasy coupled with a ‘sensation of violet light’ and finds rising easy thereafter. He subsequently explores eight astral planes, meets an angel that is familiar to him, notices an imperfect pentagram and repairs it before losing consciousness and ‘returning [to his body] in about half an hour’. The following day he makes the same preparations, goes ‘very far indeed’ through the planes, meets again his angel, which he slays, then rises some more before an assortment of beings, including his mother, his father and a little green man appear, with the intention, he assumes, to detain him from his explorations. He frees himself from them, continues, and in the

final stage of his journey he reaches the tenth sphere wherein he is confronted with ‘a coffin labelled Resurgam’ and into which he feels ‘forcibly drawn’. Neuburg manages to ‘escape’ in a ‘whirlpool of light’ and, again, returns to his body.¹

The astral action recounted is generally in keeping with those accounts of skrying recorded in the Golden Dawn Flying Rolls and used to introduce this thesis.² They are perhaps more accomplished and tempered and dwell on their surroundings at greater length. Neuburg’s record on the other hand has an aggressive and impatient quality in contrast to their measured description although this can reasonably be explained by Neuburg’s relative inexperience, perhaps even the sublimated effect of ‘academe, family and financial worries’ of which he complains in his preamble. It is Neuburg’s remark on returning from the second journey that is most striking: ‘I had rather great difficulty in “arranging” myself in my body upon my return, falling prone once or twice in the effort’. An earlier entry of 18 June complains of ‘utter failure, with no results whatever, save physical cold and weariness’.³ The very great difference between the astral body and the earthly body which hitherto had been expressed in positive terms was being awoken to as a technical problem. The astral body had been, for nineteenth-century occultists, an excellent place to subvert the worst aspects of *fin-de-siècle* life, as recalled in Neuburg’s evasion of the coffin that invites him to die and rise again. But what good was existence in the astral body if it remained, to all intents and purposes,

¹ ‘The Magical Record of Ominia Vicram Probationer of the AA in June 1909’, Warburg Institute, Yorke Collection, NS 92.

² See discussion of skrying as recorded in the Flying Rolls in the first section of the Introduction, pp. 1 – 15.

³ ‘The Magical Record of Ominia Vicram’, Yorke Collection, NS 92.

removed from the everyday and served only to accentuate the weariness of the other earthly body?

This chapter focuses on the occultists' attempts to address the role of the physical body in magical life. From the outset the chapter suggests that magical writing and practices of the first three decades of the twentieth century demonstrate a new attention to the body that is not formerly present in the late nineteenth-century phase of the magical revival. While the twentieth-century occultists' comparatively 'positive attitude' to the body has been noted in general terms before, and in places has been aligned with a concomitant liberalisation of views of sexuality and subjectivity occurring during and after the *fin de siècle*, the non-sexual somatic side of occult practice has not yet been fully described, nor its significance analysed.⁴ Alex Owen, for instance, comments on the Neuburg record and notes that it frequently admonishes the body and the difficulties it poses: "My body is a damned nuisance. Any decent *yogi* must work outside it. I would like to get out and stay there". For Owen these frustrations are evidence of the novice's 'clumsiness of [...] technique'.⁵ They serve to emphasise the progress he makes

⁴ B.J. Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult: From the Renaissance to the Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 70. For Gibbons 'A rough indication of how positive or negative was the attitude to the body can be seen in attitudes to sexuality'. He points out that a pathological disparagement characterised much early writing dealing with 'the pleasures of the flesh', but also points out that there was counter-tradition of celebration, p. 70. For more detailed studies of occultism, sex, and sexuality, see: Alex Owen, 'The Sorcerer and His Apprentice: Aleister Crowley and the Magical Exploration of Edwardian Subjectivity', *Journal of British Studies*, 36: 1 (1997), 99-133; Hugh B. Urban, 'The Power of the Impure: Transgression, Violence and Secrecy in Bengali Śākta Tantra and Modern Western Magic', *Numen*, 50 (2003), 269-308; Hugh B. Urban, 'Magia Sexualis: Sex, Secrecy, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 72: 3 (2004), 695-731; Hugh B. Urban, 'Unleashing the Beast: Aleister Crowley, Tantra and Sex Magic in Late Victorian England', *Esoterica*, V (2003), 139-192 [electronic edition] <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeV/Unleashing_the_Beast.htm> [accessed 24 May 2004].

⁵ Neuburg, in Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), p. 154.

throughout the ten day retirement as by the end he his working more fluently and exercising some self-reflexivity:

‘I find that I can fly better by using half my mind to concentrate on the soaring and half to wander as it likes. The effect of this is curious; below, it is dark and confused; above, it is always light and blue-gold. One has the sensation of perpetually passing through clouds’.⁶

Whilst in the context of Neuburg’s individual magical maturation the expansion afforded by escaping the earthly body is the desired and, when it comes, welcome effect, in the broader context of the magical revival it is not so clear cut. Owen does not draw on the magical journal *The Equinox* at any length, but what its text clearly displays is a refusal to discount ‘dark and confused’ material life, in the pursuit of integrated and sustainable magical life. *The Equinox* was first published in the year that Neuburg made his magical retirement and it served as a curriculum of study for novice magicians such as he. Alongside its exercises in willed consciousness, and its instructions in the method and philosophy of ritual, *The Equinox* published a series of instructional pieces involving the nature and conditioning of the non-astral, physical body. This chapter sets out the case that in recognising the place of the body in magical life, and in making provision for its incorporation and utilisation in magical efforts towards regeneration, the Order of the Astrum Argentum also reconstructs perception of the body in occult thought for the twentieth century. Introducing his book, *Modernism, technology and the body: a cultural study* (1998), Tim Armstrong poses a question of his research into the representation of the

⁶ Neuburg, in Owen, p. 155.

modernist body: 'Is the body internal or external to the practice of writing?'⁷ Replace writing with magic, or regeneration, and you also have the question that interested the magicians of the Astrum Argentum.

With reference to comparable non-magical movements which appeared in the interwar period, and developments in medical science, this chapter documents how the body was newly conceived of as the generator of its own life force, and how, in the occult context, this contributed to the rehabilitation of the body in occult thought, after 1900. Part i, 'The body before 1900', outlines in Section One the differences in treatment of the body in occultism before 1900, and the body in relation to medical ideas of life and death in Section Two. Part ii 'The first symptoms of regeneration' introduces the period 1900-1929 as the age of regeneration. It shows why there was a perceived need for regeneration at this time, and how regeneration was envisaged. Part iii contains the core of the analysis of this chapter in two sections: 'Embodying the earthly pedigree' and 'Astrum Argentum and Physical Culture'. With reference to both the official Physical Culture movement of Eugen Sandow, with which the term originates, and to the wider 'physical culture' that is a compelling characteristic of the interwar period, part iii examines its influence on the magic of the Astrum Argentum. The occult texts upon which the argument is primarily constructed are the Liber Documents that were published in *The Equinox*. Along with the text the photographs that they contain, published to further aid instruction in posture and technique, represent an important focus and they are read alongside comparable photographs which fulfil a

⁷ Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, technology and the body: a cultural study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 6.

similarly important function for the Eugen Sandow's Physical Culture movement. Both sets of images are read within the context of their published sources for their straightforward instructional value, but also, with closer attention to details of staging and composition, for the broader meanings they elucidate about the nature of the body in reconstruction and the significances of the projects.

i. The body before 1900

Treatment of the body in occultism

Prior to the nineteenth century, a general distaste for the material body was in evidence in almost all occult and spiritual writing.⁸ The strength of feeling ranges from frustration to abhorrence and in more orthodox spiritualities an association with sin. Robert Fludd (1574-1637), articulating something similar to Neuburg's problem 'believed that the performance of geomantic rites "emanated from the very soul"'. For Fludd, any errors in execution were therefore due to the "incongruous mutations of the body".⁹ The fundamental question as to the body's relationship to things internal to it (soul, or spirit, or powers of being), and to things external to it (nature, the universe, other bodies) provoked answers wide in range and inflection. The moralistic belief held, among others, by the mystic and quietist leader,

⁸ See, B.J. Gibbons, 'The body in occult thought', *Spirituality and the Occult: From the Renaissance to the Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 56- 70.

⁹ Gibbons, p. 65.

Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680), was that the human body was the punishment for the Fall so inner corruption was outwardly represented by “that gross Crust”.¹⁰

The general ‘disparagement of the material body’ is one thing, according to B.J. Gibbons, that occultists and mystics ‘shared with their wider culture’.¹¹ However, he points to a desire within esoteric writing to treat the body more positively. For instance, Novalis (1772-1801) wrote that “There is only one temple in the world, and that is the human body. Nothing is more sacred than that noble form”.¹² Likewise, when considered as a living object within a wider natural universe, as opposed to the subject of religious and moral discourse, a more affirmative and responsive role could be attributed to the body. The Paracelsian occult tradition, for instance, which had a considerable influence on Western medicine, propounded and practiced treatments based on the view of the human body as a microcosm within the universal macrocosm. Paracelsus (1493-1541) explained the body’s constitution in naturalistic and holistic terms.¹³

The other notable historical strand of occultism for which the body had special significance was the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross. From the compelling myth introduced by the *Fama Fraternitatis* (1614) and the *Confessio Fraternitatis* (1615) a number of organisations emerged including the Invisible College, and an

¹⁰ Bourignon in Gibbons, p. 64.

¹¹ Gibbons, p. 69. Gibbons takes occultism, mysticism and spirituality together in his study which deals with the broad themes of heterodox spiritual life. However, it is reasonable to point out that by the nature of their interest the mystic is likely to incline to a negative view of the material body, whereas the occultist is more likely to be open to experiences and theories dedicated to improving corporeal existence.

¹² Novalis in Gibbons, p. 69. Novalis, a German Romanticist and mystic, is otherwise known as Georg Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg.

¹³ Gibbons, pp. 72-3.

identifiably Rosicrucian genre of fiction.¹⁴ Central to both was the traditional theme of the *elixir vitae*, understood in broad terms as ‘a secular version of the Holy Grail’ and believed by the Rosicrucians to be ‘a by-product of the process of transmutation which led to the attainment of the *opus magnum*’.¹⁵ The reality of the existence of the historical Rosicrucians is of course uncertain, but the principal aim expressed in the early writings, to ‘“cure all ills” of body and soul’, survived and subsequent organisations, authors and poets explored its metaphoric potential.¹⁶ They undertook to work in accordance with the Rosicrucian principles chief among which was that ‘none of them should profess any other thing than to cure the sick, and that *gratis*. None of the posterity should be constrained to wear one certain kind of habit, but therein to follow the custom of the country’.¹⁷ Their administration of cures for bodily and spiritual ills was part of a wider humanist project to rehabilitate society, and was a metaphor for their political motivations and goals. Two key points regarding the Rosicrucian tradition for note in this thesis are firstly the identification of the body as both literal and metaphoric site for curative visions of social reform, secondly scholarly assessments that far from being an ahistorical movement, or a reactionary movement, the Rosicrucian Brotherhood

¹⁴ Edith Birkhead introduced the idea of a type of eighteenth-century novel dealing with Rosicrucian themes in *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance* (London: Constable, 1921). Marie Mulvey Roberts’ *Gothic Immortals: The Fiction of the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London: Routledge, 1990) explores the idea at length. Drawing on a Marxist argument she suggests that the representation of alienation dramatised by the figure of the wandering Rosicrucian is a product of capitalist political economy, see pp. 18-21 particularly.

¹⁵ Marie Mulvey Roberts, pp. 14, 15.

¹⁶ Irénée Agnostus *Fons Gratine* (1619), quoted in, André Nataf, *Dictionary of the Occult* (Herts.: Wordsworth, 1994), p. 78.

¹⁷ According to Marie Mulvey Roberts these were Andræ’s Christian Union and the Invisible College, see: *Gothic Immortals: The Fiction of the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 5.

were a product of their age, and their offshoots likewise a product of specific cultural conditions.¹⁸

More lately, the Theosophical Society's general favouring of the sacred over the material world led to it being popularly associated with ascetic living practices, and therefore the denial of the physical body. Blavatsky vigorously denied that the Society propounded asceticism and reminded critics that the first duty of the Theosophist was to live in the real world. Theosophical writing pertaining to the body is, nonetheless, theoretical in nature. Although in devising the *Secret Doctrine* Blavatsky responded to demand for plainer material and directions regarding its bearing on common life, such detail remains hard to discover. In the first of a series of papers, 'Some papers on the bearing of occult philosophy' published in the fifth volume of *Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky made a distinction between the 'earthly pedigree' and 'all the links of heredity, astral, psychic and spiritual, which go to make you what you are'.¹⁹ The paper identifies the 'double object' of esoteric science as follows:

(a) of proving Man to be identical in spiritual and physical essence with both the Absolute Principle and with God in Nature; and (b) of demonstrating the presence in him of the same potential powers as exist in the creative forces in Nature – to such a one a perfect knowledge of the correspondences between Colours, Sounds, and Numbers is the first requisite.²⁰

The physical essence is recognised as important in the first point insofar as it is understood via theoretical correspondences. Via diagrams, the paper demonstrates

¹⁸ See: Francis Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1972) (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁹ H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy* (1888) Vol 5 (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1950), p. 417.

²⁰ *Secret Doctrine*, p. 421.

the principles of the historical unity of religions and life, in theory. It does not train the Theosophist in the practical techniques for harnessing the latent powers. The Theosophical view of the physical body was as a coat of skin and temporary encasement for the more important essence of the person. Its system was dedicated to revealing the individual and social potential of the inner body rather than the outer. Imagining a man who has developed a true appreciation of the laws the paper concludes: ‘Such a man will be physically of Matter, he will move surrounded by Matter, and yet he will live beyond and outside it. His body will be subject to change, but he himself will be entirely without it, and will experience everlasting life even while in temporary bodies of short duration.’²¹ Broader questions of health are, however, present in Theosophy. Blavatsky, and later, Besant, were well-known as proponents of the vegetarian movement. Blavatsky’s allegiance to the cause was partly dictated by her belief that the former spirits of animals were imbibed if their meat was eaten. The spirits passed on to the consumer had the potential to interfere with the individual’s conscious and sub-conscious self.²² Such preferences were also, however, a product of the broad-based Theosophical ethic, which included and coincided with campaigns such as that opposing vivisection, rather than an example of concern with the condition of the body *per se*.

Golden Dawn founder MacGregor Mathers’ ‘Manifesto of G.H. Frater “Deo Duce Comite Fero” (7) = [4]’ describes the perspective of the Golden Dawn to the physical body. The document outlines the obligation of adepts seeking entry into

²¹ *Secret Doctrine*, p. 434.

²² Dion Fortune, ‘Occultism and Vegetarianism’, *What is Occultism?*, ed. by Gareth Knight (ME: Weiser, 2001), pp. 147-159, p. 147.

the Inner Order of the Golden Dawn.²³ Dated October 1896, the manifesto emphasises the necessity of maintaining sound physical health. Mathers records the negative physical effects of the arduous magical work he carried out towards the establishment of the Order. In attempting to obtain the important Z Ritual MacGregor Mathers and his wife, the magician and thought-reader Mina Mathers *née* Bergson, worked the table, and the ring and disk methods.²⁴ Mathers documents that they suffered nose bleeds, cold sweats, and required long recovery periods. They felt, he writes, that the work would kill one, if not both of them. Magical practice required commitment and experiments could extend to any duration. The magician had therefore to be able to endure lengths of time without the usual sustenance and respite. Consequently, the Manifesto contains a forward to the Adepti Minor pledge which commands the adept to ‘keep this body in such a condition of physical health and especially of vital energy’ so that ‘the ordinary chances of corporeal illness and exhaustion should not be permitted to become any bar to his constant efforts and exertion’. Despite bodily health being a formal feature of the Golden Dawn system it was so to ensure the continuation of ‘extreme and sustained attention, and critical judgement requisite to obtain any reliable and truthful answers’.²⁵

²³ ‘Manifesto of G.H. Frater “Deo Duce Comite Fero” (7) = [4], October 1896’, Yorke Collection, NS 7.

²⁴ Gerald Yorke explains the table, and the ring and disc method in an article entitled ‘Magic and the Golden Dawn’ held in the Yorke Collection. Referring to Mathers’ article Yorke writes that by the table ‘he means a small circular tripod, or table on three legs, operated as in ordinary table turning’, however, Yorke appears to have modified this view at a later date as alongside that description there is another reading, ‘here he means the Enochian system of Dr Dee, not table turning’. He continues, ‘by the ring and disc (a technique in which you hold a consecrated ring above the centre of a circle round which are the letters of the Coptic and Hebrew alphabets, certain words and colours, the sign of the Zodiac, and so on. As the ring oscillates you write down in turn the letters or words over which it has passed)’, ‘Magic and the Golden Dawn’, Yorke Collection, NS 8.

²⁵ ‘Manifesto of G.H. Frater “Deo Duce Comite Fero”’, Yorke Collection, NS 7.

In the first phase of the magical revival in the nineteenth century, the body featured in occultism insofar as good health was deemed conducive to the more important business of regeneration on a spiritual level. It was deemed that the body should be prepared in advance of magical activity, and that health should be maintained, but magic and the body were not understood to have a relationship worth exploring either for the purposes of enhancing somatic health through magic, or in terms of the positive bearing that the body might have on magical rejuvenation. The other side to the treatment of the body in the history of occultism concerns the nature of the re-born body. The doctrine of resurrection was, as Gibbons points out, ‘perfectly orthodox’, although ‘in contrast to orthodox thinkers, the occultists tended to neglect the beatific vision in their discourse on the afterlife, being preoccupied with the idea of a somatic immortality’.²⁶ Although the Theosophists and the Golden Dawn magicians executed their magical work on the astral plane and envisaged and experienced regeneration on a spiritual level, they did, nonetheless, imagine a form of spiritual *embodiment*.²⁷ The significance of this reconstructed spiritual embodiment lay in its having been reconstructed without reference to an ideal orthodox image. It was intended to be a true representation, or extension, of the self as initiation has revealed it to the individual. In theory, it was free, therefore from ‘existence that was conditioned and contingent’.²⁸

Medical ideas of life, death, and the body

²⁶ Gibbons, pp. 86-7.

²⁷ Gibbons, p. 87.

²⁸ Gibbons, p. 87.

Early general histories of medicine describe its evolution, and its relationship with culture and society, as a natural development of the human will-to-life; ‘in the struggle to live fully, the art and skill of medicine has been developed’.²⁹ The past thirty years have witnessed an important burgeoning of scholarly interest in the history of medicine, and neat views on the natural precedence of medicine have been complicated. Life fully lived as a governing medical principle has been revealed to be a relatively recent development; only in the early 1900s did it, and could it be fully realised in mainstream Western medicine. This section describes how perceptions of the body, its nature and treatment, underwent incremental change prior to the twentieth century wherein the paradigm shift that enabled a concept of physical culture occurred. Strange as it seems to aver, this shift made a concept of ‘life’ something that could be positively pursued and engendered as it had not been possible before. Up to this point oppositional categories of life and death have taken turns to be the dominant factor towards which medical knowledge and practice has directed its energies. This section provides a survey of the major changes.

The long-enduring classical arrangement of life in relation to death took the form of a straightforward opposition expressed in terms of “possession” and

²⁹ Leff, S. & V., *From Witchcraft to World Health* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1956), p. 9. For similar readings, see: Charles Singer, *A Short History of Medicine: Introducing Medical Principles to Students and Non-Medical Readers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928); Glendening, Logan, *Behind the Doctor* (London: William Heinemann Medical Books, 1933); Douglas Guthrie, *A History of Medicine* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1945); and, Kenneth Walker, *The Story of Medicine* (London: Hutchinson, 1954).

“privation”. As such ‘life was not thought of as a unitary concept but as a collection of faculties and properties, and death had to remain a theoretical nullity’ because the soul was understood to be the enabler of matter rather than matter the enabler of the soul.³⁰ When the soul departed, so life ended. Although Albury points out that Aristotle did not explicitly relate the positive and privative to human life and death, the examples he provided of positives, the faculty of sight and the possession of teeth for instance, were explained in such a way as to articulate a model of natural development recognisable as natural human ‘life’:

‘We say that which is capable of some particular faculty or possession has suffered privation when the faculty or possession in question is in no way present in that in which, and *at the time in which, it should naturally be present*’.³¹

Likewise, says Albury whose discussion and handling of the material is closely mirrored here, Aristotle’s explanation of privatives can be viewed to articulate the life cycle’s termination in death:

‘There may be a change from possession to privation, but not from privation to possession. The man who has become blind does not regain his sight; the man who has become bald does not regain his hair; the man who has lost his teeth does not grow a new set’.³²

For Albury the life-cycle provides the logic of Aristotle’s argument and constructed the binary that remained the strongest influence on medical thought for centuries.³³

Galen, for example, criticised the aspect of Aristotle’s model that divided the soul

³⁰ W. R. Albury, ‘Ideas of Life and Death’, *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine* 2 vols, ed. by W.F. Bynum and Roy Porter (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), I, 249- 280, p. 250.

³¹ W. R. Albury, p. 250; and Aristotle in Albury, p. 250. Albury quotes from *Categories*, and the emphasis added is his.

³² Albury, p. 250.

³³ Albury, p. 250.

into ‘vegetative’ and ‘sensory’ parts, but that which he propounded in replacement only served to reinforce the principles of the Aristotelian arrangement: a distinction between faculties ‘caused by nature (growth and nutrition)’ and those ‘caused by the soul (feeling and voluntary motion)’. Galen’s theory of animal life located two influences over Aristotle’s one. As Albury summarises, ‘The result of this proliferation of faculties was that many individual phenomena of life were explained although life itself was not’.³⁴ Death and its properties were to remain obscured by the many ‘phenomena of life’, although not life as an understandable concept in itself as this too was yet to emerge, until the mid-1700s.³⁵ And particularly noteworthy for this thesis, although it seems somewhat premature to point out, the irreversibility of the journey from possession to privation was also to remain an accepted truth for some time.

The next partial development in the life-death relationship came in the mid-eighteenth century and was consolidated by the rise in pathology. Physicians such as Georg Ernst Stahl and Albrecht von Haller began to investigate the damage caused by death upon the body and their reckoning that the desertion of a vital power caused the onset of death re-imagined the soul of classical medicine in physico-chemical terms.³⁶ Furthermore, the classical notion that nature is invested

³⁴ Albury, p. 251. Galen’s dates are recorded as (AD 129-c.200/210) by Albury, and as (AD 129-c.216?) in Porter, Roy, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity to the Present* (London: Fontana, HarperCollins, 1999), p. 789, which see for an introduction to Galen’s contribution to the medicine in antiquity, pp. 73-77, and ‘Medicine in the Age of Galen’, pp. 77-80.

³⁵ Albury, p. 251.

³⁶ Albrecht von Haller (1708-77) was mentored by Boerhaave and as such was deeply concerned with the question of the interrelation between the body and soul. His principal contribution to medical science was his joining of anatomical and physiological conceptions of the human body in his conceptualisation of *anatomia animate*, or ‘living anatomy’, see: Porter, pp. 249-251. Georg Ernst Stahl (1659-1734) was similarly focussed but was strongly anti-materialist and his work was influenced, according to Porter, by his evangelical Lutheran Pietism. His concept of *anima* was

with healing powers came once again to the forefront but underwent modification so that nature, in line with Hippocrates, whose writings enjoyed a revival within medical science at this time, became firmly associated with the medical behaviour of the body, over nature in a more general sense. Life remained the dominant factor and was inflected, increasingly, with a positive importance over death which was viewed to occur, so to speak, from the outside in. It was to the more accurate comprehension of the point of transition, between the presence and absence of vital life, that the major share of medical thinking was directed and from which emerged pathology; at what point did the organism's exterior environment encroach upon it sufficiently so as to overrun the life inside? The revealing objects of such enquiry according to Albury, 'were the problems of apparent death, of resuscitation, and of premature burial'.³⁷ As Enlightenment medical thinkers theorised around the ideas of life and death the body itself pointed to a paradox. Laid in death on the pathologist's table it showed the discrepancy between what Roy Porter calls the 'herculean efforts' made in Therapeutics, and the stagnancy, or in some cases 'positively harmful', efforts of physicians. As Matthew Baillie saw, "I know better perhaps than another man, from my knowledge of anatomy, how to discover disease, but when I have done so, I don't know better how to cure it".³⁸ The changes that show in a body affected by disease were, in the Enlightenment, being thoroughly described, pathological methods were being brought to an increasing number of organs and new manifestations of disease were being rendered for the

invested with soul-like qualities in reaction to what he saw as the reductive mechanistic view of the cellular body, see, Porter, pp. 247-8.

³⁷ Albury, p. 253.

³⁸ Porter, p. 266; and for Baillie in Porter, as before. Matthew Baillie (1761-1823) was central to the development of Pathology in Britain and wrote *Morbid Anatomy of Some of the Most Important Parts of the Human Body* (1793).

sake of medical knowledge, but none of this could yet be of service to the ailing body. In pathological medicine the body was the lifeless object from which, and on which, the course of death could be read and written. Death therefore stood, as Albury explains, ‘in mute opposition to life’, and the body was little more the place where one happened at the expense of the other.³⁹

In the early nineteenth century, the idea of life becomes a more substantive concept, not immediately, however, at the expense of death. The pre-existing ‘simple’ correlative between death and life was expanded to a more complex correlative in which life and death depended upon one another as the “‘conditions of existence’”. Following significant advances in zoology, in which the system of taxonomical classification based on the external characteristics of a species was replaced by a system that privileged its internal nature, the human body, like the animal’s, could now be seen as capable of dying. For Cuvier, for instance, who expounded the above view, species survival depended upon the correspondence of internal and external conditions. This meant that the continuation of life was determined by the animal’s being suited biologically to its environment, and that environment (the term was first employed in medical thought at this time by Auguste Comte), in its role as the determinant of life was increasingly characterised as life-giving, rather than the encroaching death force. The particular relevance of this volte-face for the understanding of human life is that where the unitary concept of life described an internal unseen process of resistance to disease, and was therefore understood in terms of resilience to external factors, life had now to be

³⁹ Albury, p. 249.

viewed as a principal factor in its own termination. Even, as Corvisart, quoted in Albury, wrote, “the very fact of life is the cause of death”.⁴⁰ Life was the continuation of maintenance of the body’s equilibrated systems. Although, entering the world, in the most part, capable of functioning in equilibrium, imbalances in the body caused pathogenic corruptions and turned the life force on itself.⁴¹ Albury summarises the very great change that had taken place, and upon which mid nineteenth-century medicine stood, as follows: ‘what was taken in the previous century for death has now become life, and what was taken for life has now become death’.⁴²

Having given the name ‘life’ to the newly imagined internal systems of equilibrium, and to that extent domesticating it, the 1860s and 1870s saw the emergence of important medical disciplines which compounded this way of thinking. Both bacteriology and physiology confirmed life as a local phenomenon. However, they continued to dispute the semantics of life and death, thus domesticating death along with life. For the bacteriologist, Pasteur, life had been wrongly mistaken for death; the action of death, putrefaction, was itself a vitally alive process. Cell theory, at the forefront of which was Rudolph Virchow, likewise found in the cell the human organism in miniature, and saw the same process of putrefaction to be the essence of their function. Like Pasteur, Claude Bernard saw that life and death had been misrecognised, only for him, it was death that had been

⁴⁰ Albury, p. 257.

⁴¹ According to Albury, this general disturbance of balance was seen to occur in a number of different ways. Brown saw it in terms of ‘a loss of excitability’ that happened with age, Boerhaave and Haller in terms of wear and tear whose speed of advancement was determined by repair such as that provided by nutrition, and for Corvisart and Broussais the mechanical action of the body caused its own lesions over time, see p. 257.

⁴² Albury, p. 257.

mistaken for life and this, he said, was ‘a habitual illusion’. In the system in which the conditions of existence are mutually arranged, what had been called life, was not life at all, but, more properly, death, and ““the signs”” of this were, for Bernard, ““evident and obvious””:

‘when movement is produced, when a muscle contracts, when volition and sensibility and manifest, when thinking takes place, when a gland secretes, the substance of the muscle, the nerves, the brain, the glandular tissue disorganizes itself, destroys itself and consumes itself’.⁴³

Albury points out that, as well as seeing life as death, Bernard also saw life as ““creation””, that is as a ‘creative synthesis’ that occurs in relation to growth and nutrition. Creative life was, however, subordinated to the ““*life is death*”” view because it was seen as a secondary impulse that ““manifests itself only in the presence of death, or of the products of destruction””.⁴⁴

There is one final point to introduce before moving to the twentieth century, it relates to the concept of environment and the place of life within it. Cuvier made death in the animal an organising and predictive principle in describing animal types. Although in agreement in principle the role of death for Darwin was more expansive. To use Albury’s term, death, for Darwin, functioned as an ‘agent’ that could mould present and future bodily manifestations of species already in existence, indeed, of those animals already living. Importantly, each species, checking and moderating itself, was, in so doing, altering the environment of others.

⁴³ Bernard in Albury, p. 258.

⁴⁴ Bernard in Albury, p. 259.

Albury says, ‘not only did a line now run from death to life, but another one ran from life to the environment’, drawn by Darwin as by Bernard whose cell theory only enhanced the point.⁴⁵ Bernard’s cell would never, in normal circumstances, be exposed to an outside environment such as that described in the eighteenth century, but it did exist within a smaller environment of its own, crucially, the conditions of which it created as well as responded to. By the late nineteenth century, theoretically, the life of the body was undistinguishable from death as the latter was constitutive of the former, and both were locked once again in an environment, although one different in aspect than before. This understanding saw the dearth of surgical responses noted by Porter of the eighteenth century corrected throughout the nineteenth. By envisaging both internal and external environment as spaces in which life and death confronted one another surgery had a place in which to operate and ameliorate.

The absence or presence of intervention is the key point in Tim Armstrong’s survey of perceptions of the function and treatment of the body that occurred throughout the nineteenth century and that made early twentieth century ‘revivification’ interventions possible. At the start of the nineteenth century human physiology was understood in dualistic terms whereby the body was ‘the machine in which the self lived’. Diagnostic methods were verbal involving minimal external scrutiny and no external examination because it was deemed that ‘the live body could not be penetrated safely’.⁴⁶ Still early in the nineteenth century this notion coexisted with more physiological approaches such as phrenology, that experienced

⁴⁵ Albury, p. 259.

⁴⁶ Armstrong, p. 2.

its heyday in Britain throughout and between the 1820s and 1840s.⁴⁷ A central tenet of phrenology was that the internal state of health could be read from the external body, in this case specifically the skull. Still, however, the body remained a boundary, or simply the canvas upon which life or death was presented and medicine itself was ‘primarily a matter of description’.⁴⁸ By the early twentieth century the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the principle governing modern medicine was that the body’s workings could be intervened in and improved. The perceptual development to which Armstrong’s survey of the conceptualisation of the medical body points is a movement away from a dualistic understanding of body and mind as separate entities, and the uptake of an integrated model. It is crucial to note this development as the new model of the medical body, in which it was recognised that mind and body had the capacity to impact upon one another, provided both impetus and a greater depth of logic for the major rejuvenation strategies.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, then, centuries of theorisation on the ideas of life and death had brought forward a notion of the body placed in a co-operative relationship with its environment and holding the properties of life and death inveterately within it. The view that life was miserably its own destroyer was criticised as “‘hazardous’” and “‘obscure’” and death was refuted as the

⁴⁷ Phrenology was a method of diagnosis based on the theories of Viennese scientist Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828). It held that the shape of the skull pointed to the development of particular cerebral ‘organs’, which in turn corresponded to character traits and were indicative of intellectual capacity. It should also be said that, despite being hugely popular, Phrenology never acquired status as a worthy science and its practitioners and representatives were excluded from the British Society for the Advancement of Science. Nevertheless, it here marks a stage in the changing perception of the relationship between body and mind.

⁴⁸ Jessica Jahiel, ‘Rejuvenation Research and the American Medical Association in the Early Twentieth Century: Paradigms in Conflict’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Boston University, 1992), p. 9.

straightforward condition of life.⁴⁹ Moreover, the life-death contract became an anachronism for the medical sciences and the important terms became the intermediate and intermediary states of health and disease. Converting death into disease undercut its totality and de-sentimentalised it, the substitution of terms introduced a new medical paradigm, the deficiency-disease model, which, strange as it seems to aver, made life itself a positive goal.⁵⁰ ‘According to this view’, writes Jahiel, ‘medicine could do more than define and cure: it could prevent’. The disease model of medicine straightforwardly explained that ‘in the case of any given disease, something noxious had been added, whether toxin or irritant’. What the deficiency-disease model asked was whether ‘disease could result from the lack of something necessary’.⁵¹ As consequence, problems which had not formerly been considered medical problems at all, notably aging, were being isolated as medical predicaments and therapeutic treatments sought. ‘Old enemies were being investigated; mysteries were being explained’.⁵² For the first time, outside of Rosicrucian legend, life can theoretically be maintained, prolonged and enhanced via the body which previously had functioned only to register the presence of either death, or life, and to confirm a lapsarian lack. The new paradigm allowed for the identification of new health problems, or rather it incorporated into its remit deficiencies previously thought to be natural and insurmountable privations. Paradoxically, in creating a host of new health problems and by medicalising biological function it produced new opportunities for life. While the body was pathologised, theorised and abstracted before and generally construed as incidental

⁴⁹ Albury, p. 259

⁵⁰ Jessica, p. 9.

⁵¹ Jahiel, p. 17.

⁵² Jahiel, p. 10.

to life, now it was central to regeneration. It therefore became a vehicle for life in the fullest sense. Moreover, the motor sense therein suggested indicates much about its future in the context of rejuvenation and, quite removed from the gross crust, its future in occultism.

ii. The first symptoms of regeneration

Prime Minister Lloyd George's national reconstruction speech, delivered in Manchester 12 September 1918, was transcribed in *The Times* the following day under the heading 'Peace Problems'; chief among the peacetime problems was the 'C3' body. Prompted by the dearth of suitably fit recruits to the British Army, depleted by two Boer Wars and a World War, The Ministry of National Service had conducted a survey of fitness levels of people between the ages of 18 and 42. Candidates were adjudged according to three tiers of grades ranging from A1, through B2, to C3, of which A1 indicated the target level of fitness attractive in a recruit. Lloyd George 'hardly dare[d]' give his audience the 'appalling' results and used the public opportunity of apologise to the ministry's doctors who had been ordered to conduct re-examinations on suspicion of their having manipulated the findings; 'The number of grade II and grade III men throughout the country [was] prodigious.' Following this assessment, it was predicted that, had the health of the nation been properly attended to, at least one million additional men could have been in active service. Furthermore, explained the premier, the repercussions and

disillusionment extended beyond the rank and file and affected essential industries. In agriculture, for example, under-production was again attributed to unfit human resources and was all the more disappointing because agriculture was deemed the ideal industry for the cultivation and maintenance of physical fitness. The ‘startling’ result of the survey was that the majority of those examined were declared C3. Earlier, Boer War recruitment drives had suggested that as much as 60 per cent of men in England were unfit for service prompting the formation of an Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration.⁵³ In his speech, Lloyd George congratulated the nation for ‘doing great things in this war’, but there followed a caveat: ‘We could have accomplished greater if this country had been in condition’.⁵⁴ Lloyd George’s conclusion regarding the health of the nation was that, with basic attention to matters of individual fitness, war would have come to a more triumphant and absolute end, from which it must be inferred that the urgent need for widespread social and cultural reconstruction would not exist. With a solemn warning to the British people that ‘you cannot maintain an A1 Empire with a C3 population’ (one of the statements, according *The Times*’ transcript, to draw ‘cheers’ from the assembled crowd) the war effort became the regeneration effort.⁵⁵

Anxiety over the condition of service men filtered out into a broader concern over the condition of British citizens. For example, in his introduction to *Life is Movement: the Physical Reconstruction and Regeneration of the People* (1920), Eugen Sandow quotes the Ministry of National Service statistics, and the premier’s Reconstruction speech, and utilises a recognisably Gothic metaphor to emphasise

⁵³ David Trotter, *The English Novel in History 1895-1924* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 113.

⁵⁴ ‘The War and After’, *The Times*, 13 September 1918, pp. 7-8 (p. 8).

⁵⁵ *The Times*, p. 8.

the spread of the problem. The war had ‘X-rayed deep into every fibre of the modern social system’, and had ‘revealed not only a single skeleton, but a veritable army of skeletons, in the cupboard of civilisation’. Sandow’s army of skeletons figured the declining health of the nation as its major enemy in the inter-war period.

The combined factors of the Boer Wars and World War functioned as a stark exposé. They also marked the twentieth-century problem of degeneration as different in crucial ways to the degeneration of the *fin de siècle*, or, at least, a distinct phase of the same problem, subject to different treatments, and the subject of different institutions. In *Life is Movement* Eugen Sandow places degeneration in a new domain:

As Sir Robert Hadfield had said, ‘Life had been too easy for us.’ Civilisation, a faulty education, and luxurious living had set up a softening of the national marrow, muscle and brain.⁵⁶

Both Sandow and Hadfield use the past tense and in so doing simultaneously recognise the continuation of the earlier problem, whilst marking the new mindset as distinct. Nineteenth-century degeneration was largely the domain of psychopathologists and worked in a double motion to simultaneously reveal and contain the scope of the problem that it documented. It also reinforced, and was reinforced by the *fin de siècle*’s calculable sense of ending. Nineteenth-century degeneration had social causes, as Chapter One surveys, (urban living, and new modes of communication multiplying daily interactions) but, in the main, ordinary victims

⁵⁶ Sandow, p. 9. Sir Robert Hadfield (1858-1940) was a notable metallurgist who, in 1882, discovered manganese steel, and in 1909 was elected Fellow of Royal Society. A wealthy manufacturer, Hadfield complemented his pioneering experiments into methods of metal production with lecture tours, and he published over two-hundred papers on manufacturing and social topics. He was central to the implementation of infrastructural regeneration.

were treated as just that, victims and specimens upon which the effects were observable. Where degeneration was noted now it was viewed as a present problem for all rather than a threat to be contained in the degenerates in whom the most obvious symptoms presented. The difference in the degeneration noted here is the suggestion of personal and social culpability across the spectrum; individuals had indulged themselves and grown slack, and institutions had been remiss. Likewise, where degeneration was discussed it was now done so from the standpoint of regeneration, rather than of diatribe and diagnosis. The anonymous 1895 publication, *Regeneration: A Reply to Max Nordau* set the tone for the new century:

In our political circles, in the ranks of literature, and throughout all the strata of society, there are already unmistakable signs that the period of scepticism, selfishness, and rant will end with the century; that scientific superstition and sickly Collectivist chimeras are doomed; and that the nation is sternly entering upon the mission of leading humanity towards good laws and institutions based on liberty, and thus inaugurating a universal movement which by its glorious results shall demonstrate that the alarming symptoms of degeneration, revealed by the psychologists, are the first symptoms of regeneration.⁵⁷

Writing at the end of nineteenth century, the writer espouses hopes that prognosis and therapeutics will inform social organisation of the next century. Any separation that existed between degeneration as social disease and its cataloguers is dismantled; degeneration myth is symptom of itself. It is anticipated as the first showings of the regeneration force. Although the individualist political position that this anonymous piece advocates will not be the clear-cut direction of social regeneration, the relationship between the individual and the state, a newly

⁵⁷ Anon, *Regeneration: A Reply to Max Nordau* (London: Archibald Constable, 1895), pp. 314-5.

emerging concept at this time, is crucial to regeneration schemes. At the centre of such strategies stands the body.

For Nordau the nineteenth-century degenerate body functions as the converter of negative energy; as the forces of modernity work on the individual they re-emerge as psychological damage. Equally, the individual might be rendered a degenerate by their choosing to privilege the mystical or occult world over the material world. Both are nonetheless rendered degenerate by the imbalance, or the overwhelming of one category by the other. Oliver Lodge (1851-1940) in *The War and After: Short Subjects of Serious Practical Import for the Average Citizen in A.D. 1915 Onwards* (1915), was clear: ‘There are [...] two aspects of the Universe as a whole. There may be many more, but there are at least two – the material and the spiritual – and all human existence depends on the interaction of these two’.⁵⁸ Furthermore, Lodge quotes Henri Bergson:

‘The idea, peculiar to the nineteenth century, of employing science in the satisfaction of our material wants, has given a wholly unforeseen extension to the mechanical arts, and has equipped man in less than fifty years with more tools than he had lived on the earth. Each new machine being for man a new organ – an artificial organ which merely prolongs the natural organs – his body has become suddenly and prodigiously increased in size, without his soul being able at the same time to dilate to the dimensions of his new body’.⁵⁹

Both Lodge and Bergson (1859-1941) were, in different ways, keen exponents of the renewed need for the spiritual in twentieth-century society. Although both are

⁵⁸ Oliver Lodge, *The War and After, short chapters on subjects of serious practical import for the average citizen in A.D. 1915 onwards* (London: [n. pub.], 1916), p. 14.

⁵⁹ Bergson in Lodge, p. 19.

primarily interested in, as Lodge puts it, ‘A right appreciation of the universe’ in philosophical and metaphysical terms, both view the human body as a microcosm in which the relationships and activities of the universe are held in miniature. The body, again for both, is matter utilised by the soul or the spirit and the material is an ever-present threat to the privileged spiritual. Particularly acute at the end of the nineteenth, and start of the twentieth century when Bergson was writing, was the view that the material sphere had been well-served by scientific and industrial endeavour, at the expense of the spiritual. The material body, and the material basis of society, had been outwardly expanded by surrogate inventions and applications designed to enhance natural functions and desires so that the body had become alien to its own functions. The rapidity and dimensions of expansion of the body had left the ratio of material to spiritual in fatal inequity.

Worry over the balance of material and spiritual such as this seems generalised, and the crucial terms of the argument are difficult to pin down; mental, spiritual, psychical frequently stand for the same position. Less important are the relationships and differences between such terms, they are united in their general opposition to the material and the materialistic. Texts by Sandow, Lodge and Bergson, are selected because they show the spread of such concern across subject areas and discourses.⁶⁰ Sandow, of whom more will be said in the next section was the spearhead of the movement known as Physical Culture after the comprehensive

⁶⁰ In *Regenerating England: Science, Medicine and Culture in Inter-War Britain* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), Christopher Lawrence and Anna-K. Mayer describe the way the subject and implementation of regeneration was taken up by diverse interest groups and individuals, not always officially sanctioned. They point to a distinction that emerged in the early twentieth-century between a formal conception of ‘social science’ and a form of ‘civic enquiry’. The latter involved medics, artists and other professionals in the regeneration debate. The common thread in their work is the sense of ‘oral duty to publicize their social and moral insights’, p. 2.

exercise program he developed with the aim of reconstructing a public perception of the ideal body and its attainability as a mentality of self-culture in twentieth-century society. Oliver Lodge, an eminent physicist and member of the Royal Society who also had considerable sympathies with occult and psychical research, was deeply concerned that materialist science was not serving human progress. Science only could, argued Lodge, if it directed its attention to the non-material aspects of life. The French philosopher, Henri Bergson, wrote widely on the materialist and spiritual attitudes and in texts such as *Matter and Memory* (1896) and *Creative Evolution* (1907) investigated the extent to which the spiritual and the material coexisted and the nature of that coexistence. To different degrees the three exponents of the integrated life saw dominant materialism as a barrier to human evolution, and disequilibrium as the harbinger of a dangerous politics. Oliver Lodge described the everyday action of life in evolutionary terms. The human engaged in the activity of life is engaged in business of evolving. A major aspect of this activity is, for Lodge, the negotiation of the material and the non-material aspects of existence held in miniature in the human body as the basic premise of all human engagements. The opposition is not viewed by Lodge as a case of victor and vanquished, rather, in the confrontation energy, although he doesn't use the term, the life force, is generated, the material 'enables' the individual to 'put forth effort' and it is this that effects evolution:

This utilization of matter is not easy; matter is obstructive; it has inertia. Difficulties have to be overcome, and this is good exercise and training. The result is evolution – the rising on stepping-stones of matter to higher things. The outcome of all the

interaction is Life, more Life, more fullness and completeness and elevation of Life.⁶¹

In the twentieth century evolution was being re-appropriated once again. Now, however, reformative shifts in medical philosophy inspired the individual in the species with a new power to perform in the evolutionary framework and with autonomy that neither Darwin nor Blavatsky could allow. The problem of matter, worn most conspicuously by the body, coupled with a new medical paradigm, and drawn to the heart of debates about the national present and future, became the driving force behind an identifiable culture of regeneration.

iii. The occult body in the age of regeneration

‘Life’ theorised and affirmed by its capitalisation, if to be realised, required active embodiment, or ‘embodied thinking’. Again, writing of modernism, Armstrong urges a particular reading; that the desires, aspirations and necessities that turned the modernists of his study to their bodies, just as they turned to their art (and sometimes when their art ceased to happen) be read as ‘pragmatic’ and therefore conscious ‘moving into the world of embodied thinking’.⁶² In one way this impulse is, to the occultist, an old habit; they were, by now, adept at embodying astral doubles or initiated selves. But, it was new in another way: could the everyday body be a potential resource for full, authentic life, where it had previously been at best, an obstruction, and at worst a burdensome sign of transgression? Could the

⁶¹ Lodge, p. 15.

⁶² Armstrong, p. 7.

occultists think to embody the older body, and enter their familiar world of embodied thinking via it?

I want here to demonstrate how the change in attitude to the body after 1900, which I attribute to the Astrum Argentum order, is evidenced in the order's occult thought and conceptualised in comparison to thought prior to 1900, as above. Moreover, the aim is to describe how those principles were turned into actively embodied actions, with reference to the comparable Physical Culture movement, and the theory and practice of the Rejuvenation scientists. The latter is the most distinct group to have grown out of out of the new deficiency-disease paradigm which brought into focus the cultural experiments taken as a topic here. I have said that in recognising the place of the body in magical life the A.A. should be seen as reconstructing the place of the body *in* occult thought, just as it aims to reconstruct the individual *by means of* occult thought. Of all the chapters in this thesis, this one interprets occultism with reference to the most overt example of a regeneration culture in conventional society, and although the aim is to reach to a fuller understanding of the place of the body in the magical revival, pursuing links between occultism and the activities and ideas surrounding regeneration as they were played out in more conventional ways, the section stresses the affinities and finds occultism to be an overlooked participant in this phase of mainstream culture. However, in emphasising the closeness of magical treatment of the body to the prevailing conventional culture of regeneration the corollary should also be raised: in pursuit of regeneration, British culture was also embracing an aspect of occultism.

Embodying 'the earthly pedigree'

In his essay on Magic and the Golden Dawn, Gerald Yorke suggests that the vows constructed by orders provide the best sense of their aims. He compares those of the Golden Dawn and the A.A. On joining the outer order of the Golden Dawn members pledged “to prosecute with zeal the study of the occult sciences”. On initiation into the inner order Adepts swore to apply themselves:

‘to the Great Work, which is so to purify and exalt my Spiritual Nature, that with Divine Aid I may at length attain to be more than human – a very dangerous thing to desire – and this gradually raise and unite myself to my Higher and Divine Genius, and that in this event I will not abuse the Great Power entrusted to me.’

In devising pledges for the three grades of the A.A. Crowley used that of the Golden Dawn inner order as a basis, but altered the wording for the A.A. vows, from outer order to inner order, as follows:

‘to prosecute the Great Work, which is to obtain a scientific knowledge of the nature and powers of my own being’;

‘attaining the Knowledge and Conversation of my Holy Guardian Angel’;

‘interpret every phenomena as a particular dealing of God with my soul’.⁶³

There is a crucial difference in the priorities expressed in the pledges to do with what the Great Work was understood to be, or more precisely, the method of

⁶³ Gerald Yorke, ‘Magic and the Golden Dawn’, Yorke Collection, NS 8.

obtaining it. For the Golden Dawn member the emphasis is on working in accordance with existing knowledge of the occult sciences, to follow its lead and explore the phenomena therein for personal spiritual benefits culminating, in the inner order, in the attainment of the godhead. Privileged here, by implication, is the magician with the intelligence to penetrate the mysteries through traditional learning, and also the religious sense of spiritual regeneration is strongest here. A clear difference is evident in Crowley's explanation of the Great Work in the pledge for the outer order which states that the Great Work is produced by the individual seeking formal knowledge of their personal human powers. Again, for the second order this means communicating with an Angel with whom the aspirant identifies, and for the third, the Golden Dawn transcendence of the human becomes a more cautious recognition of being in touch with the Divine but deriving from it wisdom relatable to the human. Where the Great Work of the Golden Dawn was deemed external to, but applicable to the individual, the Great Work as undertaken by the A.A. magician involved originating individual wisdom. I would argue that the turn to the body is the compelling example of this principle. Even the most cursory glance over *The Equinox's* instructional images reveals Crowley naked, or minimally-clothed. Although there is a practical point, the photographs are an aid to instruction in the finer points of practice so clothing Crowley would obscure significant aspects and largely defeat the object. But more importantly Crowley's undress makes for a clear contrast between the priorities of the A.A. and earlier systems in the magical revival. The ceremonial robes adorned with insignia as worn by the Golden Dawn magician are here eschewed in favour of the unadorned man, or women, not yet discernibly a magician.

Where Blavatsky viewed the ‘earthly pedigree’ as secondary to a host of spiritual faculties, and the aim of Theosophical Enlightenment to help man live ‘beyond and outside’ matter, Crowley declared that ‘A man is what he maketh himself within the limits fixed by his inherited destiny; he is part of mankind’.⁶⁴ Crowley offered occult wisdom, particularly the preliminary practice from which this is taken, in statements which the aspirant was bound to consider and experiment under for his or herself. This statement carries no such distinction between material and spiritual as did Blavatsky’s; inherited destiny could refer to either, or both, the student would test this for themselves. Consequently, the next statement in the sequence reads:

10. Worship and neglect not, the physical body which is thy temporary connection with the outer and material world. Therefore let thy mental Equilibrium be above disturbance by material events; strengthen and control the animal passions, discipline the emotions and the reason, nourish the Higher Aspirations.⁶⁵

There is a development here away from physicality as a potential barrier for spiritual success, as Mathers cautioned. Now, in an exclamation at which Blavatsky would have balked, Crowley entreats his students to ‘worship’ the material and respect it as the temporary home of the self, rather than admonish it for the same. It must be said that Mathers’ hyperbole regarding the perils of magic could as easily have served to fire the imagination of many neophytes as it tapped into some of the intrigue of the myth of magus, and confirmed the profoundness of their task.

⁶⁴ ‘Liber Libræ’, *Equinox*, I: I (1909), 15-21, p. 18.

⁶⁵ ‘Liber Libræ’, pp. 18-19.

Perhaps this was partly the point. Either way, the Astrum Argentum approach is more measured, realistic, and individualised. While mental equilibrium features as the principally important attainment, it is not to be pursued at the expense of material life. The material, emotional, intellectual, and physical life of the aspirant must not be viewed as limitations but as the realities of human inheritance. Whatever trials they present must be learnt from and used to enhance magical aspiration and knowledge of the limits of the self.

From this tolerant starting point the A.A. developed routines to penetrate deeply into the realities of corporeal life. These were primarily outlined in *The Equinox*, the official magazine of the A.A..⁶⁶ The publication had a wide editorial remit including reviews, poetry, short stories and texts providing instruction in magical techniques and in Chapter 4 the magazine is read as a complete cultural product. But it also functioned more narrowly as a vehicle for the publication of the magical texts known as the Liber documents. Taken together, these form the core curriculum of the A.A. system. That the documents providing instruction in a physical-culture regime were published in the Liber series confirms their status in the A.A. system.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ The Liber documents which outline a physical culture-style programme are as follows (in abbreviated form some are denoted by letters and some by Roman numerals, see abbreviated titles in parenthesis): ‘Liber e vel Exercitiorvm svb figura IX (Liber E)’, *Equinox*, I: I (1909), 23-34; ‘Liber hhh svb figura ccxli (Liber HHH)’ *Equinox*, I: V (1911), 6-14; ‘Liber tvrris vel domvs dei sub figvra xvi (liber xvi)’ *Equinox*, I: VI (1911), 10-15; ‘Liber RV Vel Spiritvs svb figvra ccvi (Liber CCVI)’ *Equinox*, I: VII (1912), 59-67. Those texts of magical importance published in *Equinox* are introduced by an individual title page, or more commonly, several title pages bearing detailed front matter. Each details the author (via their magical title), title of the piece, the A.A. members who have sanctioned its publication, its magical classification (A, B, C, or D) which appear to correspond both with the text’s importance and complexity.

⁶⁷To be clear, Crowley does not identify the texts in question (Liber E; Liber HHH; Liber xvi; Liber CCVI) exclusively and formally as schemes for the body, but I am suggesting here that their approach to magical regeneration pays considerable and hitherto unparalleled attention to the body and that they represent a discernible strand of practice. As an individualised approach to magical

Physical Culture and the Astrum Argentum

From 1900, terms like ‘self-culture’ and ‘menti-culture’ signified new attitudes towards lifestyle. Medics and sexologists explored procedures to effect ‘rejuvenation’, ‘regeneration’, ‘reactivation’, and ‘re-vivication’ (the aptness of these terms were hotly debated by the rejuvenation scientists) most notably through the Steinach Procedure.⁶⁸ Auto-facial construction; the Alexander technique; Fletcherism; Stretch-and-Swing and Overbeck Rejuvenation represented body-reform possibilities ranging from targeted surgical augmentation to general ‘feel good’ lifestyle programmes.⁶⁹ Some worked *on* the body in order to effect stimulations *within* the body, like the electrotherapy of Overbeck. Others took a more holistic approach, such as the Alexander technique which ‘deal[t] with the body as a total entity’ in order to ‘produce a new set of conscious bodily habits

practice was encouraged by the selection of Liber documents, it conceivable that a personalised path to rebirth could be constructed within this strand if this is where the Neophyte’s particular interest lies. Gerald Yorke suggests as much in a letter to a prospective probationer. ‘We want more workers who will carry out the exercises laid down in the Hindu and Buddhist systems in order to scientifically test their validity, and to interpret them in terms of Western science’. Although, if the student ‘prefer[s] strictly Western methods, we want workers keeping a scientific method is astral travelling, ceremonial magic, and the systems of Abramelin, Dee and Kelley and so on’, see: Letter 140, Gerald Yorke (GY) – Sydney Hamilton French (SHF) (13 January 1932), Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute, London, OS D2. In addition to these documents, Crowley delivered a lecture ‘The Elixir of Life: Our Magical Medicine’ (1932) before Harry Price’s National Laboratory of Psychical Research’, Harry Price Library, Senate House Library, University of London, 1/22/90. However, correspondence between Crowley and Price reveals that Crowley had been commissioned to speak on the subject of Psychic Rejuvenation, see: Letter, Harry Price (HP) – Aleister Crowley (AC) 8 September 1932; and, Letter HP – AC 13 September 1932, Yorke Collection, OS E21. Crowley appears to have high-jacked the lecture as an opportunity for promoting his strangest magical enterprise; he claimed to have manufactured a rejuvenating tincture in, as the lecture title suggests, the manner of the *elixir vitæ* of Rosicrucian myth. A collection of material not published by Crowley during his lifetime but recently collected and edited pertains to this late interest in bodily concerns. The elixir, to which Crowley refers throughout as ‘IT!’ designating both the elixir and the certain *je ne sais quoi* with which it imbued its users, seems, essentially to have been a detoxification agent, see: Aleister Crowley, *Amrita: Essays in Magical Rejuvenation*, ed. by Martin P. Starr (California: Thelema Publications, 1990).

⁶⁸ Norman Haire, *Rejuvenation: The Work of Steinach, Voronoff, and Others* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924), p. 7. According to Haire, Eugen Steinach was the first to coin the term ‘rejuvenation.’

⁶⁹ These are discussed in detail by Armstrong throughout *Modernism, technology and the body*.

which would enable the balanced, dynamic, freely moving body'.⁷⁰ A plethora of home treatment and miracle cure products entered the marketplace all purporting to re-energise and re-invigorate the ailing body, prevent illness, and promote longevity. The list includes the galvanic belts and corsets, electric hairbrushes, nasal douches, and the highly popular 'Violet Ray' devices which claimed to cure all manner of problems ranging from alopecia, to deafness, to infertility.

While none of the core thinking or science behind these innovations was completely new to the twentieth century their application in the pursuit of regeneration became more credible, although a fringe association with quackery would always remain part of the story. Furthermore, the movement firstly towards the specialisation, and secondly towards the democratisation of medicine, joined almost certainly by the expansion of the market economy meant that rejuvenation became a feasible, accessible, and popular goal (see appendix 3).⁷¹ Where the major post-Aristotelian phase in the history of medicine was marked by the refining of a plethora of contesting phenomena of life into one unitary concept, the early 1900s are broadly united in an ideal of positive life, and to that end they experimented with a variety of its observed manifestations, behaviours and phenomena.

⁷⁰ Armstrong, p. 5.

⁷¹ Popular interest in Violet Ray therapy is the subject of satire in this cartoon from 18 November 1925. It depicts an old lady consulting with her doctor. She asks: 'Now tell me doctor, who is this Violet Ray I hear so much about?' That the old lady is being visited at home, in her drawing room, by her doctor suggests a difference between the management of health then and now. Violet Ray tubes were available adapted for a range of general and specific purposes for self-administration, and travel cases came in a range of finishes suggesting further that rejuvenation was in vogue in the 1920s.

In the 1890s, responding particularly to the poor quality of recruits to the initial Boer War operations Eugen Sandow made his first attempt to implement his theories of scientific exercise. But, in spite of ‘a wave of public enthusiasm’ and some ‘casual’ alterations on the nature of which he does not expand, it came to no great effect.⁷² His second attempt, in the 1920s, conterminous with the change in treatment of degeneration and further justified by the effects of two additional military campaigns, was markedly more successful and drew the praise of Arthur Conan Doyle, and the interest of H.M. the King. Conan Doyle called Sandow the ‘greatest “recruiting sergeant” the Army has ever seen’ in respect to his work with the British Army, and, in 1911, Sandow gained a royal warrant appointing him ‘Instructor in Physical Culture to H.M. the King’.⁷³ Described by the title pages of his publications as ‘Professor of Natural Therapeutics’, and the *DNB* as ‘strongman and physical culturist’ Sandow devised a programme intended to cause cellular renewal through the systematic strengthening of the muscular frame.⁷⁴ Like Crowley, Sandow’s significant aim for Physical Culture was national and remedial. Twentieth-century degeneration was a complaint about the direction of progress under a materialist, scientific and technological paradigm, and its encroachment upon the religious, or spiritual, sense of life. By recruiting a kind of alternative army of adherents to Physical Culture he endeavoured to counter the effects of early twentieth-century degeneration.

⁷² *Life is Movement*, p. i.

⁷³ *Life is Movement*, title page.

⁷⁴ *Life is Movement*, title page; and, Mark Pottle, ‘Sandow, Eugen (1867-1925)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, [electronic version] <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/>> [accessed 07 March 2005].

A photograph of Eugen Sandow, 'Power in Repose', features on page one of *Life is Movement*. Aspects of its composition and staging introduce a tendency that is a defining feature of Sandow's programme, and wider physical culture (appendix 5). It is, as the caption explains, a 'Photo of the Author, showing excellence of physique at 52'. A black fabric background sets-off the comparable paleness of Sandow's body and although the two-colour scheme is more or less a necessity at this time it establishes nonetheless the first of a number of contrastive opposites that introduce the important features of physical culture, broadly defined. The fabric backdrop must be assumed to conceal a chair or platform of some kind upon which Sandow is rested. Thereon Sandow's weight is countered, or balanced, by his arrangement which emphasises relative weightlessness. He has minimal, if any, contact with the ground. Though his legs below the shin and calf muscles are out of shot, the poise of his torso and seat suggests that they do not find the ground and are controlled in mid-air instead. That a hand rather than a foot finds the edge of the photograph in this semi-upright stance only serves to emphasise this. Other contacts between parts of his body are similarly slight and appear designed to suggest that he is poised rather than supported either by the strength of his own frame or by any external crutch. His right arm, for instance, is curved downwards in an attitude of control which extends to the hand, fingers and thumb, and encourages the appreciation of the shape of the arm and its potential strength. Furthermore, when the eye registers the poise of the hand, it is encouraged to re-trace its gaze back up the muscular arm, across the chest to the other arm whereupon the left arm arches up to Sandow's head and is closed in a gentle fist. Rather, again, than providing support for the head, this fist rests on the left temple

and closes the open circular shape formed by the upper body. Sandow's head raised upward completes the picture. Looking to some point in the foreground Sandow conveys a sense of satisfaction with the composition and with his achievements, and a sense of wisdom brought by experience which complements the preservation and extension of youthful strength suggested in the moderately strenuous arrangement of the body. The caption seeks to heighten approval by directing attention to the fact that such 'excellence of physique' is demonstrated here in a man of 52.

From the initial opposition between darkness and light follow weight and lightness, wisdom and youthfulness, force and repose all controlled via the composition's exploitation of substance and void. The association of matter with darkness and non-material qualities with whiteness and lightness is both upheld and modified here. Sandow's body is presented figuratively as light against the dark matter behind and surrounding him, but the muscular frame he displays is the subject, and matter, of the picture and details such as his gaze into the great beyond make Sandow the material object in the photograph's void. Either way, note the equal measure of darkness to lightness, of background to body. In every aspect of this composition equipoise and balance is emphasised, down to the detail of Sandow's only adornment. A pendant with a taut chain has come to rest at the centre point of his chest. Suggestive of a plumb-line the chain and pendant's tautness and centring places Sandow in tune with the unseen forces of his body, it confirms Sandow's body to be in a state of equilibrium.

Both Sandow's Physical Culture and Crowley's A.A. draw particular influence from biology which looked inside and located cellular worlds *within* the body. *Life is Movement* explained that the programme emphasised 'the influence of physical movement, scientifically applied and carried out, upon the conscious evolution of new and better cells'.⁷⁵ Insofar as physical culture was predicated on the importance of holding matter and spirit in therapeutic equilibrium, it has its basis in the influential work on cellular theory of Rudolph Virchow (1821-1902), and before him of F.J.V.Broussais (1772-1838). Broussais is known as the physiologist whose work countered patho-anatomy and directed attention away from the behaviour of disease towards the functioning of life, a principle which Virchow explored medically. A particular connection is forged by Sandow's consistent attention to his age at which time the photographs were taken. Broussais formulated the idea that physiological phenomena were dictated by a 'mean' reached by coordinating data on sex, age and physique upon which health was determined.⁷⁶ Under the new positive health and deficiency paradigm such data were no longer held to be prohibitive, rather they provided the basis for investigations seeking to arrest the conditions of the indicative categories. At first glance, the corpulent fleshiness of Crowley's images suggests either a refusal of the model of the mechanised equilibrated body, or the resilience of the Broussais mean which Sandow purports to have surmounted. In truth, the images suggest little of the perpetual, youthful, vigour held in arresting check in a honed physique, as Physical Culture determined to cultivate. Vim, thrill, and prime of life are not thoughts that crowd the mind on contemplating Crowley here, the image is more,

⁷⁵ *Life is Movement*, p. i.

⁷⁶ Porter, p. 314.

portly late-Edwardian man, disrobed. But Crowley himself recognised this and Mary D’Este (editor of *The Equinox* from volume seven) added a note in the front page announcements to draw attention to the inclusion of the photographs. The note confirmed that the pictures were printed as additional instruction for those who had experienced difficulties with the preliminary Liber E exercises, and also to encourage those who might be deterred in following the physical route on account of their perceived physical deficiencies.⁷⁷

Virchow, heavily influenced by Broussais extended an influential theory of the behaviour of cells that is encapsulated in his axiom: ‘*omnis cellula a cellula* (each cell from a cell)’. He also referred to cells living in “cellular democracy” and “republic of the cells”.⁷⁸ The combined idea is that there is an optimum level of life that is theoretically achievable according to make-up of individuals at any given stage on the life-cycle. By stimulating the function of muscular tissue, the underdevelopment of which Lloyd George and others held to be a very real domestic enemy of the day, each individual can achieve an optimum level of life, even surpass it. Virchow’s choice of political terminology adds an additional layer to this active principle of life. The idea that cellular organisms were structured via a

⁷⁷ *Equinox*, I: VII (1912), front pages: ‘Some of the weaker brethren having found the postures in Liber E too difficult, the pitiful heart of the Praemonstrator of A .∴. A .∴. has been moved to authorise the publication of additional postures, which will be found facing this page. An elderly, corpulent gentleman of sedentary habit has been good enough to pose, so that none need feel debarred from devoting himself to the Great Work on the ground of physical infirmity’. Liber E is a preliminary training text which covers basic instruction in clairvoyance, control of thought, and a course of reading, as well as three introductory exercises relating to the body: Asana (posture); Ramayana (Regularisation of the Breathing); Dharana (Control of Thought); and Physical Limitations. See: ‘Liber E. Vel Exercitiiorvm svb figura ix’, *The Equinox*, I: I (1909), 23-34. The document draws more detailed comment, from a different perspective, in Chapter Four.

⁷⁸ Porter, p. 331.

democratic principle undercut the liberal humanist view of the individual in an interesting way by making life reliant on an indefinite number of miniature interactions, figured here as republican citizens. These interactions had of necessity to involve, in discrete ways, the cells of the whole body for the benefit of the whole body, too much vigour in one area would incapacitate cells in another area; success depended on the maintenance of even production, interaction, and reproduction. The implication is that within this finely tuned equilibrium of cellular muscle is a myriad of tiny encounters between the matter and spirit, fuelling the Bergsonian 'more life'.

The same attention to equilibrium is evident in the Liber images (see appendix 10). Pramayama, the practise of regularisation of breathing, is here broken down into three stages and an instructional visual provided for each. In the picture numbered 2 within the three asanas (postures) depicted, Crowley demonstrates the same equilibrium that is more carefully staged in 'Power In Repose'. The small raised platform upon which Crowley takes up his position evidences his balance, more so even than Sandow's before, because Crowley is in a meditative and motionless state here as suggested by his expressionless face. Crowley's thumb and middle finger touch in the yogic arrangement suggesting a similar dispersal and circuit of force. Likewise 'Four Positions' (appendix 13) sitting and standing motionlessly, in a manner now understood to be produced internally by energetic equilibrium. However, while productive equilibrium is a clear tendency in the A.A., it is also recognised as a starting point, rather than an achievement in itself. Liber Libræ, an early instructional document in the principles

of A.A. magic, reads ‘Learn first – Oh thou who aspirest unto our ancient Order! – that Equilibrium is the basis of the Work’. Secondly, or firstly rather (the command regarding the importance of equilibrium is appropriately numbered 0) it informs ‘that as man is born into this world amidst the Darkness of Matter, and the strife of contending forces; so must his first endeavour be to seek the light through their reconciliation’.⁷⁹ Sandow’s images largely represent the culmination of successfully completed schemes. Even where ‘Life of the Author’ reinforces that Physical Culture is a life-long course of improvement, at each stage the ages declared emphasise that a stage in the journey has been completed; the work itself is done in between studio sittings. Crowley’s images instruct in themselves, and as a result a more distinctly physical state in motion is evident, and a more distinctly closed system.

Greater intensity is registered in the images of Crowley than those of Sandow and it is significant. The body as the generator of its own life force, with which the history of the ideas of life ended, is in evidence in these poses most clearly perhaps in Crowley’s ‘spasmodic trembling’ in ‘pramayama’. Likewise the central importance of exertion as the enabler and the effect of the confrontation between matter and spirit is registered in the same photograph and confirmed in the note ‘It has been found necessary to show this because students were trying to do it without exertion, and in other ways incorrectly’.⁸⁰ As the Liber documents from which the instructional photographs are taken further confirm, the exercises are designed to activate the body to produce effects that are to be contained by the

⁷⁹ ‘Liber Libræ’, p. 16.

⁸⁰ ‘Liber RV’, *The Equinox*, facing p. 62.

body, and that nourish it. For instance, the sweat produced all over the body when pramayama is properly performed is said to be ‘different in character from that customarily induced by exertion’. Not simply a waste product, this sweat is a signal that the body is functioning in a state of acute equilibrium and providing itself with its own muscular nourishment, ‘If’, it is written in ‘Liber RV’, ‘the Practitioner rub this sweat thoroughly into his body, he will greatly strengthen it’.⁸¹ In its instructions to students to view them as closed physiological and self-nourishing systems Crowley foregrounds a notion of bodily economy, the body as economy, which was the extension of cellular theory explored by the rejuvenation scientists and desired by their patients.

Prominent among the new variety of health practitioners were Eugen Steinach (1861-1944), Serge Voronoff (1866-1951), and clinician and sexologist, Norman Haire (1892-1952).⁸² According to Norman Haire’s survey of the subject of rejuvenation, written to address popular misconceptions regarding procedures,

⁸¹ ‘Liber RV’, *The Equinox*, p. 62.

⁸² The work of the rejuvenation scientists was regarded as highly important to the A.A.. A folder in the Yorke Collection contains the correspondence of Gerald Yorke and a number of prospective initiates to the A.A.. In the first place, the initiates write to Yorke to solicit information regarding the order, its teachings, and its membership policy. Yorke, Crowley’s secretary in matters both magical and mundane, guides and advises the initiates towards entry into the order. Incidentally, the correspondence shows the extraordinary investment of time required of the instructor. It is the headed paper upon which the letters in this file, relating to the A.A. in the late 1920s and early 1930s, are written that holds their significance by divulging the nature of their ordinary business and the nature of the connection they perceive it to have with occultism: Dr Ernest Graigwell’s paper features a clock face and the motto ‘Health turns the Clock Backward’ and declares him to be a New Jersey Naturopath and Drugless Physician; Victor Wane writes from the T.W.L. Nature Cure Centre in Staffordshire; and the elaborate business paper of Sydney Hamilton French bears a header of an angel and banner with the words ‘health’ and ‘chiropractic’ emblazoned, and in the bottom-left margin each point on the spine of a female silhouette in profile is labelled with the name of the vital organ to which it corresponds on the chiropractic skeletal model, finally the words ‘The spine is the Human Switchboard controlling Health and Vigor – Chiropractic releases the Power Within’. The correspondence between Yorke and Hamilton French is particularly interesting as French explains that his interest in the order is to gain knowledge of magical systems which he intends to incorporate into an alternative therapy. During their correspondence Yorke advises him to ‘read up on the latest research work on hormones’, see: Letters 139-164 Gerald Yorke – Sydney Hamilton French (January – May 1932), Yorke Collection, OS D2.

particularly in respect to what became known as ‘the Steinach Procedure’, ‘He [Steinach] has attempted, with a considerable measure of success, to improve the human health and happiness by transplantation of human sex-glands, or by stimulation of a small duct’.⁸³ The research upon which such procedures were based recognised that advances in bacteriology and cellular pathology had succeeded in prolonging life in statistical terms, but sought instead to investigate the possibilities for the prolongation of life, coupled with a corresponding increase in vigour; the aim was the prolongation not simply of life, but of youthful and happy life.⁸⁴ With this hypothesis as their starting point Voronoff, Steinach and Haire discovered that the ductless glands (those lacking an external secretion duct), that had previously been thought to have no function, did in fact also make secretions. The importance of the finding lay in the consequent finding that the ductless glands secrete hormones into the blood stream and thereby affect the function of the whole body. It was therefore proposed that by manipulation of the testicular glands, the quantity and quality of the restorative and protective hormones in the blood stream could be increased to stem the symptoms of old age. Armstrong explains the procedure in terms of it affecting ‘a fictional “puberty”’.⁸⁵ Diana Wyndham explains that ‘the post-vasectomy hope was that, instead of giving life to children,

⁸³ Norman Haire, *Rejuvenation: The Work of Steinach, Voronoff, and Others* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1924), p. 6. The misconceptions to which Haire addresses his study were likely encouraged by an unfortunate incident that he mentions in his introduction. In Haire’s words: ‘an unfavourable impression was created by the sudden death of Mr. Wilson, one of Steinach’s patients, the day before he was due to have delivered a lecture on “How I Was Made Twenty Years Younger” at the Albert Hall’, (pp. 8-9). Mr. Wilson’s especially untimely death cast doubt on the efficacy of his claimed rejuvenation, but the planned venue for his lecture surely indicates the appeal of the subject.

⁸⁴ See: appendix 4 picturing a seventy-two year old patient before, and after he underwent the Steinach treatment. Such pictures, along with case histories and treatment records appear in books on the subject as evidence of the success of operations. For a discussion of the peculiar modernity of such medical interventions and their bearing on the creativity of modernist arts see: chapter five, ‘Seminal Economies’ in Armstrong, pp. 133-158.

⁸⁵ Armstrong, p. 147.

aging men would give life to themselves'.⁸⁶ In Steinach's words, the principle of hormone therapy: "a man is as old as his endocrine glands".⁸⁷ Other variations on the treatment devised included the injection of synthetic male hormone to treat sexual dysfunction in men, and a 'reactivation' treatment for postmenopausal women.

Where Sandow's equilibrium is internally vigorous, but externally conveys a quiet serenity, the equilibrium stimulated by the more drastic Steinach Procedure extended a more dynamic metaphor. Armstrong asks why this procedure seemed so convincing to those who chose to be operated upon, and points to 'two interlocking traditions of thought relating to male sexuality: the idea of the "spermatic economy" and, less directly, of seminal energy'. The first relates to the understanding of the body as a system requiring equilibrium in all areas of expenditure of energies. Mind problems could be converted into body problems according to this idea. If one area of the body over-produced then another area would suffer depletion as a consequence. 'The equation also worked the other way', suggests Armstrong, 'producing a vast literature on spermatorrhoea and its depletion of mental energy'. The rationale and consequent appeal of rejuvenation techniques, such as the Steinach procedure, appeared to straddle a modern medical paradigm, and an older one. At once based on new mechanistic approaches which brought to light the role of the hormone as the stabilising feature of physiological behaviour, while at the

⁸⁶ Diana Wyndham, 'Verse-making and lovemaking – W.B. Yeats' "strange second puberty": Norman Haire and the Steinach Rejuvenation Operation', *Journal of History of the Behavioural Sciences*, 39: 1 (2003), 25-50 (p. 26).

⁸⁷ Steinach in Wyndham, p. 26.

same time sharing the, older, logic of ‘self-insemination’.⁸⁸ Suggested by Armstrong, the Steinach operation reorders what was a widely-accepted view that woman, as the recipients of seminal fluid, benefited from its electricity-like, rejuvenating power; the Steinach procedure manipulates the reproductive system so that the self, rather than the other, is the beneficiary. Importantly, “‘Steinach’s method is independent of the supply of an external source of energy’”.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the lexical properties of ‘the new “Glandular Elixir”’, recalling Rosicrucian myth, make the appeal of this concept of the body for the occultists.

There is an undeniably rich metaphorical store attendant to the idea of man as his own creator. In Armstrong’s analysis, the older tradition of thought on self-insemination exerts an influence on those who chose, like Yeats, to take up the opportunity for reactivation treatment points further to the appeal of the same principles for the occultists, who sought an embodied and creative power of being. He details the idea as it appears from classical culture to modern medical culture based upon the gendered distinction between “‘hotter” fluids of masculine generation in conception’ and as it accrues in the late nineteenth century a notional and metaphorical association with the power of electricity.⁹⁰ Polarities such as this influenced occult ideas of sexuality, and the idea of self-insemination has wider magical significance via the fertility rites of pre-Christian magic and spirituality.⁹¹ Just as the discursive power of the rejuvenation ideal advertised by Steinach and

⁸⁸ Armstrong, p. 147.

⁸⁹ Schmidt in Armstrong, p. 149.

⁹⁰ Armstrong, pp. 147-148, (p. 147); see also footnote describing the classical root of the tradition, p. 278.

⁹¹ Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 186; and Hugh B. Urban ‘*Magia Sexualis*’ (2004) shows how the notion of self-nourishing became central to the O.T.O.’s sexual magic.

others was the result of the fusing of older ideas about the nature of human life with prevalent scientific discourses, the *Astrum Argentum* thought on the body fused with the variety of ideas behind and issues around mainstream bodily regeneration. If the modern medical body could be made the source of its own life it circumvented the role of an external divine force. It displaced and assumed the godly role and thereby avoids the contingency with which other knowledge systems had prescribed the body and therefore the self.

Equilibrium, regularisation and the closed-motor model of the body produce certain clear physical effects. For instance, Sandow establishes a series of comparisons between his physique and classical figures, in appendix 8 no less than the Farnese sculpture of Hercules. A photograph providing ‘Supplementary Instruction in Asana’ (appendix 12) depicts three positions, ‘The Dying Buddha’, ‘The Hanged Man’, and ‘The Corpse’. As post-meditation poses that encourage the practitioner to mimic the body in death they are symbolic of the A.A.’s training in a kind of positive acquiescence of the material realities of corporeal existence, and thereby of embodied thinking. W.B. Yeats, perhaps the most famous recipient of the Steinach Procedure whose treatment was administered by Norman Haire in April 1934, serves as an example of the physical benefits of sexual rejuvenation. In September of the same year Yeats embarked on relationship with twenty-seven year old Margot Ruddock; Yeats was, at this time, sixty-nine. The apparent success of the operation has since served critics as a metaphor for the pattern of peak-trough-peak in the poet’s work. In this roll of rejuvenation strategies, insofar as they are turning inward and seeking to augment the body for a more active, self-producing

role as the generator of life, the A.A. is, I think, a fitting companion. But physical culture was not simply about producing physical results, and inducing the ‘more Life’ for a purely medicalised body. Each physical culture strategy sought a corresponding adjustment in the spiritual or emotional life. Resulting from each strategy and surrounding and supporting them are clarifying narratives.

Eugen Sandow’s ideas were disseminated and practiced via books that outlined exercise courses and supplied elementary anatomical information in accessible ways. Cardboard pull-out bodies with overlays of the skeletal and muscular systems, for instance. *Life is Movement: The Physical Construction and Regeneration of the People (A Diseaseless World)* (1920) is the focus here, and is representative of his work.⁹² A skim through the *The Equinox* Liber documents (in which the body becomes a focus, see subsequent section) and *Life is Movement* (1920) makes clear that, if not exactly sharing a primary market, the two publications are distinctly similar products, in respect to the body. Both contain numerous photographs, particularly of their authors, or in Crowley’s case editor and major contributor, and both feature a strong narrative vein to which these photographs, a selection of which are included as appendices 5-13, contribute. Photographs of *The Equinox* have a crucial practical role and are included with instructional pieces demonstrating elements of posture techniques. Likewise, *Life is Movement* features images of a posed Sandow exhibiting the desired muscular

⁹² Eugen Sandow, *On Physical Training: A Study in the Perfect Type of Human Form*, ed. G. Mercer Adan (London: [n. pub.], 1896); *Strength and How to Obtain It* (London: [n. pub.], 1897); *The Construction and Reconstruction of the Human Body: A Manual of the Therapeutics of Exercise*, (London: [n. pub.], 1907); *Body-Building, or, Man in the Making: How to Become Healthy and Strong* (London: [n. pub.], 1919); *Life is Movement: The Physical Reconstruction and Regeneration of the People (A Diseaseless World)* (Herts:[n. pub.], 1920); and monthly journal *Sandow’s Magazine of Physical Culture* (1899-1904), after 1904 the magazine continued weekly as *Physical Culture* (1905-1907).

frame in a variety of flexed and relaxed positions (appendix 9). Both function as exercise manuals and, particularly applicable to *Life is Movement*, as a prospectus for the Physical Culture lifestyle. For instance, as evidence of the success of his training regimes, Sandow included testimonials and before-and-after photographs of his trainees, photographs of contest winners, and of assorted fine specimens he had encountered on his national and world-wide travels (appendix 6).

The thread of personal narrative is conducive to the promotional role of the books, and is overtly present in *Life is Movement*. It includes a supplementary chapter entitled ‘Eugen Sandow: Life of the Author as told in Photographs’ that is a kind of annotated album documenting his increasing physical prowess; the life of the body of the author (Appendices 7, 8, 9).⁹³ In *The Equinox* too, Crowley’s own career is a continual guiding presence in the serialisation of ‘Solomon the King’, in his own words, the story of Crowley’s revival; in his diary of a magical retirement appended to Volume 1, Number 1; and in his poetry, read in Chapter Four.⁹⁴ The point to emphasise here is that it is not so much the books themselves that are on offer, but the lifestyle that can be accessed through them: physical, and magical culture the ideal; the community; the instruction; the contests and rewards; the endorsed products; the whole material and embodied culture. Striking in both *The Equinox* and *Life is Movement* is the way physical culture is embedded in historical culture as a means of representation.

⁹³ *Life is Movement*, pp. 482-500.

⁹⁴ ‘The Temple of Solomon the King: Part I’, *Equinox* I: I (1909), 141-233; ‘The Temple of Solomon the King, Part II’, *Equinox* I: II (1909), 217-335; and, ‘John. St. John’, *Equinox* I: I (1909), [supplement] 1-139.

Broussais' aphorisms on the behaviour of cells, earlier quoted, have already signalled an association between classical civilisation and physical culture; the cell's wider environment is imagined as a happy and efficient culture, moreover, a republican culture. Sandow's narrative to the first of the images that appear in the photographic supplement 'Life of the Author as told in Photographs' is clear on the early influence of classical depictions of the human physique in his life and career (appendix 7). As a boy he was 'delicate', explains the caption to the first image, but, enthused by the statues of classical heroes he developed an ambition, 'to become as well-developed and strong as they were'. In the second Sandow is pictured at 18 wearing a leotard with animal skin detail as if in the manner of a young gladiator. His robust posture, leotard and leather sandals contrast with the grey suit of the young Prussian boy. Once established, a host of other images, beyond those supplied here, take up this theme: notably appendix 9 in which he appears in Romanesque sandals, an animal print under pant, and is flanked by an architectural pillar suggestive of a classical mode; and in appendix 8 Sandow in imitation of Farnese's statue of Hercules, is presented alongside a rear view of the original statue for the purposes of comparison, the notes point out that 'many say that the Author's proportions are the more symmetrical of the two'.

The classical referents function firstly to associate the physical culturist with strength and heroism, and secondly to reinforce the function of physical culture and the individual within it. Recalling Lloyd George's words, 'You cannot maintain an A1 Empire with a C3 population', physical culture is entrenched in the image of a civilisation at its apex (as British society was strongly felt to be in its decline

phase, the implications of history regarding the fall of the Roman Empire appear not to unsettle Sandow's confidence). The themed staging of these images turns the Broussais aphorism, and the principles behind cellular theory outwards towards what Sandow called 'a splendid spirit of self-culture' which created the optimum environment for individuals to generate social equilibrium.

Elements of *The Equinox* photographs allude more specifically to Ancient Egyptian culture, see, for example, the photograph supporting 'Supplementary Instruction in Asana' (appendix 12). Depicted are the three positions, 'The Dying Buddha', 'The Hanged Man', and 'The Corpse'. The leopard hide upon which Crowley rests post-mediation, and which is seen in the photographs of the preceding discussion, establishes a comparable cultural reference to that of Sandow (see appendix 12). But two pillars, one white and one black, the base of each bearing lotus flower detail establish Egyptian culture as the referent. More specifically, the colours of the pillars that frame Crowley represent white and goetic magic, the two pillars of Hermetic Magic. In staging this way the physical culture aspect of the A.A., the photograph encourages in one sense a desire to make a similar association with an historical culture, as did Sandow, and thereby discloses a further kinship with physical culture. In another way, by staging the physical culture element thus, the A.A. symbolically returns the body of the magician to his occult heritage. Significantly, however, this return happens *after* he has explored the range of physical culture experiences. In the smaller context of the exercise outlined, Crowley has reminded the student that 'bodily health is almost essential and should be carefully guarded' and led them through a range of physical culture-style

exercises: regularisation of breathing; posture; and, in a note, makes the student aware of a body-reform procedure which severs the tongue's fraenum linguae.⁹⁵ The results produced and evidenced by the photographs have included an equilibrated energised state and the spasmodic trembling, registered by the camera, of the body's motor-economy in action.

That the body now lies exhausted, but rejuvenated, amongst an assemblage of props that reinforces not only that occult theurgy and physical culture were participating in a common project, but that through this participation the A.A. was transforming the place of the body in traditional occult thought. Theurgy is defined as 'a system of magic, originally practiced by the Egyptian Platonists, to procure communication with beneficent spirits, and by their aid produce miraculous effects'.⁹⁶ By framing the end of Liber E in this way the physical culture work of the A.A. is confirmed as an occult undertaking.

Described firstly above is the process whereby the physical body of the occultist acquires a place in the history of the magical revival which had been denied it overwhelmingly by contemporary magicians, and lately by present-day cultural historians. Secondly, the significant characteristics found within, and accrued by that body, in the years 1900-1930, a time of heightened interest in the corporeal and ideological limits of the body and the achievement and connotations of heath. If occultism is accepted as marked by contemporaneousness as well as

⁹⁵ The idea of this was this is that breathing is encouraged through the throat rather than the nostrils, although Crowley advised against it because nothing could be learnt by 'cheating difficulties'.

⁹⁶ *OED* 1. [electronic version] <<http://www.dictionary.oed.com/>> [accessed 20 December 2006].

traditionalism and attention is paid to the relative influences of each category, unforeseen and unexplored aspects of magical practice are brought to the fore of the cultural history of the magical revival. In this case, the somatic exercises of the Astrum Argentum are revealed to have been closely informed by contemporary, and popular, enthusiasm for body-reform. Physical culture, it is argued *pace* Armstrong, denotes a new desire to achieve a whole body-mind experience of physical living that eschews short-term repair, or localised improvement in favour of holistic existence. Significantly, the focus on physical culture highlights the Astrum Argentum's redoubled efforts towards regeneration in a way that appears to work counter to the principles of magic, in the context of occult tradition, but current and critical in the social and cultural context of inter-war Britain. In seeking knowledge of the powers constituting their being, those participating in the discrete practical sessions set out by the Astrum Argentum are experimenting by externalising, internalising, and ultimately embodying a process of evolution refined. They can be seen therefore to be carrying forward the principles previously explored by the Golden Dawn, but the occult body is afforded a new autonomy by its being embedded in medical and physical culture. The Astrum Argentum found the body to be very much internal to, and enabling of magic. The Order lifts the body out of the magical tradition freeing it from any undue religiosity or reverence, reinvigorates it, bodily, with the technologies of intervention proposed and practiced within contemporary strategies, and conceptually via Physical Culture, and returns it rehabilitated to magical tradition.

It can be argued, therefore, that 1900-1930 sees a concept of the 'occult body' emerge for the first time, distinct from both the astral body, and the physical body. As the site in which a regenerated subjectivity is formed, the occult body is the embodiment of the principals of the magical revival. For Yeats embarking upon Eastern meditations in 1906 the 'object' was 'to lay hands upon some dynamic and substantialising force'. He distinguishes this aim from the pursuit of a 'quiescent and supersensualizing' state of the soul. In the description put forward in this chapter, the occult body is not only made the focus, but is the source and resource of the crucial 'substantialising force' and its marks the accomplishment of the will to effect, in Yeats' words, 'a movement downwards upon life'.⁹⁷ Although the stated aim throughout the magical revival, this thesis as a whole suggests that the objective is ever more the foundation of magical activity after 1900. The successes, in reality, of such endeavours are uncertain. As the chapter commenced with a frustration, it will have to conclude with one; lasting successes amongst the magicians who sought true regeneration cannot be verified, quantified, or qualified. However, for William James all apprehension or appreciation of the fuller life, regardless of outcome, be it displayed in mindsets ranging from general healthy-mindedness, to conversion, to saintliness, and regeneration, is itself 'more' life in motion. Whatever the lasting results of rejuvenation on Aleister Crowley, and these seem doubtful, experience is in-eradicable as the final chapter will discuss.

⁹⁷ Allan Wade (ed.), *The Letters of W.B. Yeats* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 469.

Chapter 4

‘The Method of Science, The Aim of Religion’:
The Equinox, a testament to the occult experience

Writing under the pseudonym Jacob Tonson, Arnold Bennett reviewed the first number of *The Equinox* for his popular ‘Books and Persons’ column, in the weekly *New Age* magazine. The review begins:

A finely unpopular magazine, just out, is ‘The Equinox’. It is a venture of that philosopher-errant, Mr Aleister Crowley. It appears twice a year, at five shillings a time, and is large and luxurious. It is a ‘review of scientific illuminism,’ and also ‘the official organ of the A.A.’ I will not murmur on this too exoteric page the secret significance of ‘A.A.’ To discover it you must spend a crown.¹

In his customary sardonic fashion, Bennett introduces *The Equinox* as something of an oddity. He describes the particulars of the journal and misses no opportunity to query its seriousness of purpose. It is, explains Bennett, to be published biennially, or rather it ‘appears’ implying ‘as if by magic’, twice yearly. Its price of five shillings ‘at a time’ is emphasised, dispelling any potential for misunderstanding that a crown might secure the payer a subscription to multiple issues rather than to a

¹ Jacob Tonson, ‘Books and Persons’, *New Age*, 25 March (1909), p. 445. The *New Age*, subtitled ‘An Independent Socialist Review of Politics, Literature, and Art’, was a renowned London weekly that was formative in the naissance of Socialism. Edited principally by A.R. Orage (Holbrook Jackson left the co-editorship after one year), the journal, under Orage, ran from 1907-1922. Contributions on social, political and ethical subjects were regularly provided by notables such as: George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Richard Aldington, and Florence Farr.

single one, and perhaps also to draw a comparison with the *New Age* that, in 1909, cost one penny. Its physical dimensions and appearance are gently mocked in the languid consonance of ‘large and luxurious’, and the project of ‘that philosopher-errant’ as a whole is anticipated to fail in the word ‘venture’. *The Equinox* is presented as a publication both out of step with the economies of modern printing practice, and, through Bennett’s ironic deprecation of the *New Age*’s ‘too exoteric page[s]’, as a publication whose outdated content is counter to the demands of a politically and culturally aware readership such as that of the *New Age*.

And yet, a short story by Frank Harris, entitled ‘The Magic Glasses’, gives Bennett cause to write in the same review, ‘with a due sense of responsibility’, that ‘this is the finest story that Frank Harris has written’. His emphatic promotion of the story goes on: ‘It must be read. It cannot be left unread’; ‘this tale really is something that errs from the common’; ‘a morsel for persons of taste’. Possibly, the succession of accolades reads as sarcasm, but Bennett’s closing comment, ‘If “The Equinox” can live up to this standard it will be bought by the profane’, suggests that he finds in Crowley’s magazine something tempting and interesting.² That *The Equinox* review is preceded in the same column of the same date by observational commentary regarding the banality of popular magazine fiction only serves to enhance the point by comparison. Bennett’s short review captures the peculiarity of *The Equinox*: anachronistic in terms of design and circulation, and surely repellent, in that case, to a modern and progressive readership, and yet offering a piece of fiction capable of exciting the jaded Jacob Tonson.

² *NA*, p. 445.

This chapter pays close attention to the paradoxical appeal of the journal. Since Bennett, scant attention has been paid to the journal, either in terms of its importance in the tradition of modern Western magic, or in terms of its contribution to cultural life more widely; just three scholars have made reference to it, and in each case, only briefly. In *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (2004), Alex Owen discusses Aleister Crowley's career at length. She quotes once from the journal to show Crowley's astral projection technique, and in her only direct reference to it calls it 'an ambitious, well-produced periodical dedicated to the serious discussion of the occult arts'.³ Likewise, Ronald Hutton quotes from the journal in *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (1999), but a description of the context of the quotation is not necessary for his purposes.⁴ Timothy D'Arch Smith's chapter "'The Books of the Beast": Prolegomena to a Bibliography of Aleister Crowley' (1987) has a different methodology to which context is more important the content. D'Arch Smith, historian of book printing, considers, with reference to the Golden Dawn system, the 'intrinsic symbolism' embedded in Crowley's entire catalogue of published works, *The Equinox* included.⁵

As Bennett and Owen have intimated, the journal is multifaceted. Of necessity, not all of the journal's elements can be described and analysed here, and

³ Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 152 & 192.

⁴ Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 176.

⁵ Timothy D'Arch Smith, "'The Books of the Beast": Prolegomena to a Bibliography of Aleister Crowley', *The Books of the Beast: Essays on Aleister Crowley, Montague Summers, Francis Barrett and Others* (London: Crucible, 1987), pp. 13-48, (p. 14).

those considered to have the most significance in terms of highlighting the internal developments of the magical revival are given the most space. The magical allegories, and the ritualised dramas designed to be appropriated by readers in accordance with their magical aspirations, have not been covered here. However, the first part of this chapter endeavours to give an overview of the journal's standard contents. It outlines its relation to the A.A. with which it was published in association, and its relation to occult periodical publication more generally. It will suffice at present to confirm Bennett's description of the journal and emphasise that it was produced by the magical order of Crowley's devising, the A.A.

Two further parts build on the background presented in part i. A sense of the nature of instructional material included in *The Equinox* will have been gleaned from Chapter Three, as from part i. For the purposes of this chapter a working distinction is adopted between the 'wisdom' texts, and the rest of the journal. The first of these terms is borrowed from Garth Fowden's *The Egyptian Hermes* (1986), in which he identifies a number of genres within the texts included in the 'technical' Hermetica, of which wisdom is one. Fowden himself prefers 'instructions' over 'wisdom', as the second suggests a too blunt association with the better-known philosophical Hermetica and it is, in part, the purpose of his study to understand the historical complexities of the relationship between the two Hermetica. 'Wisdom' nonetheless serves this chapter well implying as it does that these texts address themselves to the description of magical processes and the imparting of knowledge.⁶ However, the unease Fowden feels in applying the term 'wisdom'

⁶ Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

across the range of texts in the *Hermetica* will have resonance for the discussion in part ii; *The Equinox*, like the technical *Hermetica*, privileges study, over doctrinal philosophy, as the route to regeneration. Arnold Bennett's description of the journal as 'a finely unpopular magazine' serves as the heading under which the poetry of *The Equinox* will be discussed, and the journal's production and design. These headings organise the chapter, but they are united in its broad aim, to suggest the significance of the journal within the culture of regeneration.

In Chapter Three it was suggested that, in its treatment and conceptualisation of the body, twentieth-century occultism moves closely in line with medical science in marking a development of social thought away from degeneration, towards regeneration. The degeneration theorists' singular focus on how not to live is replaced by more speculative consideration of the question how to live. This section considers, from the viewpoint of philosopher and psychologist, William James, the function of religion in early twentieth-century life. James was clear that purely philosophical, and equally, purely psychological understandings of religion were inappropriate, and in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) advocates an empirical approach through which to test the validity of religion as a mode of life, or strategy for living. The relevance of *Varieties* for *The Equinox* is twofold. Firstly it demonstrates the important terms of the new type of thinking in which *The Equinox* participated. Aleister Crowley was clearly influenced by James' book and quotes liberally from it in an early *Equinox* text. Secondly, James' privileging of the contours of experience over orthodox religion allowed different 'varieties' (his use of 'varieties' over 'types' captures the sense of degeneration supplanted) of

religious life to be expanded and the regeneration of the sick soul emerges as a central experience. In his explication of this theme he suggests questions which can be taken to the 'wisdom' texts of *The Equinox* and the occult practices of the A.A. in order to reach an understanding of process of regeneration in twentieth-century occultism. What particularly were the occultists seeking to regenerate to, and what away from? How did they envisage this happening: suddenly in a revelatory manner, or more gradually, or in clearly defined stages? Who, or what, if anything would be their guide in this?

The question of who, or what, would provide inspiration and support is part of the concern of part iii. This section looks at the remainder of *The Equinox*, those texts which do not obviously impart knowledge or instruct, but which invite interpretation in the context of the regeneration goals of the whole. And the journal as artefact, to which Bennett draws attention, must also be addressed for its distinctly un-modern appearance in relation to Crowley's belief that 'with this publication begins a completely new adventure in the history of mankind'.⁷ The aim of this section will be to ask: To what extent does the journal's anachronistic look and multifaceted composition militate against the claims for simplicity and accessibility of regeneration made by the order in support of which it was produced?

⁷ 'Editorial', *Equinox* I: I, (1909), pp. 1-3 (p. 1).

i. The aims of the A.A. and a brief description of *The Equinox*

In the *Confessions*, Crowley wrote of *The Equinox*: 'I arranged for it to contain something like a complete programme of my proposal Operation to initiate, emancipate and relieve mankind'.⁸ This ambition is also the goal of the Astrum Argentum, or Order of the Silver Star. Crowley, having left the Golden Dawn during its reshuffle, began to conceive of the ideals of the A.A. during a celebration of the autumn equinox. He and his old Golden Dawn mentor, George Cecil Jones, performed a pared down version the Golden Dawn's equinox ritual and thereafter set about a comprehensive revision of the G.D. teachings, 'eliminating all unnecessary features and quintessentializing the magical fomulae'.⁹ Although a good deal of the allegorical language and structure had to remain in the magical texts, in order that their symbolic narrative function properly, the A.A. was intended to offer a purer and modernised magical system stripped of the ornament of the Golden Dawn. Alluding to the Golden Dawn and orthodox religion in 'An Account of A.A.', Crowley justifies the reconstitution of the A.A., in the early twentieth century, on the grounds that the 'external form' of religion has become removed from its 'inner truth'.¹⁰ The A.A. was reconstructed in order to meet a fundamental spiritual need that was not currently being catered for.

⁸ Aleister Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography*, ed. by John Symonds and Kenneth Grant (London: Penguin Arkana, 1989), p. 841. The first two parts of Crowley's autobiography were first published as two separate volumes titled *The Spirit of Solitude* (1929) in allusion to Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Alastor, Or, the Spirit of Solitude' (1815).

⁹ *Confessions*, p. 532.

¹⁰ 'An Account of A.A.', *Equinox*, I: I, (1909), pp. 5-13, (pp. 9-10).

For the A.A. reinvigorating occult religion meant placing renewed emphasis on the methods of accessing the rite, over the practice of ritual and the observance of doctrine. This put the individual experience at the centre of magic. The A.A. and *The Equinox* were run with a commitment to inclusion just as had been the Theosophical Society. This meant making the order as accessible as possible to interested people from diverse walks of life, minimising potential barriers to entry, and generally downplaying its function as a magical order in the traditional sense. It also meant that the magical texts that would supply the detail of its teaching would have to take the initiates themselves within reach of their own truths and effect their own regeneration without the need, in every case, of an intermediary officiator. In respect to the first, in practice this meant doing away with the Flying Roll-style document distributed on application and by circulation among members, and replacing it instead with a publication available for purchase by all. Likewise, it meant avoiding too specialised terminology and where possible using ‘the simplest available language’. Although as the Tonson review pointed out, the journal was costly: Crowley’s ideal of inclusiveness was not in practice entirely what it was in principle. Later editorials do however make reference to the A.A. lending library. Also featured are appeals for readers, as they progress through the system, to pass back their second-hand copies of *The Equinox*, so as to make them available to readers unable or unwilling to purchase their own. This appeal extended to the numerous additional titles which an A.A. member found on their recommended reading list. Likewise, the first issue declared Crowley’s intention to set up a laboratory for use by Brothers wishing to carry out ‘experiments as require too

much time and toil to suit with their ordinary life', although it is unclear whether this plan reached fruition.¹¹

In respect to the second facet of this commitment, the first editorial for *The Equinox* explained the principles behind the journal's editorial policy:

With the publication of this review begins a completely new adventure in the history of mankind. Whatever knowledge may have been imputed to men, it has always been fenced in with conditions and restrictions. The time has come to speak plainly, and so far as may be in the language of the multitude [...]

But the Brothers of the A.A. make no mystery; They give you not only the Text, but the Comment; not only the Comment, but the Dictionary, the Grammar, and the Alphabet.¹²

Formally announcing the formation of the A.A., Crowley explains that in *The Equinox*, unlike in the texts of previous magical orders, the magical instruction will be supplemented with comment and carefully explained methods of experiment to ensure that initiates were able to formulate their understanding of the magical tradition as it pertained to their personal development. This support took the form of 'Postcards to Probationers' which contained encouraging messages and hints for practice, and substantial supplements appended to editions showing Crowley's own workings and records of magical experiences such as 'John St. John'. Other editing quirks exist that suggest that Crowley thought himself a moderniser of magic. In 'Account of the A.A.', Crowley appears to have thought it necessary to update Eckhardston's *The Cloud upon the Sanctuary*, a text that A. E. Waite and Crowley held to be the text that revealed to them their own magical aspirations, by changing the major share of appearances of the words 'ripe' or 'ripeness' to read 'fit' or

¹¹ 'Editorial', *Equinox*, I: I (1909), p. 3.

¹² 'Editorial', *Equinox*, I: I, (1909), pp. 1-2.

‘fitness’ a modification perhaps designed to suggest the relevance of magic in the era of reconstruction.¹³

The scientific method of the A.A. should also be introduced at this point. ‘The Method of Science, The Aim of Religion’ that supplies part of the title for this chapter is also the motto of the A.A. and appears on the title page of each edition of *The Equinox* along with its subtitle ‘A Review of Scientific Illuminism’. In the motto claimed Crowley ‘(if rightly interpreted) all is expressed’.¹⁴ Crowley was, it seems, partial to attaching monikers to the various magical procedures of his reinvention, nowhere more evident than in his adoption of the archaic spelling of ‘Magick’ used in Renaissance grimoires and particularly associated with the Enochian system developed by Dr John Dee. His preference for such terms was certainly bound up with his conscious restyling of occultism for what he hoped would be a new and expanding public interest. Crowley’s own efforts on this front with the A.A. had a broader context in the early twentieth-century occult community. For the duration of its publication 1906-1928, *The Occult Review*, under the editorship of Ralph Shirley, dealt with identical concerns and sustained lively debate regarding the provenance and future of occultism. The first *Occult Review* made the familiar claims to ‘deal on scientific lines with subjects which

¹³ This desire to broaden the appeal of occultism is further seen in Crowley’s attempts to arrange a ‘scheme of co-operation’ between *The Equinox*, *The Occult Review*, and *The English Review* with a view to promoting occult literature. Ralph Shirley, the editor of *OR* was apparently enthusiastic to participate but editor of *ER*, Austin Harrison, was unwilling. *Confessions* records that Crowley thought this was senseless: ‘His ignorance of the importance of the occult public was not merely complete, but invulnerable to all information. I gave him the figures. I proved that for one person who cared for poetry, there were at least a thousand whose only form of reading was spiritualism, theosophy, psychical research, Magick, Yoga, mysticism, Christian Science, and its congeners, occult freemasonry, etc., etc. [...] His very secretaries rose up against him and confirmed my statement’, (p. 895).

¹⁴ ‘Editorial’, *Equinox*, I. I (1909), p. 2.

have fallen into disrepute', and paraphrases a congratulatory letter from occultist and physicist Sir Oliver Lodge welcoming the new journal as a potentially 'useful scientific instrument'.¹⁵ The discussion was opened by the controversial contribution, 'A Commercial View of The Occult' by F.C.S. Schiller which provoked a flurry of letters to the editor from readers who had seemingly failed to appreciate its semi-serious tone. In an amusing inversion of the general trend towards the demystifying occultism Schiller complains that 'Nowadays [...] even magic is in danger of becoming serious, of being separated from the congenial company of its congeners and rendered scientific!', and concedes that 'the occasion is appropriate for considering how the inevitable process of rendering the "occult" to humdrum "science" may be forwarded.'¹⁶ For Schiller the key to establishing occultism as a science lies in its commercial success, and, Schiller adds, vice versa. Schiller's argument is parodic but it encapsulates the concerns of an occult movement self-consciously positioning itself within the broader cultural movements of the era.

*

The astronomical event that lent its name to *The Equinox* provided something more than a moniker. It also inspired and governed *The Equinox*'s precise dates of publication. The magazine was first issued to coincide with the vernal equinox of 1909, and all subsequent editions were published either on 21 March to fall on that spring equinox, or at the autumnal equinox which falls on or around 22

¹⁵ 'Editorial', *Occult Review*, I: I (1906), 1-2, pp 1-2.

¹⁶ F.C.S. Schiller, 'A Commercial View of The Occult', *Occult Review*, I: I (1905), 13-18, (p. 18).

September.¹⁷ Crowley's choice of dates is significant, and he drew attention to them by suffixing each volume and issue designation on the title pages and spine with the appropriate astronomical symbols for the equinoctial month in question: ☉ in ♈ (Sun in Aries), and ☉ in ♎ (Sun in Libra). According to the astronomical calendar, equinox, meaning 'equal night', is the point at which the ecliptic and celestial equator intercept; twelve hours of daylight and twelve hours of darkness occur with the sun rising exactly in the east and setting exactly in the west. Signalling the start of European summertime the vernal equinox is, more specifically, also the first point of Aries expressed as, 0^h RA, 0°DEC, the origin of the celestial co-ordinate system and indicating the point of equilibrium between Right Ascension and Declination.¹⁸ Each volume and issue also displayed the year of publication, twice. Once in roman numerals, thus MCMIX as might be expected for the first edition. And a second time: An. V, again for the first edition of 1909; An. VI for Volume I, Numbers III and IV of 1910, and so on. Both the specificity of the equinoxes as publication dates, and the double record of the year have significance beyond their apparent affectation. The astronomical and magical significance of the biennial equinoxes, particularly the vernal, lies firstly in their marking a moment of equilibrium, secondly in marking the intersection between the terrestrial and

¹⁷ The journal's original print run was 1909-1919. Ten numbers were issued in volume I (1909-1913), and only one number was issued in volume III (1919). According to Crowley, the wisdom demands that five years of speech must be followed by five years of silence. Consequently, the five year interim period in which Volume 2 Numbers I-X ought to have appeared saw no publication. Nonetheless, Volume II Numbers I-X is referred to as the 'volume of silence'. See: *Confessions*, p. 791.

¹⁸ In the celestial coordinate system (a method by which stars and planets are positioned), Right Ascension is the equivalent of longitude and is the projection of those longitudinal lines onto the sky and is measured in units of time (1 hour = 15 degrees) starting from the first point of Aries. An object's RA (and DEC) is fixed in relation to the stars that, unlike planets, do not move on the celestial plane, and RA increases towards the east. Measurement can also be taken using RA and Declination (DEC) whereby the celestial poles at a declination of 90° N and 90° S and is measured in degrees, arc-minutes, and arc-seconds North or South from the celestial equator.

celestial realms, and thirdly, and consequently, in denoting a new astronomical cycle. The reason for the odd expression of the year is found in the *Confessions* and is related to a publication of Crowley's that preceded *The Equinox*, *The Book of The Law*, published in 1904. Crowley held the belief that a new Aeon of Horus was dawning in the Western world that was to supplant the existing era, which he termed 'Era Vulgaris' (the abbreviation 'e.v.' frequently appears in Crowley's writing). This began in 1904, hence, 1909 was year five of the new aeon.¹⁹ The meaning of equinox in astronomical terms also had magical significance for Crowley as all magical practice was underpinned by the belief in the co-existence of the two spheres, one worldly and one Astral, and by the belief that the latter could be penetrated. That the equinox signifies equilibrium is also appropriate for Crowley insisted that the starting point of any magical undertaking be the achievement of an acute emotional and physical balance. Furthermore, the equinox's actual function in commencing a new astronomical phase gives it a powerful suggestive function so that by publishing *The Equinox* at the two equinoxes Crowley appears to offer each edition of the journal as a new phase of magical endeavour, redoubling the experience and knowledge of the preceding phase in the next.²⁰

¹⁹ Part 3 of the *Confessions*, 'The Advent of the Aeon of Horus', records the episode in Crowley's life in which he struggled to understand the implications of *The Book of Law*. According to Crowley's account a praetor-natural being named Aiwaz (or Aiwass) transmitted the book to Crowley over a number of invocation sittings in April 1904 through 'Ouarda' Crowley's wife Rose Kelly.

²⁰ Timothy D'Arch Smith also notes that the spines and title-pages of *The Equinox* bear the sigils of the sun, Aries and Libra. He makes a further suggestion regarding the significance of the specific dating pointing out that the Golden Dawn conducted a twice-yearly Ceremony of the Equinox to reaffirm the aims of the order and to appoint new leaders. D'Arch Smith's bibliographical survey of Crowley's written works explains that as well as a preference for publishing at the equinoxes, Crowley also evinces a predilection for the summer and winter solstices. See: D'Arch Smith, pp. 17-18.

Unlike the numerous contemporary journals dealing with occult subjects that appeared between 1880 and 1920 and enjoyed varying degrees of longevity, notably *The Occult Magazine* (1885-6), *Lucifer* (1887-1897), *The Theosophical Review* (1897-1909), *The Theosophical Chronicle* (1905-1914), *Quest* (1909-1930), *Occult Review* (1906-1938), which were published in soft booklet form with dense text in accordance with the economies of modern printing, *The Equinox* was weighty and handsome and typically ran to over 300 pages. Weighty to the point, in fact, of being almost unmanageable as Crowley found when he sent to press the edition of March 1912. The volume was simply too hefty for a sole firm to handle, particularly within the strictures of the equinoctial issue schedule, thus forcing Crowley to have the front matter, pages 1-248, and pages 355-400a printed by Turnbull and Spears, Edinburgh, and the remainder by his preferred press, The Chiswick Press, London.²¹ It was also printed on paper bearing chain lines and watermarks more usually suited to quality book publishing, and every edition included photographs and colour plates, and displays evidence of attention to typography and page layout.

Those contemporary titles cited catered to a relatively broad audience which is not the principal impression given by *The Equinox*. *The Occult Review*, for example, accepted contributions from a variety of occult amateurs and ‘professionals’ which were more or less scholarly in nature, as well as articles and reviews from commentators with an interest in questions of modern spirituality but with less formal sympathy with occultism *per se*: Holbrook Jackson, for instance,

²¹ See: front matter of *Equinox*, I. VII (1912).

then editor of the *New Age* frequently contributed pieces to it. *The Occult Review* also appeared to count among its readership men and women with a residual interest in spiritualism and psychical research and tolerated, and later encouraged, the submission of readers' accounts of supernatural experiences. Later issues ran a sort of paranormal problem page whereby readers could send in accounts of their strange dreams and curious encounters enclosed with a coupon cut out from the pages of the journal entitling their story to a personal analysis from the house expert. *Lucifer* frequently included short stories with theosophical themes, such as those discussed in Chapter 1, but on the whole, of the rest, was unique in this. In the main, *The Equinox's* contemporary publications were designed to inform its readers of the scope of occult research, comment on the relevance of occultism to current affairs, and advertise events and new publications which were agreed to hold some of degree of interest to the occult-minded.

In contrast *The Equinox* has a decidedly more clubbish air, and unsurprisingly so because it was, as Bennett pointed out, the mouthpiece of the A.A. It was, in essence, a curriculum of study to be built up in instalments in order to guide an initiate through the process of initiation. In compliance with this, its formal role, it published magical texts, and commentary thereon, and instructions for elementary occult experiments in, for example, Tarot divination and clairvoyance. A strongly celebratory and comic dynamic is also present. For example, Crowley's professional dislike for his old Golden Dawn colleague, Arthur Edward Waite, fuelled numerous spoof articles. Crowley also contributed pieces under an array of pseudonyms most notably that of Oliver Haddo in reference to

Somerset Maugham's novel *The Magician* (1908) that featured a black magician of the same name whose supposedly sinister, but in reading somewhat inert, character and exploits Maugham apparently based on Crowley. The cliquishness is further felt in the ruthless and satiric book reviews section which appears to favour an in-group of occultists with associations with the A.A. or with Crowley, and roundly dismisses any outsiders to this; again, Waite's publications do not fair well. The relish with which it was put together is suggested by the names under which it appeared, 'Stop Press Reviews' in Volume I, Numbers II and III, and obtaining the name 'The Big Stick' in Number IV onwards. Likewise the considerable poetic and fictional prose content, which with the partial exception of *Lucifer* was not a feature of the other occult periodicals, is either celebratory of occultism or offers cautionary tales regarding the life lived without its influence. Thematically, these contributions emphasise fellowship and brotherhood, and will be the subject of part iii.

ii. The wisdom texts

William James and religious experience

William James' path-finding research on the contours of religious experience does not immediately present itself as a likely relation to that of the rejuvenation specialists introduced in the previous chapter. James' reputation is generally held to rest on his scholarly negotiations of what Gerald E. Myers explains is the 'historically intimate but logically uncertain relationship between philosophy and

psychology'.²² Concerning this, or contributing to one or other of the subjects, James published several seminal titles of which *Principles of Psychology* (1890) is widely recognised as his major work.²³ However, his most popular publication begins with a chapter that clearly establishes a link. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* was published in 1902 and compiled from the series of twenty Gifford Lectures given by James at the University of Edinburgh during his tenure of the Gifford Professorship on Natural Religion in 1901 and 1902. Chapter 1, 'Religion and Neurology', criticises the tendency to forge psychophysical connections between mind and body that James termed in *Varieties* 'medical materialism'. The postulate of medical materialism that was current in the field of psychology in turn-of-the-century Britain and America held that every mental state, healthy or morbid, was the result of an organic condition. To borrow James' disingenuous application of the theory in further explanation, this meant that, for example, 'George Fox's discontent with the shams of his age, and his pining for spiritual veracity' is understood to be 'the symptom of a disordered colon' and 'Carlyle's organ-tones of misery it accounts for by a gastro-duodenal catarrh'.²⁴ Concluding his mock exposition of the medical materialist position he anticipates the work of Steinach *et al* in his summary: 'All such mental over-tensions, it says, are, when you come to the bottom the matter, 'mere affairs of

²² Gerald E. Meyers, 'Introduction: The Intellectual Context', *The Works of William James, The Principles of Psychology, Volume 1*, ed. by Frederick H Burkhardt and others (Harvard MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1981).

²³ For the best overview of the career of William James, including those interests and influences such as Psychical Research that scholarship has tended to play down or ignore, see the introductory essays to the various volumes the Harvard edition of collected works. See, as above.

²⁴ William James (1902), *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York and London: Penguin, 1982), p. 13. All page references to the main text of *Varieties* relate to this Penguin edition.

diathesis (auto-intoxications most probably), due to the perverted action of various glands which physiology will yet discover'.²⁵

In light of the foregoing discussion of the rejuvenation experts' work in the emerging discipline of the life sciences it might be pointed out that James does them something of a disservice in placing their research in exclusive service of materialist classificatory medical and psychological systems. Their working hypothesis was predicated not on a taxonomical compulsion to expose the magnitude of disease and the scale and types of deficiency, with all its attendant moral implications, but on the belief that a solution existed. Importantly, in attempting to prove the solution they demanded a new understanding of deficiency. No longer understood in terms of an aberration of the moral fibre, deficiency was newly located in a circuit of bodily energy whose functions and malfunctions were only just beginning to be understood, and that could be caused to regenerate itself. Regardless of the value James did, or did not, see in the rejuvenation scientists, the mention of them in here is significant as it brings into clearer focus an overlooked intellectual context of *Varieties*.²⁶ And it shows that in the early twentieth century, the categories of material, and spiritual were still pertinent to the cause of defining human nature.

²⁵ *Varieties*, p. 13.

²⁶ As suggested, it is most likely owing to the impact of James' ideas on the conceptualisation of boundaries between subjects and, consequently on the organisation of the modern American academy, that has meant that disciplines remain the most frequently addressed context for studies of James' scholarship. Likewise, as will be addressed, *Varieties* suggested a framework of religion studies. The notable exception to these two dominant interests is the aforementioned Harvard University Press *Works of William James* which includes a volume, *Essays in Psychological Research, 1884-1909 c.* This volume has been collated by the series editors from miscellaneous sources collected by or written by James between 1884 and 1909 during which time he was active in the subject. It provides a fascinating complement to James' 'official' interests and holds that James' work in psychical research shows a desire to 'preserve the most valuable features of the of both the scientific and religious perspectives', p. xiii.

The medical materialist approach underpinned the psychopathological texts of Degeneration theory exemplified by Nordau's publication of the same name. Understanding the basis of James' objection to medical materialism helps show the process by which, intellectually, Degeneration was supplanted by Regeneration. Although James' at times insincere tone (as he himself admits when admonishing himself to 'play fair in this whole matter') must be taken into account, substantial connections remain. The former theory was, for James, simple to the point of being reductive and the conclusions it forced regarding his present concern, the religious life, were a case in point. "The liver", he apostrophises, becomes under the medical materialists the determiner of religious conviction, 'When it alters in one way the blood that percolates it, we get the Methodist, when in another way, we get the atheist form of mind.' Moreover, he disliked the value judgement implicit in the postulate, and explained his objection by asking his audience to recall a time in which they dismissed another person's expression of state of mind by saying it was "nothing but", and drawing themselves on the psycho-physical connection.²⁷ This also implied a hierarchy of organs and comparable hierarchy of mental dispositions, even a web of associations that James, a resolute empiricist, could not tolerate in a philosophy. If the alienists Nordau, Charcot and Lambroso were not clearly enough the target of James' complaint, 'one discipline of the school' he explains, 'has striven to impugn the value of works of genius' and the circuitous nature of the disciple's argument is described, Nordau and his 'bulky book' are referenced in the footnotes. Beneath these examples lies a larger objection about what qualifies as religious experience, and the basis of such decisions.

²⁷*Varieties*, p. 14.

At the centre of James' argument with the medical materialists, and so the degeneration theorists, is the question of origin. Or rather, the posing of the question of *origin* (italicised throughout James' chapter) is the problem and is to misdirect philosophical, and psychological, endeavour. On this point James begins to outline the way forward in the elucidation of the religious life of man. James attributes Henry Maudsley with being the 'cleverest of the rebutters of supernatural religion' and shows that even an alienist must concede the ultimate validity of the religious experience. James quotes, "It is the work that is done, and the quality of the worker by which it was done, that is alone of moment", then explains, 'In other words, not its origin, but *the way in which it works on the whole* is Dr. Maudsley's final test of belief'.²⁸ Accordingly, and this is the aspect of *Varieties* which made it popular as well as the aspect that drew the main comment and criticism from his contemporary scholars, James based his study of religion on personal records, or *documents humains*.

James' definition of religion in *Varieties* was '*the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine*', which, as well as being a rebuttal of the degeneration stance, was also a reaction against the predominant intellectual view of the function of religion.²⁹ Indeed, this view, he

²⁸ *Varieties*, p. 19. Maudsley's concession is, however, dubiously expressed in full: 'What right have we to believe Nature under any obligation to do her work by means of complete minds only? She may find an incomplete mind a more suitable instrument for a particular purpose. It is the work that is done, that is alone of moment; and it may be no great matter from a cosmical standpoint, if in other qualities of character he was singularly defective — if indeed he were a hypocrite, adulterer, eccentric, or lunatic.'

²⁹ *Varieties*, p. 31.

suggested, did not properly take into account the question of function. The chapter ‘Circumscription of the Topic’ takes this as its topic and is the perspective more commonly taken as the important context of the thesis of *Varieties*. The force of inquiry into religion was currently directed towards religious doctrine and ideas under what John Smith explains was the ‘Anglo-Saxon tradition of philosophical idealisms stemming from Kant and Hegel’.³⁰ Such a tradition discussed religion in terms of a ‘dialectic of ideas’ and ‘encompass[ed] religion in philosophical theory of reality’.³¹ Religion was, therefore, understood to exist as an abstraction – an abstraction, William James held, of the primary experience, as it were, on the ground. This calls into sharp focus the object of belief. In ‘Reality of the Unseen’ he explains in Kantian terms the space between the object as ‘philosophical idealism’ has it and the object as *Varieties* has it. Objects of religious belief are those ideas to do with ‘God, the design of creation, the soul, its freedom, and the life hereafter’ which doctrine articulates, but which are ‘properly not objects of knowledge at all’ and therefore are devoid of real significance.³² But, of course, the conclusion forced by rationalism which requires, as James later explains ‘that all our beliefs ought ultimately find for themselves articulate grounds’ does by no means disclose the whole picture.³³ Returning to Kant, these technically senseless objects do have practical meaning, and they translate into faith because of this: ‘We can act as *if* there were a God [...] consider Nature as *if* she were full of special designs’.³⁴ To be clear, James is not aligning his view with that of Kant’s

³⁰ John E. Smith, ‘Introduction’, *The Varieties of Religious Experience, The Works of William James*, ed. by Frederick H. Burkhardt and others (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), xi-xii, (p. xii).

³¹ Smith, p. xii.

³² *Varieties*, pp. 54-55.

³³ *Varieties*, p. 73.

³⁴ *Varieties*, p. 55.

praktischer Hinsicht, but on this point Kant articulates for James a characteristic of religion in practice that highlights its functionality in the every day life of its devotee.

The significance of this understanding of religion as an integration of the abstract into the practice and fabric of life will be further examined for its bearing on the magical texts included in *The Equinox*. Sufficient for the present introduction of *Varieties* however is the nature of the broad project that James was undertaking, and as will be come to shortly, the nature of the structures of varieties of religious life, previously categorised as alien by degeneration theories, that it allowed James to identify and explore. John E. Smith is clear, as is Martin E. Marty and others, that in *Varieties* James addressed himself to an undeniably evolutionary concern. Marty explains that there was a general cultural mood in America, equivalent to that in Britain necessitated by the domestic effects of its overseas conflicts, which precipitated a study such as James' and likely secured its success. In the introduction to the Penguin edition of *Varieties* he highlights that the 'psychology of religion' was beginning to take hold in tandem with the establishment of the discipline of psychology. Crucially, there existed a 'ferment' for which James and contemporaries such as John Dewey, George Santayana, Josiah Royce, and Charles Sander Pierce could take as their subject as "New Theology," "Social Gospel," "New Thought," and "Christian Science" and assorted revivalists were emerging. This is, again, comparable to the various leagues in Britain.³⁵ The dual character of this cultural ferment is also characterised for Marty

³⁵ Martin E. Marty, 'Introduction' *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1982), vii-xxxvi, (p. ix).

by the titles of two publications dealing with turn-of-the-century America: *The Age of Energy* by Howard Mumford Jones, and *A Search for Order* by Robert Wiebe. The first registers the endeavour directed towards technological and imperial progress, and the second the complementary need to exercise some control, ‘to put names and handles on the new forces’ that were beginning to ‘define their personal and collective lives’.³⁶

Although, as Smith’s introduction shows, James was taken to task by his contemporaries on a number of points, not least the reconciliation of the concept of experience to his empiricist method, his decision to circumscribe the subject from the standpoint of experience was more than a simple methodological quirk but the yardstick for judging, in Smith’s words, ‘the extent to which religious life is be regarded as an ideal for human existence’.³⁷ In a later chapter James concedes that the subject of experience cannot be qualified exclusively by empiricism because some degree of ‘theological probability’ will always be exercised when assessing the effectiveness of religions, though through theological probability he is able to wed the two to some extent, and it seems important that, for James, ‘this very standard [of ‘theological probability’] has been begotten out of the drift of common life’. His empirical approach to religion has also, it seems, necessitated the privileging of experience as the crucial concept. He highlights, for example, the way ostensibly dissimilar religious lives are attracted to the same mechanisms of worship. Ritual worship appeals to both to modern transcendental, ceremonial religions as it does to the more puritan mind, and both of these, says James, by all

³⁶ Marty, pp. vii-viii.

³⁷ Smith, p. xxxviii. Smith points out that experience is a ‘secular yardstick’.

accounts appear to be ‘addressed to a deity of an almost absurdly childish character, taking delight in toy-shop furniture, tapers and tinsel, costume and mumbling and mummery’. Likewise, for the ritualist, the pantheistic life is entirely bare in its inestimable capaciousness and the evangelical simply too austere and therefore unpromising. Experience explains this:

It is the voice of human experience within us, judging and condemning all gods that stand athwart the pathway along which it feels itself to be advancing. Experience, if we take it in the largest sense, is thus the parent of those disbeliefs which, it was charged, were inconsistent with the experimental, method.³⁸

Thus, James explains, in the light of experience, the problem is ‘immaterial’. Experience erases such inconsistencies because it itself is proof of worth, or, as he goes on to explain, is evidence of the fitness of a religious lifestyle to any life in question. In an inversion of Darwinian evolutionary logic, and Degeneration, James places religion (one mechanism by which life may be lived) at the centre of human life. The religion that recommends itself to human standards will be followed and its theological beliefs invited and legitimised, the ‘humanly fittest’, that which does not ‘the humanly unfit’ will not be adopted and will usually also be discredited.³⁹ By means of such a model James marks a route through the subject of the place of religion in the early twentieth century, and posits a science of religion.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Varieties*, pp. 330-331.

³⁹ *Varieties*, p. 331.

⁴⁰ The specificity of that timeframe must be emphasised as many scholars would surely reject James’ ‘experience’ as an advisable tool with which to approach historical religions and the fraught politics of power and persecution inherent therein.

The Influence of Varieties on Scientific Illuminism

This section argues that *Varieties* worked considerable influence on the A.A. system. In general terms, James' science of religion formally gives credence to the existence of the occult, insofar as it is held to be central to types of religious life, the unseen, to that extent exists. What is more, James argues for its existence without recourse to intellectual or philosophical arguments. It permits, therefore, the activity of the occultists, as evidence of the performance of human nature (to recall the often overlooked extension of *Varieties*' title). Moreover, the specific methods in which the A.A. instructed, and which constituted scientific illuminism, appear to have been developed in response to the mechanisms of religious varieties outlined by James. The A.A. motto, 'The Method of Science, the Aim of Religion' is most profitably read in these terms, and must be read as a contribution to the broad movement that this thesis identifies whereby the category of life is brought into focus in more positive terms than before. Also of importance is James' identification of essential experiences that cut across orthodox religions. They are identified and documented thematically according to the essence of the experiences detailed in the *documents humains*. In them, any orthodox religious associations are incidental: the sick soul, the divided self, harbouring other needs for conversion, and rebirth, emerge as universally felt experiences of the religious life. Again, vitiating the claim of orthodox religion and lending further authority to the occultists' complaints in that respect, and the timeliness of their re-emergence. Occultism's claim that it was assigning itself the task of repairing universal fissures in human subjectivity is apparently confirmed in *Varieties*. That Aleister Crowley

drew inspiration from *Varieties* in his formulation of the A.A. has been noted; what, then, were the specific influences of *Varieties* on the A.A.? This section will now examine aspects of scientific illuminism in relation to the structures of the religious life of *Varieties* in order to demonstrate in more detail the influence of *Varieties*' thought on the Astrum Argentum programme of regeneration. Additionally, it will be suggested in part iii, that *Varieties* can be seen to have a further bearing on the poetry and material production of the journal.

Scientific illuminism provided a comprehensive system of therapeutics influenced as much by *Varieties* as by occult science. Different types of spiritual need were catered for in the system: those suffering extreme soul-sickness, as well as those for whom the desire for rebirth is borne not out of an anxiety produced by the absence of spiritual meaning, but who apprehend the something more, the unseen and see reflected there not a lack but a possibility for the real life, and feel positively that therein lies the key to their future. In his preface to 'The Temple of Solomon the King' Crowley says that this has always been his feeling: 'there was no sickness of soul, no division of self'; rather, he had 'simply turned a corner on the road along which he was travelling' and realised that 'the mighty range of snow-capped mountains upon which he had up to now imagined he was gazing was after all a great bank of clouds'. Certainty was lost but it did not produce a crisis, rather he 'pass[es] on smiling to himself at his own childlike illusion'. Nonetheless, the A.A. course is also offered to both those susceptible in positive ways to the mysteries, and those for whom crisis is the motivating factor:

Who has not, at some period during his life, experienced that strange sensation of utter bewilderment of being awakened by the

sudden approach of a bright light across the curtained threshold of slumber?⁴¹

These people feel intoxicated by ‘wonderment’ and are frustrated, but also encouraged, by their ‘inability to open wide the blinded eyes’. For this variety of initiate the light pours into the ‘corners and crannies of the dark’, purges them of any psychological menace they might have possessed, and invites them to seek the key to the mysteries. Equally:

Who, again, has not stepped from the brilliant sunlight of noon into some shadowy vault, and, groping along the dark walls, has found there to be but as the corpse of day wrapped in a starless shroud of darkness?⁴²

These are those whose nature is undermined by the ‘radical and general’ feeling of dislocation expressed here in the juxtaposition of the brilliant sunlight and shadowy vault.⁴³ For them the light of day, with all its associations of health and balance, has been shrouded and extinguished. To both of these the preface extends its invitation:

O my brothers! come with me! follow me! Let us mount the dark stairs of this Tower of Silence, this Watch-tower of Night [...] Come, come! Halt not! Abandon all! Let us ascend. Yet bring with ye two things, the flint and the steel – the slumbering fire of Mystery, and the dark sword of Science; that we may strike a spark, and fire the beacon of Hope which hangs above us in the brasier of Despair.⁴⁴

Differentiation of need was, in the first place, symptomatic and further evidence of the gulf that had developed between the material and the spiritual life, and of pervasive spiritual indigence. Differentiation was also a key feature of

⁴¹ ‘The Temple of Solomon the King’, *Equinox*, I: I (1909), pp.139-230, (p. 157).

⁴² ‘Temple of Solomon’, p. 167.

⁴³ *Varieties*, p. 135.

⁴⁴ ‘Temple of Solomon’, p. 168-9.

James' reasoning in *Varieties*. James suggested the concept of the 'difference-threshold' as a way of grasping the aesthetic differences between modes of religious experience, and again it provides justification for twentieth-century occultism. Just as the 'theological probability' model sought to explain the process of discrimination between one type and another through experience, the difference-threshold demarcates, essentially, a psychological or emotional pain threshold by which human nature is to a large part conditioned. For some the threshold will be high and their experience of disunity will constitute a 'mal-adjustment with *things*, a wrong correspondence of one's life with the environment'. Such a person's sense of spiritual stability can be restored with ease on the 'natural plane' by 'modifying either the self or the things, or both at once, the two terms may be made to fit'. These people can affect their own rejuvenation fairly simply in the course of their everyday life. For the human nature whose threshold is drawn lower and more fragile, however, no such rearrangement of self to environment or vice versa can assist. Such people require nothing less than 'supernatural remedy'. They cannot moderate their experience of their divided soul by finding correspondences for it in a mismatching of 'outer things', lifestyle, and environment with the self because the root of the 'wrongness' is beyond cognition, 'radical and general'. 'Does it not appear', asks James, 'as if one who lived more habitually on one side of the pain-threshold might need a different sort of religion from one who habitually lived in the other?'⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *Varieties*, pp. 134-135.

The 'Editorial' to issue two formulates the A.A.'s 'statement' in six different ways 'so that there may be found one acceptable to each seeker who is open to conviction'. Each variation of expression highlights the different ways the same problem may be felt, or framed, from the straightforward, to the philosophical, to the allegorical; each, however, is a version of the first series, of which the first statement is the fundament, and the second its manifestation in man, and in this case, the third a suggested resolution:

1. We perceive in the sensible world, Sorrow. Ultimately that is; we admit the Existence of a Problem requiring a solution.
2. We accept the proofs of Hume, Kant, Herbert Spencer, Fuller, and others of this thesis: The Ratiocinative Faculty or Reason of Man contains in its essential nature an element of self-contradiction.
3. Following on this, we say:
If any resolution there be of these two problems, the Vanity of Life and the Vanity of Thought, it must be in the attainment of a Consciousness which transcends both of them. Let us call this supernormal consciousness, or, for want of a better name, 'Spiritual Experience'.⁴⁶

The statements point to the inherent division in the nature of man expressed as vanity of life and vanity of thought. Man's natural compulsion towards both of these modes of life exists dialectically and no solution whereby the two can be

⁴⁶ 'Editorial', *Equinox*, pp. 1-10 (pp. 3-4). Other versions of the same appear to have been constructed with a different type of thinker in mind, see the first two statements of each series. For example, series II appears to be an expression of the principles of the A.A. for the materialist, or the scientist partial to Darwinian evolution theory:

1. There is no hope in physical life, since death of the individual, the race, and ultimately the planet, ends all.
2. There is no hope in reason, since it contradicts itself, and it is in any case no more than a reflection upon the facts of physical life.

For those already *au fait* with the A.A. method:

1. We have but one method, that of Science.
2. We have but one aim, that of Religion.

And in the form of an allegory:

There was once an Inhabitant in a land called Utopia who complained to the Water Company that the water was impure.

'No,' answered the Water Man, 'it can't be impure, for we filter it' (pp. 5-7).

resolved to one another can be found. Statement four goes on to reject faith as a remedy in this sense, because faiths purport to be authoritative and, in the secular world, require the utilisation of reason in order to choose between them. ‘Spiritual experience’ is the Jamesian term settled upon for the state of higher consciousness that transcends the material life, and the rational life and gives meaning to both.

How was this imagined to occur in the A.A. system, what structures characterise the sought-after spiritual experience, and how were they reproduced in scientific illuminism? Meaning in life is constituted for James via the presence or absence of frames. He explains that the meaning and value, positive or negative, that is attributed to aspects of the ordinary life of the individual is dependent upon its ‘framing’ by ‘remoter schemes’. If suffering occurs in the context of immortality lent it by religion, for example, then days will appear to be filled with opportunities and will hold significance. If on the other hand, no remoter values are in the background of life, which naturalism and evolutionism has made the case, ‘the thrill stops short’.⁴⁷ James asks his audience to think of themselves divest of the emotion which life encourages. ‘Try to imagine’, he says, ‘it *as it exists*, purely by itself, without your favourable or unfavourable, hopeful or apprehensive comment’.⁴⁸ He suggests his audience will struggle to imagine such a condition of living deadness, but this is the condition of the sick and divided soul.

James’ question is the basis of six exercises prescribed in ‘Liber E. Vel Exercitiorvm svb figrâ ix’ published in *Equinox*, Volume 1 Number 1. The

⁴⁷ *Varieties*, p. 141.

⁴⁸ *Varieties*, p. 150.

exercises cover physical clairvoyance; Asana, or posture; Pranyama, or regularisation of breathing; Dharana, or control of thought; physical limitations, and a course of reading is also supplied. It is a text designed specifically for the new aspirant and the exercises prescribed are introductory. Each exercise calls for an emptying out of the sense of the present self as it is produced by the faculties of mind and body, or by the vanities of life and thought. Crowley's notes anticipate that the 'object' of the practices will not initially 'be clear' to the aspirant.⁴⁹ That is because the object of each is a negative one involving the deconstruction of the natural frames that condition existence ordinarily. *Dharana*, for instance, requires meditation upon, initially, a single 'simple' object, later progressing to 'combinations of simple objects', 'simple moving objects' and finally to 'combinations of moving objects'. 'During these practices', it is explained, 'the mind must be absolutely confined to the object determined upon; no other thought must be allowed to intrude upon the consciousness'. Exercises seven and eight encourage the opposite, an expansion of consciousness, only however, to be followed by the most complete exclusion of those thoughts:

7. Proceed to imagine living objects; as a man, preferably some man known to, and respected by, yourself.
8. In the intervals of these experiments you may try to imagine the objects of other senses, and to concentrate upon them. For example, try to imagine the taste of chocolate, the smell of roses, the feeling of velvet, the sound of a waterfall, or the ticking of a watch.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ 'Liber E. Vel Exercitiorvm svb figurâ ix', *Equinox*, I: I (1909), 23-34, (p. 31).

⁵⁰ 'Liber E', pp. 30-31.

The aspirant is here encouraged to imagine him, or herself to be a social being interacting with other personalities. The significance of the advice regarding the selection of a familiar and respected person is not made clear, but it can be reasoned that intimacy or friendship with a person would make them easier to imagine than someone unknown, also that they would be harder to shut out of the meditation as is finally required. Similarly, the examples of sense stimulations to be imagined place the aspirant in a broader world, social and natural, and encourage contemplative contact with the remoter schemes that *Varieties* finds to be the crux of the healthy mind.

The rational intellect is challenged in the exercise in clairvoyance which trains the initiate to anticipate cards drawn from a Tarot deck: ‘Remember that one should expect to name the right card once in 78 times. Also be careful to exclude all possibilities of obtaining the knowledge through the ordinary senses of sight and touch, or even smell’.⁵¹ Exercises in *Asana*, *Pranyama*, and Physical Limitations encourage the aspirant to reconsider the function and purpose of their body by making it perform in ways considered to be counter to its purposes. In the first they must, ‘learn to sit perfectly still with every muscle tense for long periods’, until their proficiency in this can be measured ‘to the point that a saucer filled to the brim with water and poised upon the head does not spill one drop during a whole hour, and when you can no longer perceive the slightest tremor in any muscle’. In *Pranyama* the most natural of practices, breathing, is complicated by the task to regularise it, and in ‘Physical Limitations’ a number of trials in asceticism are devised to test the

⁵¹ ‘Liber E’, p. 26.

basic requirements of the body, including its capacity for sleep deprivation, fasting, physical endurance, silence, and any other ‘capacities and aptitudes which may occur’ to the aspirant. In every case the natural function is willingly subverted in order to eradicate the cognitive, emotional, rational, and sensual, meaning-giving frame.⁵²

In place of the old frames, new ones are, however, revealed to the aspirant. ‘Physical Clairvoyance’, for example, will cause, in the course of the exercise, the aspirant to outgrow probability as they learn to detect the discrete ‘harmonies’ within which the Tarot works. For instance, a card ruled by Mars would be harmonious with a 5 and a card of Gemini with “The Lovers”, whereas, to call the Lord of Love (2 Cups) for the Lord of Strife (5 Wands) would show that you were getting nothing right’. The arithmetic measures by which the Tarot functions, and which the aspirant must read, subject to different, symbolic, correspondences. *Dharana* properly performed might encourage ‘intruding thoughts’, and the moving object, to which an aspirant’s meditation eventually progresses, might reveal a ‘tendency [...] to depart from the course laid out for it’, likewise, ‘other phenomena’, may present itself, just as ‘Various remarkable phenomena will very probably occur’ during *Pranayama*.⁵³ Examples of the phenomena signal new frames in bud and must be submitted to a magical journal, a point which Crowley impresses on readers at every opportunity. As soon as the experiment is at a close, however, detailed scientific notes must be taken. From these notes the substitution

⁵² ‘Liber E’, pp. 27-9.

⁵³ ‘Liber E’, p. 30, & p. 29.

of frames, for frames can be charted and analysed, and the experience rendered objectively. The process extends to the reading list. Through ‘careful study’ and the reading of ‘extreme divergences side by side’ the aspirant will learn to ‘speak in the language of his master and facilitate communication with him’; furthermore, he will ‘discover the fundamental harmony of these works’ which are otherwise difficult to comprehend.⁵⁴

What the ‘Liber ix’ exercises set in motion is a general alteration of associations. James remarks that such alterations are fairly straightforward in psychological terms and they occur via the substitution of frames. Nonetheless new frames produce a profound solution to the problem of soul sickness by facilitating a radical change at a person’s ‘*habitual centre of his personal energy*’. It was at this point that fervour for life was altered into despair, where the hot and vital thoughts that worked on life in a positive way became dead thoughts, and where the process must somehow be reversed.⁵⁵ The various ideas and aims of man’s life form into systems of association. When one particular aim is acted upon it generates, in the centre of personal energy, a subject specific interest and ‘gathers a certain group of ideas together in subordination to it as its associates’, and ‘When one group is present and engrosses the interest, all the ideas connected with other groups may be excluded from the mental field’.⁵⁶ In these terms, James describes religious conversion, but the process extends to regeneration, as a ‘bringing in’ from the peripheral consciousness wherein they sat passively, ideas that on taking a central

⁵⁴ ‘Liber E’, p. 33.

⁵⁵ *Varieties*, p. 196.

⁵⁶ *Varieties*, p. 193.

place newly become the habitual centre of energy via which all elements of life are moderated and processed.

The process of supplementation is explicitly and actively supported by the A.A., through *The Equinox*. Retaining the focus on the ‘Liber’ documents, identical patterns displayed in the early texts are reproduced at an increasingly advanced level. Forms of activity and exercises are couched in language that is more economical in one sense, but mounting in magical import in another. By Volume 1, No 4, for example, ‘Liber III vel JVGORVM’ supplies an exercise in *Dharana* without recourse to that title, or to the supplementary ‘Control of Thought’. By now, a year into their studies, the aspirant’s remoter schemes should be exchanged more easily in response to magical and allegorical language. Thus the exercise begins, ‘The Ox is Thought. Man, rule thy Thought! How else shall thou master the Holy Spirit, and answer the High Priestess in the Middle Gateway of the Crown?’ Also in recognition of the aspirant’s increasing proficiency in modifying his centre of energy, the imperatives of the novice documents are replaced with more open instructions: ‘Here are practices which may last a week or more’. Those practices are correspondingly more complex:

alpha. Avoid thinking of a definite subject and all things connected with it, and let that subject be one which commonly occupies much of thy thought, being frequently stimulated by sense-perceptions or the conversation of others.

beta. By some device, such as the changing of the ring from one finger to another, create in thyself two personalities, the thoughts of one being within entirely different limits from the other, the common ground being the necessities of life.⁵⁷

⁵⁷‘Liber III vel JVGORVM’, *Equinox*, I: IV (1910), 11-14, p. 13.

Down to the detail of the ordering of this sequence of exercises, the aspirant is understood to be advancing. The digits of the former sequence are replaced here by integers from the Greek alphabet, and, as the suggested ‘ticking of a watch’ in the former created a contextual present for the aspirant (even if only to promote its disputation), the aspirant is now mastering the art of marshalling multiple personalities of different natures. Crucially, however, to the success of the exercise, and to the argument of this thesis, the limits of those personalities be grounded in everyday life.

William James points to a weakness in his study when he confesses that his science of the religious life cannot fully describe how and why certain ideas enter and remain as the organising principle of life. Even records of personal experience provide only part of the picture, but his further description of the aftermath of the conversion, how conversion manifests itself in life, continues to elaborate a frame of reference pertinent to the A.A. system of regeneration. A ‘circumlocution’ or ‘motor efficiency’ is produced by the idea that was dormant before as all the other systems and associations ‘re-crystallize’ around the one that newly radiates. The most unsatisfactory aspect of description of the aftermath is for James the need to fall back on the ‘hackneyed symbolism of a mechanical equilibrium’:

A mind is a system of ideas, each with the excitement it arouses, and the tendencies impulsive and inhibitive, which mutually check or reinforce one another [...] But a new perception, a sudden emotional shock, or an occasion which lays bare the organic alteration, will make the whole fabric fall together; and then the centre of gravity sinks into an attitude more stable, for the new

ideas that reach the centre in the rearrangement seem now to be locked there, and the new structure remains permanent.⁵⁸

In spite of James' reservations, however, this description above all frames the work of the initiate of the A.A. and the design of that system. 'Liber Libre svb figrâ xxx', the first of the instructional wisdom texts published in the first issue of *The Equinox*, is a gnomological list of twenty-two instructions, statements, exclamations, and questions of which the first, numbered '0', is 'Learn first – Oh thou who aspiest unto our ancient Order – that Equilibrium is the basis of the Work'.⁵⁹ Equilibrium is both the basis and the goal of the A.A. system, some level of equilibrium had to be achieved in order to begin the preparations for regeneration, but a more profound and lasting equilibrium was also the imagined culmination of the operation.

Throughout *The Equinox*, both in the wisdom texts and evident in the journal as a whole, a number of closely related operations are envisaged and methodised, to aid the aspirant in the re-equilibration of their centre of energy and the adoption of a new and permanent remote scheme with a direct bearing on life. Importantly for this thesis which suggests the nature of the developments across magical thinking and practice from Theosophy to the A.A., the scientific method is

⁵⁸ *Varieties*, p. 197.

⁵⁹ *EQ*, 'Liber Libræ', I: I, pp. 15- 21, (p.16). Fowden explains, in relation to the 'technical' Hermetica, how lists of statements such as those of 'Libre Libræ' were designed to be used, among other things, as teaching aids. The series of statements is offered for readers, and in the case of the Hermetica scribes, to group and classify according to theme depending on their interpretation of the words, and they can be fashioned into short prose pieces on the same principle. As teaching aids they are easily reducible to lists for memorisation, and they function as topic headings to be followed by the teacher. Very much in the manner of a skeleton curriculum they can provide the basis for expositions. It is reasonable to suggest that a document such as 'Libre Libræ' was published with a similar function in mind. The students of the A.A. did not attend group meetings as had the Golden Dawn membership, neither were they permitted to discuss their work with other members of the order save for their mentor, nevertheless consultation and contemplation of the gnomology might well have formed part of the personal study of the neophyte. See Fowden, pp. 71-72.

adopted whole-heartedly here. Crowley explains this method in ‘The Temple of Solomon the King’ and acknowledges his indebtedness to *Varieties*. Two indented quotations prelude Crowley’s Preface, one from *Revelations*, (xi: 1) and the other, attributed to ‘Prof. William James’, is from *Varieties* ‘Religion and Neurology’.⁶⁰ Crowley’s preface follows closely the structure and topic material of the first lectures: firstly it takes on Degeneration and holds the Jamesian view that psychopathological categories ‘form an excellent loophole out of which the ignorant may crawl’; secondly, it provides a succinct survey of the current state of religion explaining why Christianity has no relevance whilst conceding that the ‘entanglement of systems’ has prevented a clean understanding of the nature of true occult religion; and, thirdly, it advocates the scientific approach to be adopted in pursuit of enlightenment through the A.A. system.⁶¹ The discussion of the scientific in relation to the A.A. system does not supply any detail about the technicalities of this; simply, it is it seems, the exercise of choice based upon experience that constitutes the method of science, exactly as James has it, confirmed by much unrefined quotation from *Varieties*. What is interesting, however, is the way Crowley’s preface embraces *Varieties* as the contemporary expression of the traditional discernment of occultism. ‘We are at perfect liberty, in these tolerant days, to cry “Yea!” or “Nay!” to any religious proclamation writes Crowley, and proceeds to connect the watchword of the modern day skeptic, ““Why?”” with the former utterance. In connecting the two, he says, you find scientific illuminism. This is Crowley’s expression of magic that James’ text has allowed him to explain.

⁶⁰ See: Crowley, Aleister ‘The Temple of Solomon the King’, Part I, *The Equinox* (1909), I: I, pp. 139-230, (pp. 141-2); for the corresponding passage in *Varieties* see, p. 14; and from *Revelations*, ‘And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God and the alter, and them that worship therein.’

⁶¹ ‘Temple of Solomon’, I: I, pp. 143-144.

‘Why’ is the question demanded of the rationalist, whereas ‘yea’ and ‘nay’ are revelatory utterances that are the product not of the intellect but of intuition. Scientific illuminism is the coupling of these two reactions to knowledge.

As ‘Liber Exercitiorvm’ frequently reminds its readers, all successes, failures, phenomena, emotions and conditions, including mental and physical states, even the weather at the hour during which experiments were conducted, must be recorded in full in a magical diary. Generally, this enabled the examiner to assess the preparedness of the aspirant to progress to more complex magical practices, and the diary could contribute to the growing body of occult knowledge the A.A. was desirous to command; more specifically, though, the magical diary functions as a testament to scientific illuminism and is an active document in that. Magical records were to be made in an objective and empirical manner so at once to condense the magical experience and give it a further substance beyond a personal record, and to contribute to the body of practical occult knowledge as much for the present practitioner as for those of the future. Only by detaching themselves from the experience can the aspirant know with certainty to what to say ‘Nay’, and to what to say ‘Yea’. And only by that process can the aspirant liberate their habitual centre of personal energy and make it new. The ‘Liber’ documents are then wisdom documents not underpinned by external revelation, but instructive in the generation of an individualised wisdom. Finally, prefiguring the discussion to follow in part iii, William James’ hesitance on the question of the permanence of the schemes that

effect regeneration in the individual has continued resonance for the elements of the journal remaining to be discussed.

iii. 'a finely unpopular magazine'

The truth is that in the metaphysical and religious sphere articulate reasons are cogent for us only when our inarticulate feelings of reality have already been impressed in favour of the same conclusion.

William James⁶²

This section takes up Arnold Bennett's remark that describes *The Equinox* as 'a finely unpopular magazine' and suggests that, even in its irony, it provides the most appropriate terms with which to approach the matter of the journal as an artefact, and its poetic content. Almost everything about the journal, in spite of Crowley's best efforts to the contrary, made it unlikely to enjoy or achieve popularity in any sense of the word. Bennett's adverb 'finely' registers both the comparatively lavish production of the journal, and, modifying 'unpopular magazine', suggests that its earnestness in this respect lends it the charm of a publishing curiosity and in this it will likely be of some interest to some persons. Bennett is in fact raising a fairly

⁶² *Varieties*, p. 74. The passage continues: 'Then, indeed, our intuitions and our reason work together, and great world-ruling systems, like that of the Buddhist or of the Catholic philosophy, may grow up. Our impulsive belief is here always what sets up the original body of truth, and our articulately verbalized philosophy is but its showy translation into formulas. The unreasoned and immediate assurance is the deep thing in us, the reasoned argument is but a surface exhibition [...] Please observe, however, that I do not yet say that it is *better* that the subconscious and non-rational should thus hold primacy in the religious realm. I confine myself to simply pointing out that they do so hold it as a matter of fact'.

well-rehearsed argument regarding occult publications of the early-twentieth century in his implied appraisal of how and why the journal will be read, the question of the relationship between its function, subject, and style. As mentioned, Bennett comments on the interest he found in the short story ‘The Magic Glasses’ and commends its potential to appeal to the ‘profane’, but in so doing he both reinforces the primary role of *The Equinox* as an organ committed to the business of Scientific Illuminism, which holds no serious appeal for the reviewer, whilst allowing that one aspect of it might be deemed respectable, hold its own so to speak, out of this context. The function of the poetry and of the material production of *The Equinox* in relation to its initiatory goals and regeneration will be the substance of the interpretations here offered; an attendant discussion provoked by the terms of Bennett’s criticism must, however, firstly be had regarding the question of the translatability of occult texts and the occult experience.

The kind of poetry printed in *The Equinox* was subject in the early twentieth century to criticism of its style. It was held to be anachronistic and in that was considered either inappropriate for its subject matter, presumably where the reviewer had some degree of sympathy with revivalism or mysticism, or entirely suited to its subject matter which was anachronistic too. Later, George Orwell and T.S. Eliot take up the subject of the occult in poetry – Orwell directly and Eliot indirectly – in their essays on W.B. Yeats and Swinburne respectively.⁶³ These essays further explore the problem of style, or to adopt Orwell’s terms, the ‘manner’ and ‘texture’ of poetic writing, in this case Yeats’, as it pertains to ‘Great Wheels,

⁶³ See: George Orwell, ‘W.B. Yeats’, *Essays* (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 233-238; T.S. Eliot, ‘Swinburne As Poet’, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920) (London: Methuen, 1960), pp. 144-150.

gyres, cycles of the moon, reincarnation' and so on.⁶⁴ Eliot's essay on Swinburne is thought relevant for discussion here, partly because Crowley's poetry was written in imitation of Swinburne's verse, but primarily because the conclusions Eliot reaches regarding the problems of reading and describing Swinburne are instructive in describing the poetry of *The Equinox*. Both essays ask a number of questions of their poets that are less concerned to interpret their work historically or theoretically, or to articulate their place in poetic tradition, and more so to reach a sense of the poets' idiom in itself. This seems to be a valuable way to make an initial approach to the poetry of *The Equinox* of which no criticism or interpretation yet exists, and to acquire appropriate terminology for its discussion.

Only the first edition of *The Equinox* was reviewed by the *New Age* meaning that no comment on the poetry is available; however, reviews of other verse by Crowley and Neuburg, who were the main contributors of poetry to the journal, drew the attention of the 'Recent Verse' columnist and show the nature of the criticisms that are later expanded by Orwell and Eliot. On Crowley's 'Hail Mary', 'The lilt of this, and in places its phraseology, have in them something which scarcely bears witness to a humble and profound reverence for the mother of God on the steps of Heaven', a mismatching of subject matter and expression is the main complaint.⁶⁵ Victor Neuburg's collection 'The Triumph of Pan' is rewarded for being 'more circumspect' in its choice of topics than Crowley's work (and his personal association with Crowley is noted), but is shortly given ironic praise for 'giv[ing] us little of that boring stuff that is usually termed "strong meat,"' and for

⁶⁴ *Essays*, p. 235.

⁶⁵ *New Age*, 21 December (1911), X: 8, p. 184.

being ‘in the matter of wind, spray, Pan, mouths, hair, throats, Osiris, stars, hermaphrodites, fauns, and obscene gods [...] a faithful disciple’. Neuburg’s inclusion of an incantatory poem, which the reviewer recognises as being a dedicatory poem and points out is ‘(printed in red ink)’, is quoted in full and thoroughly mocked for being un-poetic, as is Neuburg’s own predilection for what is viewed to be unnecessary affectation in print design.⁶⁶ The ‘poem’ in question is dedicated to Crowley, and is an incantation excerpted from the A.A. Autumn Equinox Ritual.

A look at criticism, again in the *New Age*, of contemporary fiction reveals similar contentions. The poetic failure to do justice to mystical subject matter was discussed more broadly as a symptom of all ‘transitional’ literature attempting to capture and represent the essence of the unseen. A review primarily of Algernon Blackwood’s *Incredible Adventures* (1914), but drawing on other comparable writers articulates the problem that the world created by Blackwood’s fiction is in constant flux: it is an ‘incalculable world’ such as the ‘logical mind of man, the mind of *words*, can have no intelligent contact’. Blackwood’s world remains alien to the reviewer of his fiction because no language, and by implication genre, has

⁶⁶ *New Age*, 6 July (1911), IX: 10, p. 2. The dedicatory poem and the reviewers’ acerbic comments in full: Omari tessala marax,

Tessala dodi phornepax.

Amri radara poliax

Armana piliu.

Amri radara piliu son’;

Mari narya barbiton

Madara anaphax sarpedon

Andara hriliu.

‘It is a tender little lyric, delicate, iridescent, fragrant as a summer dawn [...] I am not quite sure that the apostrophe in “son’ ” can be regarded as legitimate, and I have an uneasy suspicion that “hriliu” has been dragged in owing to the difficulty of finding a rhyme to “piliu.” But, taken on the whole, this little poem could scarcely have been better.’

been found by which to adequately express the significance and substance of the unseen world. Hitherto a fantasy or metaphorical space in fiction, the unseen world was now being charted and co-opted by, for example, the life sciences and the sciences of the mind and a medical language being expanded with which to describe its structures and their meanings. In light of science's demystification of occult psychological space, Blackwood's magical composition is too vague for the modern reader and can carry therefore no weight of narrative meaning; the reliance for narrative drive on the tension between 'white or black' magic is further made irrelevant by the popular view of psychiatry as having triumphed over demonology. The review goes on to conclude that the failure 'from a literary point of view' of fiction dealing with 'the new world of ideas' is 'symptomatic', and 'in conjunction with much modern writing (Stephens aforesaid, Mr. Arthur Machen, the horrible Mr. Crowley, "Blast," etc.) a symptom of transition'.⁶⁷ The modern writing currently on offer signals a point of crisis for the reviewer whereby the subject matter appears to ensure literary failure.

A comparable crisis was being felt in the world of modern poetry as a whole. A sense of demise marked the cultural concern over the state of British Poetry in the first decade of the twentieth century. Timothy Rogers surveys contemporary magazines of the period 1911-1922 and describes what the critics saw as poetry's incremental decline paralleled in the "successive death[s]" of the principal Victorian and Edwardian poets and statesmen.⁶⁸ Writing in 1910, in the *New Age*, Orage describes the British public as having been conditioned to feel and

⁶⁷ *NA*, XVI: 4 (26 December, 1914), 97-98, pp. 97-98.

⁶⁸ A.R. Orage, in Timothy Rogers, *Georgian Poetry 1911-1922: The Critical Heritage* (1977), p. 3.

re-feel the end of an era, “Tennyson was the last, so was Lord Salisbury. Then it was Meredith, and only recently it was Swinburne”, before calling these announcements “premature” and proposing that “The last genuine link with the Victorian age has been broken with the death of King Edward VII”.⁶⁹ His assessment of the un-ending end of the Victorian and Edwardian age is echoed in wider commentary where the collective demise of Tennyson, Swinburne and Meredith is repeatedly viewed as tantamount to the death of English poetry. Rogers details this inclination thoroughly and returns to Orage whom, two years on, on the subject of poetry and the broader state of culture, wrote, “If I were asked upon what I rely for the renaissance of England, I should say a miracle”, sentiments that were shared by T.S. Eliot who reflected in 1954 that “the situation in poetry in 1909 or 1910 was stagnant to a degree difficult for any poet of today to conceive”.⁷⁰

In the decades prior to the ascendancy of modernism, a dearth of quality writing was the abiding feeling and the underlying weakness lay in the inability of writing and poetry to deal in new and relevant ways with the knowledge systems underpinning contemporary life. Retrospectively viewing the occult writing of the early twentieth century from a post-modern position the occult poetry fares even less well on the challenge of language. A contrast is made the more marked by certain modernists, such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, whom research has shown to have found aesthetic and intellectual inspiration in occult symbol and myth and wrought the modernist poetic aesthetic from the traditions that those articulated. Where their

⁶⁹ Orage, in Rogers, p. 3.

⁷⁰ Orage, in Rogers , p. 3; Eliot in Rogers, p. 3.

art was highly intellectual and directed towards the articulation of historical forces working on modern man, and underpinned to a greater or lesser extent by the validity of intellectualised art, the occultists were still composing poetry in, hoped for, imitation of Swinburne. Likewise, the writer and poet D.H. Lawrence was profoundly worked on by the metaphorical substance of Pan and primitivism and can be viewed, with Eliot and Pound, to be formulating questions and drawing conclusions regarding civilisation from the same world-view shared by the occultists but finding and founding an avant-garde aesthetic inextricable from their subject matter. In its criticism of modern writing, however, the *New Age* review provides a reason for the collective failure of such works and inadvertently establishes the framework through which the poetry, in particular, must be read. Thematically, the notion of passing through a crisis, the process of regeneration, is the substance of the poetry of *The Equinox*. If modern writing such as that contributed to it is deemed to flounder on what the review calls the ‘invariably thin ice’ of its very attempt to give expression to a new view of life it is perhaps because of the challenge posed by its ‘words’, or rather the ornamental utterances it heaps up in the place of clean and digestible language.

Yeats’ language, according to Orwell, occasionally offers up ‘overwhelm[ing]’ phrases such as “‘the chill, footless years’”, but on the whole is prone to artificiality, and it is Orwell’s thesis that this falsity divulges the poet’s fascist politics. It is Orwell’s broader thesis that it is the failure of Marxist criticism that where it enables explanation of literary subject-matter and imagery in terms sociological it provides none such for the connection between “‘tendency” and

literary style’, for the sociological meaning of its ‘texture’. And yet, as in the case of Yeats, Orwell is sure that there is one. After all, says Orwell, ‘a Socialist would not write like Chesterton or a Tory imperialist like Bernard Shaw, although *how* one knows it is not easy to say’, because it not a question of ideology permeating discourse, but of it having a far less easily quantifiable effect on the whole residual quality of the poem that remains when its objects are stripped away.⁷¹ The political analogy Orwell utilises to frame his essay betrays much about what the perceived problem is. And it seems to be an intellectual argument about the extent to which the idea and the activity of the writer or poet is embodied in the texture of the text. By virtue of its very existence its texture betrays an involvement in something and identifies the poet or the writer too closely with the text and with the object of that involvement.

To dwell in some detail on the nature of this disagreeable texture is worthwhile because each fault might equally be levelled at the poetry of *The Equinox*. So firstly, it was artificial in manner, as Menon’s book *The Development of William Butler Yeats*, which is concerned with the esoteric undertow of Yeats’ work inadvertently reveals to Orwell via its ‘scattered’ quotations, of which no ‘six consecutive lines’ can be read ‘in which there is not an archaism or an affected turn of speech’. Although not made explicit, Orwell’s indication of the subject of Menon’s book makes the initial implication that in the esoteric passages is witnessed the highest instance of anachronism and affectation. Orwell continues:

To take the nearest example:
‘Grant me an old man’s Frenzy,

⁷¹ *Essays*, pp. 233-238, (p. 234)

My self must I remake
 Till I am Timon and Lear
 Or that William Blake
 Who beat upon the wall
 Till Truth obeyed his call.

The unnecessary ‘that’ imports a feeling of affectation, and the same tendency is present in all but Yeats’s best passages. One is seldom long away from a suspicion of ‘quaintness’, something that links up not only with the nineties, the Ivory Tower and ‘calf covers of pissed-on green’, but also with Rackham’s drawings, Liberty art-fabrics and the *Peter Pan* never-never land, of which, after all, ‘The Happy Townland’ is merely a more appetizing example.

Further tendencies to ‘raggedness’ and ‘squashy vulgar’ poetical language, as in the word ‘loveliness’, although almost certainly deliberate, ‘weaken[s]’, according to Orwell, Yeats’ ‘polemical poems’. Unfortunately the tendency generated by occultism that might be excused in less serious poems, is elsewhere a taint. The affectation is reactionary and unfetters a host of associations, particularly redolent of the *fin de siècle* that Orwell turns back on the poetry: the Arts and Crafts movement and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, both of which seemed trite almost as soon as the century turned; children’s fiction and their illustrations, suggesting immaturity, or worse infantilism, fantasy, even delusion; and the content of the embedded ‘calf-covers’ quotation that James Joyce’s *Ulysses* mocks, among other things, revivalist printing, and what Orwell has earlier called ‘Irishism’. The importation of the quotation from a heavyweight of modernist writing to this essay on tendency serves to highlight a great divide between that tendency and modern writing, and it is surely Orwell’s intention, to question the tolerance afforded it.⁷²

⁷² Orwell, p. 234. See: James Joyce, *Ulysses*. The full quotation reads: ‘To be printed and bound at the Druidrum press by two designing females. Calf covers of pissedon green. Last word in art shades. Most beautiful book to come out of Ireland in my time’. The ‘Druidrum’ Press is significant as Yeats’ sisters established a press in Dundrum in order to produce deluxe collectable editions of Yeats’ work, the compounding of Dundrum with Druidism references Yeats’ involvement with the occult, and particularly the Celtic Twilight and completes the allusion, at least as it has significance here.

Such examples of tendency Orwell finds relatable to Yeats' 'feudal' and 'aristocratic' imagery which betrays his fascism.

Orwell explains the difficulty posed in reading occult poetry. 'One has not, perhaps, the right to laugh at Yeats for his mystical beliefs' he says, 'for I believe it could be shown that *some* degree of belief in magic is almost universal'. However, Orwell cannot ignore the 'fantastical philosophy' and cautions against dismissing it as an 'unimportant eccentricity', or as 'the price we have to pay for a great and curious intellect' for he is clear that it was 'heading' somewhere more sinister. Yeats' politics and his occult leanings converge for Orwell on two points: first, the cyclical view of history taught by theosophy, in holding that events and ages past will be repeated, that another 'age of tyranny' awaits, demolishes the notion of progress and exonerates inequality; and second, the congenital secrecy associated with occultism is central to fascism. Yeats' sensitivity to occultism, particularly a theosophical style of occultism, is still called an embarrassment to scholars of his work, but has in fact been the basis of interpretation on a number of occasions. The affinities, the mutual predictions, of Fascism and occultism should not be ignored and only serve to highlight the question of the meaning and experience of modernity and the subconscious negotiations that fraught set of questions produced. However, surrendering early twentieth-century occultism to Fascism is to leap in agreement to the second part of Orwell's problem with occultism (the casual treatment of it as harmless eccentricity), and to fail to attend to the first, the inescapable factor of its appeal, which must be discussed on its own terms, as has been the broadest aim of this thesis. Although the concept of regeneration has considerable and terrible

consequences in twentieth-century national socialism it is more helpful for this thesis to think in terms of the mystical origins of fascist ideology, rather than translating the occult manner as inherently fascist.

Swinburne represents a critical conundrum for Eliot in ‘Swinburne As Poet’. Eliot shows concern for the same issue of translatability, but finds fault not in the poetry of tendency but in interpretation. The task he sets himself in the essay is to find a way to decipher the contribution of Swinburne, a poet it is fair to say, he writes, beloved of his age. And therein rests the problem: how, in 1922, should he approach this poet’s work, and evaluate his indisputable contribution when he has no words with which to do it? The manner of it seems once again the hurdle as Eliot, circumscribing his test admits:

agreed that we do not (and I think that the present generation does not) greatly enjoy Swinburne, and agreed that (a more serious condemnation) at one point in our lives we did enjoy him and now no longer enjoy him; nevertheless, the words which we use to state our grounds of dislike or indifference cannot be applied to Swinburne as they can to bad poetry.⁷³

“Diffuse” is one such word, but on Swinburne’s work it will not stick because should Swinburne have ‘practised greater concentration’ his poetry would have been ‘not better in the same kind, but a different thing’ and no longer the thing enjoyed. There is much that resists alteration for although ‘no one stanza seems essential’ none could be left out without destroying the whole. Of praise, too, Eliot is cautious and he deconstructs the popular commendation of the ‘sound’ of Swinburne’s verse. Comparing it to that of Campion he suggests that where

⁷³Eliot, p. 145.

Campion's verse achieves meaning and 'sound-value' separately, Swinburne's creates no 'pure' effect, of either 'sound, or of image, or of idea'.⁷⁴ Partly, and importantly in development of a critical framework through which to read *The Equinox* poetry, Eliot concludes that this is to do with the use to which Swinburne puts words. 'He employs', says Eliot, 'or rather "works," the word's meaning', and he chooses always the most general word thus avoiding the purity of Campion and maintaining instead indirect emotion that is conveyed not by 'intensification' but through 'expansion'.⁷⁵ Eliot explains that deeper inspection of Swinburne's verse finds no object beneath the word that seemed to suggest it. This might be considered a failure, but because its own world is entirely self-sufficient it needs not a referent beyond the words that compose it, and it is not a sham either, because in this it does have sincere integrity. It is protected from such criticism because it is 'impersonal' and does not pretend to be something it is not, only 'when you take to pieces any verse of Swinburne, you find always that the object was not there – only the word'. This is no conspiracy of meaning or interpretation, only the conditions of that poetic world. The *New Age* reviewer's own words on the necessity that the writer of the 'new world of ideas' be of the world of '*words*' are recalled here, as they are in Eliot's concluding remarks that although Swinburne's language is alive 'with a singular life of its own', a different language is newly important to 1922 and

⁷⁴ Eliot addresses his analysis to the following Campion couplet, p. 146:

Shall I come, if I swim? wide are the waves, you see;
Shall I come, if I fly, my dear Love, to thee?

⁷⁵ For example, quoted in Eliot, p. 147:

There lived a singer in France of old
By the tideless dolorous midland sea.
In a land of sand and ruin and gold
There shone one woman, and none but she.

that 'is struggling to digest and express new objects, new feelings, new aspects, as, for instance, the prose of Mr. James Joyce or the earlier Conrad'.⁷⁶

This is the case of the difficulty of translating the occult poetry. What the two essays taken together show are the barriers to interpretation that are present in occult poetry. Together the essays are an exercise in interpretation that demonstrates the limits of two quite different approaches. 'W.B. Yeats' approaches the poetry in a materialist view of history and omits an analysis of the poems in their more local context, namely in the occult world-view, preferring instead to connect that world-view with the fascist. 'Swinburne as Poet' attempts to assess Swinburne's contribution on its own terms and in this provides the stage of interpretation skipped by Orwell. The problem with this is that it reveals a poetic world so completely self-contained that its words refer only to other general words in its composition and in this way although they 'expand' meaning of a kind, it is a meaning so impersonal and so separated from the present which requires a healthy language which is defined by Eliot as language able to 'present[s] the object', that is 'so close to the object that the two are identified'. In Swinburne object and language are identified merely by default 'because the meaning is merely the hallucination of meaning, because language, uprooted, has adapted itself to an independent life of atmospheric nourishment'.⁷⁷ This expression of 'atmospheric nourishment' points, however, to the spirit in which the occult poems of *The Equinox* must be read. Coupled, I want to suggest, with the James' explanation of the function of frames and associations around religious life which James described

⁷⁶ Eliot, p. 150.

⁷⁷ Eliot, p. 150.

also in terms of their capacity to nourish life in their right presence, and empty out in their absence, this is the most fitting approach to make to the poetry of *The Equinox*. Furthermore, taken in its entirety, the publication offers a sincere response to the one problem James could not fully answer: how it is that the ‘new ideas’ that become the new ‘centre of gravity’ fuse, and how ‘the new structure remains permanent’.⁷⁸

In the longest of Crowley’s poems ‘The Wizard Way’, which is generally representative of all *The Equinox* poems, the narrative is straightforward. It follows a would-be wizard seeking a key that is symbolic of illuminism and rebirth. Along the wizard way the stages of the questing hopeful’s journey are described with reference to gods and goddesses, and are also assisted by the occult practices which he grows to understand:

He had learnt the elvish sign;
Given the Token of the Nine:
Once to rave, and once to revel,
Once to bow before the devil

The narrative confirms the seeker’s command of the elvish sign by proceeding to relay a series of enchantments which the token of the nine produces. His progress is thereby described via the enchantment itself, and others that punctuate the poem. In this way his progress is charted. The language used is replete with the archaism and affectation despised by Orwell: ‘Inchauntments’, ‘halidom’, crooked bears an accent, ‘crookèd’; liturgical phrases are exclaimed ‘*Sursom cor!*’ and ‘*Sic pervenias!*’; liberal use of ‘hath’ in place of has; and numerous exclamations ‘Oh!’,

⁷⁸ *Varieties*, p. 197.

‘Oh!’, ‘Ah!’ and ‘O’. Lines like ‘Such the swart ensanguine kiss’ from ‘The Wizard Way’ are representative, particularly of Crowley’s verse and almost certainly qualify as squashy and vulgar as Orwell noted in Yeats.⁷⁹ Progress is slow through a poem such as ‘The Wizard Way’ because so much of the language used is either unfamiliar or obsolete. To borrow Orwell’s rule of thumb, six lines reading is enough to find plenty in the way of affected occult mannerism. In imagery likewise it is feudal and aristocratic, although simplistically so as in: ‘So, it is I that writhe with the twitch / Of the faery blood, and the wizard itch’.⁸⁰ And the setting of ‘The Wizard Way’ suggested by the scenery makes a multitude of historical references. As a fairy land it is suggestive of Victorian children’s fantasy narratives, although the language employed is frequently overtly sexualised. Chivalric elements connected with the wizard’s quest are further conveyed in imagery and setting. Description of light emanating from a castle’s window ‘embrasure’ places this architecture as medieval, giving the imagery a two-fold historical reference in late nineteenth-century revivalism. Further drawing from themes in contemporary culture, the poem is animated by the Panic influence and features the ‘rude and goatish god’. In short, the poem is laden with miscellaneous imagery and outmoded language.

All the elements do, however, have a common aim in compelling the poem and the narrative towards its confirmation of the wizard’s rebirth. The ways that this is conveyed and its purpose can be analysed by asking the same questions of it that Eliot took to Swinburne’s verse. Could any word or stanza have been removed

⁷⁹ ‘The Wizard Way’, *Equinox* I: II (1909), 35-46, p. 40.

⁸⁰ ‘The Wizard Way’, p. 44.

to achieve a more refined economy of concentration? Each scene is over-drawn with character, action and all things occult, and while, at any point, those elements could stand in for one another at various points in the poem they are, ultimately, the substance of the poem. Consider the following verse:

He had traced the serpent sigil
 In his ghastly virgin vigil.
Sursum cor! the elfin hill,
 Where the wind blows deadly chill
 From the world that wails beneath
 Death's black throat and lipless teeth.
 There he had stood – his bosom bare –
 Tracing Life upon the Air
 With the crook and with the flail
 Lashing forward on the gale,
 Till its blade that wavereth
 Like the flickering of Death
 Sank before his subtle fence
 To the starless sea of sense.⁸¹

The variety of characters, the influences exerted by them, aspects of nature, the surfeit of lines, each delivering a new idea, description, or action, emphasise that the wizard is gaining in power and control over his environment. That each line delivers, with few exceptions, a single picture or image, adds to a detail in the next, an action, or some variation on that rule contributes also to the insistent pace which supports the quest. As Eliot noted of Swinburne, words are employed and worked by expansion rather than intensification. This is apt for the passage above. There is no gradual intensification of idea, rather an expansion away from the detail of the traced sigil towards a 'starless sea of sense' prolonged by sibilance. Eliot's observation that Swinburne's verse resists appraisal in respect to its sound value is also pertinent here. Sound, form and content pursue no discrete functions

⁸¹ 'The Wizard Way', p. 39.

respectively; rather, they contribute unevenly and indiscriminately to the atmosphere.

The same argument made of the function of lines and words within stanzas equally relates to the place of the stanzas in the whole. Each stanza contributes its stage of the quest and maintains its compulsion, suggesting that achieving regeneration is arduous and lengthy, but that the encounters become increasingly familiar. Signalling that development, a change in tense occurs in the first line of the stanza following that quoted above: ‘Now at last the man is come / haply to his halidom’.⁸² Pronouns are used to designate the man less frequently from this point on and description is dedicated instead to the invocations he makes. The revelation that the man has become a wizard does not, however, come in the ecstatic manner of which the poem courts expectation. The first reference is delivered with comparative discretion in ‘Wonder-weft the wizard heard / This intolerable word’. Until this point he has been advancing by manipulating nature; now a disembodied voice confirms that he has reached the brink ‘Of the resolute abyss!’ and he faces the profoundest mysteries of nature at which the ‘shimmering veil’ of the first stanza could only hint. In traversing the symbolic abyss the wizard attains the god head. Subsequently, the poetic voice which had narrated the wizard’s journey changes to the first person and that character takes up his own quest. The fulfilment of that quest is registered, in the same way as the first wizard, by his perception of a new condition of subjectivity: ‘Ah! my proper lips are stilled. / Only, all the world is filled / With the Echo, that dips over / Like the honey from the clover’.⁸³

⁸² ‘The Wizard Way’, p. 38.

⁸³ ‘The Wizard Way’, p. 46.

Excepting the plain sexual references, the poem's infantile rhythm and simple rhyme scheme animate the sense that this is a poem for children. It is not, of course, but it is nevertheless written for an intended audience of magicians also seeking the rebirth that is achieved by the wizard of the poem. In this way the poem, published in the first edition of *The Equinox*, serves to confirm for those readers the nature of the study upon which they are about to embark. Drawing on the general *mise-en-scène* of magic, witchcraft, and occultism, and further framing it for the early twentieth-century reader in an associative context drawing on medievalism, the resurgence in interest in the god Pan, and the suggestiveness of the 'shimmering veil' obscuring nature's secrets, with which the readers of *The Equinox* would no doubt have been familiar, the poem ultimately extends an invitation to transcend all that has been represented by experiencing it in person. The final stanza and the closing couplet read:

Ah! my proper lips are stilled.
 Only, all the world is filled
 With the Echo, that dips over
 Like the honey from the clover.
 Passion, penitence, and pain
 Seek their mother's womb again,
 And are born the triple treasure,
 Peace and purity and pleasure.

— Hush, my child, and come aloft
 Where the stars are velvet soft!⁸⁴

Writing of Swinburne, Eliot reconciles the peculiar barrenness of the poet's words with the poetic world his language creates. Whilst in doing so Eliot proffers a way

⁸⁴ 'The Wizard Way', p. 45.

of reading Swinburne which preserves the poetic meaning of his style, it remains the thing which prevents, for Eliot, contemporary understanding: that poetic world will not translate. Similarly, in 'The Wizard Way', words, lines, stanzas, and the poem itself, taken apart or studied for deeper meaning, yield nothing. The last lines of the poem convey equilibrium in the alliteration and repeated conjunctions in 'Peace and purity and pleasure', and the final couplet serve to seal the narrative and convey it away with the mystery for which it overcompensated, still intact. Crowley does not so much create a poetic world as construct a world in verse from clichéd description. But two characters pass through that world of representation, in order to transcend it, and the final couplet speaks directly to the A.A. initiate, entreating them to do the same. The poetic world, therefore, defers at every point to the real world of magical experience, and to the magical system of *The Equinox* itself.

Implicit in Eliot's review of Swinburne is the suggestion that there is a certain type of reader impressed by his verse and upon whom the whole untranslatable atmosphere works some effect. *The Equinox* poetry had such a readership by default. The draw of *The Equinox* was squarely its magical content, particularly the Liber documents in which the formal route to regeneration was outlined. I want to suggest that the formal composition of the poetry functions to nourish an atmosphere which not only corresponds with the poems, but serves a similar purpose within the wider context of *The Equinox*. Where the exercises outlined in the Liber documents, and the documentation to be produced in evidence of the effects testify objectively, to the experience of regeneration, the poetry performs a complementary role by continually re-enacting examples of

communions, invocations, and re-birth. The value of the Liber documents lies in the scientific method in which they train the initiate in order to render the abstract meaningful, quantifiable, investigable and applicable. Pieces such as, ‘Postcards to Probationers’, and appended magical records, supplement for the reader the scientific side of the journal’s approach. They are particularly important because, unlike the Golden Dawn, members of the Astrum Argentum pursued their study privately and were forbidden to have contact with one another, so the point of fact that the Liber documents constitute a discreet curriculum should be emphasised. *The Equinox* should be understood, therefore, to sustain, defend, encourage and champion the work of initiates at work on the Liber documents. The value of the poetry lies in its nourishing an atmosphere that is supportive to the initiates’ work, initiating in other ways than the Golden Dawn a sense of Brotherhood. It orientates their scientific work in the religious experience they were through it pursuing, and appears to address the aspect of *Varieties* that he found unanswerable.

The Liber documents remedy the original shock that laid ‘bare the organic alteration’, which caused the state from which the initiates requires delivery, by exercising new alterations in the organic perceptions. They thereby carry out the mechanical work in retraining and equilibrating the motor that produces perception so that it can produce more of the same in a therapeutic function. The poetry helps the new ideas to settle, ‘re-crystallize’, and become permanent features of the new arrangement.⁸⁵ ‘Ave Adonai’ speaks to an inconsistency, or an interval between the exchanges of remoter spheres. Crowley’s poem articulates disappointment that the

⁸⁵ *Varieties*, p. 197.

anticipated transferral has not been complete through the persona of a woman disappointed at her lover's absence. Initiates are cautioned about the likelihood of failures, especially in the early days of study, in the Liber texts, and the scientific method makes those failures results nonetheless. 'Ave Adonai' presents a more instinctive reaction, through the woman's viewpoint. In her question, 'Have I not gilded my nails / And painted my lips with vermillion?' it registers the preparations that have gone before but that do not bring the desired end in the question. And it registers an enforced change, awaiting replacement meanings:

Am I not wholly stript
 Of the deeds and thoughts that obscure thee?
 I wait for thee, my soul distraught
 With aching for some nameless naught
 In its most arcane crypt –
 Am I not fit to endure thee?⁸⁶

Older frames have been stripped away provoking the woman, here standing in for the aspirant, to ask why the revelation does not occur, and to doubt their fitness for attainment. Here the disappointment being engaged with is that potentially felt by the reading initiate. It is forestalled and resolved by the last three verses, however. The disillusion and self-doubt expressed in the early questions are overturned in the questions, and the exclamations, that follow:

Girded about the paps
 With a golden girdle of glory,
 Dost thou wait me, thou slave who am,
 As a wolf lurks for a strayed white lamb?
 The chain of the stars snaps,
 And the deep of night is hoary!⁸⁷

⁸⁶ 'Ava Adonai', *Equinox*, I: II (1909), p. 351.

⁸⁷ 'Ava Adonai', *Equinox*, I: II (1909), p. 351.

Wholly and metaphorically stripped before, the initiate will identify with the gradual introduction of elements of ritual and myth and the substitution of the relationship for a symbolic representation of the relationship between the initiate and the god invoked. The earlier questions are personal and hesitant, but here the question takes on some rhetorical authority. Its syntax, particularly the two even clauses embedded at the heart of the sentence, suggests recovering composure and authority. The diction further animates a scornful tone. When consummation occurs it is magical rather than the romantic coupling the scene setting of ‘Pale night’, and ‘pearl-pure pavilion’ had suggested. ‘Have I not gilded my nails / And painted my lips with vermilion?’ is uttered again as a taunt expressing the all along inevitability of the union.

The Equinox fulfilled and extended its role as a nurturing context for the regeneration in its very design. Aleister Crowley, its main editor and major contributor, was acutely concerned with its material and visual presentation. Like the occult poetry printed within its pages, the physical journal appears to have been designed to complement, and particularly in the case of the so-called ‘blue *Equinox*’ affect the goal of rejuvenation. The binding and printing of the covers of *The Equinox* are the aspect of its production that most clearly seems to have been designed and produced with an occult audience in mind. As Timothy D’Arch Smith notes, the task of a ‘perceptive bibliographer’ is ‘to pinpoint from biographical sources how and why and through whose influence’ choices of materials and printing came to be made.⁸⁸ In the case of Crowley, in order to offer an accurate

⁸⁸ D’Arch Smith, p. 14.

assessment of his books, magic must be accepted as the single most influential factor in their composition. He points to Crowley's magical diaries of the years 1914-1920 to show how Crowley viewed all aspects of his life, including his literary work, through the lens of magic. The diaries record rituals performed to secure the success of his Simon Iff stories, to invoke "literary current", for "success in Shaw article", for "poetic inspiration". Indeed, as D'Arch Smith points out, Stephen Skinner, the editor of the dairies in question notes up to eighteen magical operations performed in anticipation of "literary success".⁸⁹ Likewise, in *Magick and Theory and Practice* (1929) as D'Arch Smith also notes, Crowley felt his very writing of it to be imbued with magical potential: 'It is my Will to inform the World of certain facts within my knowledge. I therefore take "magical weapons", pen, ink, and paper; I write "incantations" – these sentences'.⁹⁰ D'Arch Smith attends to the task of perceptive bibliographer for Crowley's publications and suggests that in addition to the 'sigils and seals that adorn cover and title-pages and imprimaturs' and 'which endow a certain mystical authority' there is besides 'built into the very heart of his publications' an 'intrinsic symbolism' that takes in 'their paper, their size, their colour, their price (we can go so far)'.⁹¹

The publication of *The Equinox* at the vernal and autumn equinoxes and the identification of this fact by the zodiacal signs that were embossed on the spines of

⁸⁹ D'Arch Smith, p. 13.

⁹⁰ The full quotation supplied by D'Arch Smith reads: 'It is my Will to inform the World of certain facts within my knowledge. I therefore take "magical weapons", pen ink, and paper; I write "incantations" – these sentences – in the "magical language" i.e. that which is understood by the people I wish to instruct; I call forth "spirits", such as printer, publishers, booksellers, and so forth, and constrain them to convey my message to those people. The composition and distribution of this book thus an act of MAGICK by which I cause Changes to take place in conformity with my Will' (p. 14).

⁹¹ D'Arch Smith, p. 14.

the journal have been earlier introduced. It was suggested that the equinoctial significance in representing the moment of complete equilibrium, which is the beginning and end of all magical endeavour, might be one reason for the imposition of the strict schedule. D'Arch Smith follows Crowley's magical analogy in, and regarding, *Magick in Theory and Practice* and provides more detail. He explains that celebration of the equinoxes was an important feature of the Golden Dawn ritual year during which the aims of order were ritually affirmed by the assembled order. In addition, D'Arch Smith suggests that the talismanic operations of the Golden Dawn provided Crowley with inspiration. The ritual consecration of objects such as wands, ceremonial cups and swords was thought to imbue them, as the initiate, with magical powers, for these, as much as the magician, were participants in the ritual. Likewise the colour blocking of the front cover of volume III, number I, the 'blue *Equinox*' (1919) as it became known on account its striking appearance, draws D'Arch Smith's comment on account of what he views to be deliberate use of colour symbolism. The cloth colour of this edition was royal blue, and the Ancient Egyptian eye of hours set within a blazing sun is dark blue blocked in dark orange. Although contrasting colours to the untrained eye, D'Arch Smith explains that the colour choices are a further influence of Golden Dawn teaching on Crowley's work, particularly here the influence of its interest in colour symbolism which it 'raised from an optical truism to a magical phenomenon'. It was concerned with the illusory effects induced by contemplating, to follow D'Arch Smith's example, a red square, before switching the gaze to a white square which they found caused the complementary colour of the first square looked upon to appear, green in the case of red. Viewed through the context of G.D. magic, the colours are complementary and

cause this ‘flashing’ effect which if studied sufficiently and mediated upon, had the potential to heighten consciousness.⁹²

Just as the poetry of *The Equinox* requires to be read embedded in the context in which it is produced so must the material product. The question that must first be asked of them is what are they for? And, only secondly, what do they mean? The answer in this case, as ever with *The Equinox*, is initiation and regeneration. In this context is resolved its ambiguous design and content, its own material and spirit, just as initiation exploits the same oppositional forces. By employing, for instance, the system of colour relations in the fabric of its designs it appears to unleash an initiatory potential in simply being looked at. If this suggestion is taking the theme too far (although D’Arch Smith’s thorough research makes it eminently possible) it is relatable, with poems like ‘The Wizard Way’, at the very least to the principle of reinforcing new frames, and to the transformation of those frames, into permanent meaning-making remoter schemes as identified as a central function of the religious life.

The differentiation and abundance of slants and methods, although all dedicated towards the same end, undertook to ensure that each inclination, interest, ability mindset, background, and importantly need, in its deepest religious sense, were catered for to the highest and most complete degree in *The Equinox*. Further incorporating all of these is the twinned method and aim of science and religion. In it, we are told and invited to decipher, the whole project of the Astrum Argentum,

⁹² D’Arch Smith, p. 18. Incidentally, D’Arch Smith mentions too that the price of the Blue *Equinox* was set for his American purchasers at 666 cents as a tongue-in-cheek gesture to his being known in the popular press as ‘the great beast’ and ‘the wickedest man in the world’, p. 18.

and the secret of scientific illuminism is encapsulated. Having broken uncharted ground by applying an empirical-scientific method to the truly unknown domain of religious behaviour, *Varieties* is, if there is one, *the* contemporary source in which to find the meaning of scientific illuminism. In fact it is likely that the term arose and crystallised in Crowley's mind on reading *The Varieties of Religious Experience* as scientific illuminism does not feature before now in the history of occultism, moreover, that Crowley read and prized *Varieties* is evident in the extended excerpts he included in the first volume of *The Equinox*. The essence of scientific illuminism is present as much in the gesture of naming, regardless of meaning, as it signifies a desire to clarify reality.

The *Astrum Argentum* half embarks on its own *Varieties*-style circumscription of occultism as seen in its insistence that candidates keep detailed magical diaries which function for them, as for their instructors, as *documents humains*, in much the same way as diary would function for James. But this is only half of the picture, clearly the scientific of the conundrum, because at the same time the A.A. is catering to varieties of the religious sense that James set out to analyse. And the same could be said of *Varieties* itself. Where James was addressing the questions: What are the religious propensities?; and, What is their philosophic significance? Is he not undertaking a quest akin to all those within *Varieties* and without who find their remoter schemes futile and hopeless? The idea that James's own story is embedded in *Varieties* is anecdotal, but poignant, I think, nonetheless. Ultimately the individual would define illuminism for themselves, of course, and this is its essence; method testifies to religious experience. The significance of

Varieties for the Astrum Argetum, as for the magical revival as a whole, is its placing a religious sense at the heart of the question of how to live, and particularly, how to live in the twentieth century, a question to which the occultists had strenuously and religiously devoted themselves. Moreover, within this new domain of religious life, *The Equinox*, in all its volumes and varieties of editions, sits a testament to it, and to itself, a sort of blueprint and index to the testaments of the many other men and women whose records did not surface if they were ever preserved.

Conclusion

Most certainly this Order gives you much more in the way of the practical workings of the Occult than the TS, and is really the best aid to the TS [...] We must however never forget that the TS has a particular mission for this Fin de Siècle and England and India in particular. The TS teaches generally and theoretically for the most part, though there are some practical hints in the S.D. we should do well to bear in mind in our Order [...] You can now use your room set apart for all sorts of experiences.

Rev. W.A. Ayton – F. L Gardiner (5 April 1895)

If I am only well enough to travel, I shall be coming up for the day to get Chemicals and apparatus.

F.L. Gardiner – W.A. Ayton (24 May 1895)

I have been very busy comparing one Author with another, and feel now quite sure of my ground which I never did before. The nearer one gets to it, the more Daemons seem to be let loose to hinder and obstruct one. The practical difficulties are greater than any one could imagine, but to be spiritually obstructed is worse still.

Gardiner – Ayton (16 July 1895)

I have given myself more and more over to my own working and feel quite incompetent to take any active part in what is going on in our Order.

Gardiner – Ayton (5 October 1897)¹

¹ Yorke Collection, NS 9.

The Ayton-Gardiner correspondence samples two men's experience as participants in the Magical Revival. Both men were members of the Golden Dawn, and before that, as the letters suggest, of the Theosophical Society. They testify most strongly to the way the culture of occultism influenced the lives of those attracted to explore the latent powers of their being, and within that, to their particular desire to withdraw from prescribed activities in favour of exerting increasing personal and practical control over their magical lives. In this case the particular context for the first letter is the occasion of F.L Gardiner's advancement within the Golden Dawn. Ayton's letter passes on his wife's congratulations (she too was a member of the G.D.), and some general remarks are exchanged regarding their mutual wishes for a meeting. From their respectfully informal correspondence what emerges is the sense that magic had been fully assimilated into their personal and everyday lives. The progression evidenced in the four extracts registers the delights as well as the challenges of magical life. Moreover it demonstrates that on an individual basis magicians were making conscious decisions regarding the future direction of their studies and their preferences regarding the nature of their involvement in occultism, a central internal theme of the Magical Revival which this thesis has sought to demonstrate. Gardiner and Ayton concur that the Theosophical Society, although involved in an admirable and timely project, and despite its own assurances that it deals with ideas of more than mere archeological import, is too theoretical to meet Gardiner's needs. There are, he discovers, practical problems on which the T.S. cannot advise. His initiation into the inner order of the Golden Dawn assures a function for his 'room set apart', for a time at least. However, his personal study

appears both to develop beyond this and to contract into individualised work; ultimately he declares himself incapable of participation in the business of a magical order. By 1897, for Gardiner, the Golden Dawn, the very model of the magical order, is mundane and limiting.

I offer the Ayton-Gardiner correspondence as a partial conclusion to the internal narrative that emerges as an important theme of the Magical Revival, and as a fitting summary of this small but significant segment of the cultural history of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain. The clear sense of progression in Gardiner's magical life is replicated on a larger scale throughout the Magical Revival. The Theosophical Society outlined its syncretistic system with a strongly theoretical angle of which the only practical accoutrements required were a pen, some paper for notes, and good reading light. The Golden Dawn contribution to the Magical Revival was a highly systematised scheme of magic. Although a continuation of the syncretistic Theosophical world-view in principle, it too upheld the tenet of unity of religions, although within that The Golden Dawn strongly privileged the systems of those historical cultures to which ritual and initiation were defining features. The Golden Dawn system constituted a kind of overlay for the earlier. Hence, the easy transition for those magicians seeking experience with the phenomena of their being rather than extensive narrative about its universality. After 1900, the desire for practical and individualised magical experience is registered in the A.A. system, and in the narrower focuses of the various splinter orders which arose from the remnants of the shaken Golden Dawn. There are numerous additional examples of refinement towards the personal examined by this

thesis, not least in the turn to the magical potential of the inner physiological system under the A.A., or in the spectrum of religious proclivities and differentiated need for which the A.A.'s experience-based system catered. However, to return to Gardiner, his clear line of progression so reflected in the wider maturation of the Magical Revival, begs a question: where does the magical revival go? That is, at what point does the interest in the bearing of the occult on life, and particularly in its potential for rejuvenation cease to be of interest? This conclusion will respond to this question in two ways: firstly by providing an epilogue to the magical revival in the form of a discussion of Dion Fortune, a magician and writer whose work in the late 1920s and the 1930s might be seen to represent a final and interesting stage of the Magical Revival; secondly, by taking a broader cultural view and suggesting where the type of magical thinking that informed the culture of occultism might go, into which discourses it might feed.

In many ways Dion Fortune represents the clearest example of a magician dedicated towards the application of the magical on the everyday. Between 1929 and 1936 she wrote four magical novels, and one partial novel, *Moon Magic*, that was completed and published posthumously.² Fortune's real name was Violet Firth but was known in all circles by Dion Fortune, the name she derived from her magical motto 'Deo Non Fortuna'. Many magicians, for obvious symbolic reasons, enjoyed using their magical names when in touch with fellow occultists, but there is

² Dion Fortune, *The Demon Lover* (1929) (London: Society of The Inner Light, 1996); *The Winged Bull* (1935) (London: Society of The Inner Light, 1998); *The Sea Priestess* (1935) (Boston, MA: Weiser, 2003); *The Goat-Foot God* (1936) (Northants: Aquarian, [n. d.]); *Moon Magic* (1956) (Boston, MA: Weiser, 2003).

perhaps a sign of Fortune's whole philosophy suggested in her utterly sincere adoption of the name. Like her predecessors Fortune was of the belief that Society needed to awaken to its latent cosmic forces as embodied by Paganism's gods and goddesses, or as she referred to it, society needed a dose of 'Vitamin P'. In this way her novels are romances with a difference:

We had passed into another dimension – the dimension of the things of the mind, and that which was between us had taken on a significance that which was no longer personal but part of Life itself - of Life, going on in the eternal becoming. Molly was to me not a woman, but the thing which is woman [...] losing ourselves in the larger life we found each other.³

Here, in the closing scene of *The Sea Priestess* (1935), Wilfred Maxwell describes the outcome of a magical act of sexual sublimation that is typical of the conclusions of Fortune's fiction. Maxwell and his new found partner Molly have correctly performed the ritual and, through identification with the elements and actors of the astral plane, achieve enlightenment and, even more importantly, acquire the vocabulary with which to explain it. Maxwell's tone of rational and complete emotional insight, contrast with his deranged ponderings at the start of the novel during which he, 'in the ordinary way' merely 'skated over surfaces' and found nothing in his thoughts but 'an obscure muddle'.⁴

The journey from 'obscure muddle' to a new found self-hood is repeatedly described in the novels and charted through the emotional and magical journeys of her protagonists. Maxwell begins the novel suffering the pressure of work and depression, added to which, an acute asthmatic affliction and more debilitating still

³ *The Sea Priestess*, p. 234.

⁴ *The Sea Priestess*, p. 13.

apparently, a severe and sustained campaign of henpecking at the hands of his mother and spinster sister. His occult interest is aroused by reading the work of Algernon Blackwood and others. Another, Hugh Paston, recently widowed experiences a depressive episode on learning that the car accident in which his wife had died had also killed her, unbeknown to him, long-term lover. He wonders ‘What should be the attitude of a husband at once outraged and bereaved? Should it be grief and forgiveness or a disgusted repudiation?’⁵ Lost, Paston restlessly wanders the streets of London, and in the throes of an existential crisis he is exemplary pre-initiatory material. Paston’s perambulation leads him down a dingy walkway and, significantly, to an antiquarian bookshop. Here he rummages in the two-penny basket that stands on the dimly-lit threshold of the premises and rejects several perishing books whose titles he cannot decipher until one ‘reasonably clean blue binding heaved up from the welter like a log in rapids’.⁶ Pleased by its state of comparative preservation and its intriguing title, ‘The Prisoner in the Opal’, Paston dips into the novel and reads:

‘The affair gave me quite a new vision of the world [...] I saw it as a vast opal inside which I stood. An opal luminously opaque, so that I was dimly aware of another world outside mine’.⁷

That Paston, in his crisis of conscience and character, seems to have been meant to discover *The Prisoner in the Opal* is confirmed by the analogous reawakening experienced by the protagonist of that novel. Just as the opening chapter of *The Goat-Foot God* anticipates, if Paston reads the novel and is open to its symbolism, he will achieve spiritual awareness akin to that of the prisoner. After skim-reading a

⁵ *The Goat-Foot God*, p. 8.

⁶ *The Goat-Foot God*, p. 10.

⁷ *The Goat-Foot God*, p. 11. *The Prisoner in the Opal* is a novel written in 1928 by A.E.W. Mason.

second passage, an account of a Black Mass involving a ‘renegade priest’ and a ‘dissolute woman’, Paston does decide to purchase the novel certain that it is something to ‘both hold the attention and intrigue the intellect’.⁸ Both men’s initial awakening to occultism is familiar. The incidence of discovery of an occult manuscript and finding therein the promise of alterity has been cited by many real life magicians as the catalyst for their studies and has become a kind of truism in the history of the occult.⁹ From this point on Paston and Maxwell find a holistic remedy in private devotions and group ritual. Both reach a point in which they can identify themselves with the deeper significances of the universe. Incidentally, both find their health improves and Maxwell’s asthma completely disappears.

The significant thing about Fortune’s novels is how they undertake to administer the remedial Vitamin P, not in their characters, however, but in their readers. Before turning to occultism, Dion Fortune was an early graduate and practitioner-researcher at the London Medico-Psychological Clinic, founded in 1914. The clinic developed a therapeutic of ‘mental hygiene’ based on a psychosomatic view of organic and mental illness and a belief that psychological

⁸ *The Goat-Foot God*, p. 11.

⁹ The most striking example of this device in use is the myth of origin perpetuated by MacGregor Mathers and Samuel Wynn Westcott, discussed in Chapter Two. In *The Winged Bull* the focus is slightly different. The plot follows Fortune’s customary pattern and the thematic attention to the need to construct a new language through which to access occultism and communicate its potential is expressed through the potential neophyte, Ted Murchison’s, experience at The British Museum. On one foggy evening, during which Murchison visits, the museum is said to look ‘like the entrance to Hell’ and once inside ill-lit exhibition halls fail to set off the exhibits, p. 7. The suggestion is that relics of magic and supposedly historic cultural practices are consigned firmly to the murky past by the ideology that governs the idea behind the museum. When the face of a winged bull of the temple of Nineveh stares at Murchison with a ‘curious, questioning expression’ and seems to ‘probe his very soul’, the dead religions are seen to be very much alive and necessary in rescuing humanity from its very hell as represented by the museum, a monument to the system of classification and materialist science’, p. 9.

disease is as debilitating as organic disease.¹⁰ Maxwell, suffering in equal degrees from asthma and emotional oppression, could easily be a clinical case study. Fortune intended her novels to have an actual initiatory function in themselves. She disliked the public magical ‘performances’ that had increasingly become the outlet for the later Magical Revival. Fortune thought them pantomime and she could not see how a public hall could be conducive to the very personal, psychological work of regeneration. She did believe, however, that the literary form of the novel, however, could be put to work in the name of mental hygiene.

Reflecting on her intentions for her novels, Dion Fortune published several articles in *The Inner Light*, the journal of the magical order she founded, also called the Inner Light, or Fraternity of the Inner Light:

I decided to produce novels that should come as near to an initiation ceremony as possible; that is to say, that should produce in receptive persons something of the same results as are produced by the experience of going through a ritual initiation.¹¹

Fortune anticipates that a receptive reader will access the novel on an experiential level, penetrating the narrative and retrieving its personal relevance to them. If the

¹⁰ The objectives of the clinic in full were, ‘i) The treatment by medical and psychological means of functional nervous diseases and of functional disorders accompanying organic diseases; ii) The advancement of this branch of Medical Science; iii) The extension in the community of knowledge of the laws of Mental Hygiene’. Gareth Knight, *Dion Fortune and The Inner Light* (Loughborough: Thoet, 2000), p. 29.

¹¹ A note on Dion Fortune’s writing: access to the Inner Light archives is impossible unless a *bona fide* member of the Order and as a result much of Fortune’s work is filtered through the publications of order members such as biographer and one time student of Fortune, Gareth Knight. He has edited and published much of her writing by collecting together series of articles for publication in book form and quoting un-cited excerpts of her articles in his self-published occult journal *Quadriga*. In one of Knight’s *Quadriga* articles, ‘Individuality and The Ghost’, he quotes extensively from an unknown source in which Fortune discusses *The Sea Priestess* and *Moon Magic*, Gareth Knight, ‘The Individuality and The Ghost’, *Quadriga*, 15 (1980), 4-22, p. 14.

purpose of ritual, earlier outlined by Nataf, is a symbolic procedure designed to allow the participant access to the astral light, it follows that the novel must provide ritualistic elements to guide the reader's response. Fortune's novels can be seen to do this through their identification with certain gods and goddesses, Isis in *The Sea Priestess* and *Moon Magic* and Pan in *The Goat-Foot God*. The novels' description of setting and their portrayal of stereotypical or archetypal characters are replicated throughout all her novels to aid the process of identification between reader and character. Just as, for example, the poetry of *The Equinox* re-enacts rebirth in every verse, Fortune's novels play out through prose the same process. By establishing, as does the ritual space, a kind of comfort zone of prescribed operations and actions repeatedly performed, the novels, by Fortune's theory, free the reader to react to the symbolism she wrote into her fiction. Finally, suggesting how occult texts and novels continue to influence and inform present-day magicians, and confirming the initiatory power of Fortune's fiction, Gareth Knight explains how a ritual invocation of Isis can be worked using geographical and architectural detail taken from the novels.¹²

Dion Fortune's magical theory of novel writing represents a continuation of the Magical Revival's endeavour to continually refine magical thinking into methods and texts appropriate to personal study, and which can be assimilated most

¹² Knight's article '*The Sea Priestess and Moon Magic*' explains that the novels give details of the practicalities of ritual that Fortune is unable to provide in her more theoretical work and suggests two methods, based on the novels, by which to enter the Astral light and make mind contact with Fortune. He says, 'In visiting the place in the imagination the descriptions of the exterior and interior of the sea-house might be utilised from the novel. One could build this into a sequence, arriving at the tunnelled doorway, going through into the courtyard, and then into the house having traversed the Down', Gareth Knight, '*The Sea Priestess and Moon Magic*', *Quadriga*, 3 (1977), 4-7, p. 16.

easily into personal habit. The convenience of buying a magical paperback in order to get one's rejuvenation underway, compared with assembling the accoutrements of wand, robe and the rest, or even finding a quiet space in order to roll out the leopard hide, undress, and begin a pramayama session, is not easily missed. The internal narrative of the Magical Revival as one increasingly turning away from the material and performative *mise en scène* that at defined it at its peak, is brought to a close with Dion Fortune's novels.

A defining aim of this thesis has been to demonstrate the value of directing the critical eye away from the esoteric and studying instead the exoteric aspects of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century occultism. Individual chapters have examined connections between the ideas and activities that were informing conventional culture and occult culture. This has brought to light features and phases within the Magical Revival which have not before been documented. I think particularly here of the A.A.'s rehabilitation of the corporeal body, both in real terms, and the rehabilitation of body as a concept in occult thought, and again, the A.A.'s new approach to magical wisdom. Before that, sensitivity to the textual culture of occultism led to a *reading* of Theosophy in an attempt to understand how its own methodology and form *is* its meaning, and how this reveals the nature of its confrontation with Darwinism. It also, of course, in so doing, contextualises the frustrations of those who felt their magical futures lay the other side of initiation just as Theosophy's rigorous documentary approach had at one time poached Spiritualists, perhaps, it can now be conjectured, seeking a broader framework for their interest in the return of the deceased spirit. The SPR was researching in order

to provide such an empirical framework, but could that conceivably satisfy the inquiring mind who attended a *séance*? Psychical Research could either prove or disprove the validity of findings, and authenticate the experiences of individuals on that level, but it still couldn't provide the glue, that is express what it was to be a spiritualist, in the wider scheme of things.

In presenting Theosophy as it appears 'on the page' I have attempted to highlight something of the discrete *experience* of Theosophy as might be had by an interested individual as they sit down to read, for instance, *Isis Unveiled*. Theosophy, more than any of the other occult movements that constitute the Magical Revival, seems to continue to exist in modern cultural scholarship independently of its written texts though Joscelyn Godwin has shown the importance of noting its researched construction, and Sinnett's persistent reminders not to dismiss Theosophy as a mere historical hobby paradoxically alerts us to the question. If the Payne Wright milieu had only decades before delved into the mysteries of the ages and reported on their findings in a range of texts, as had Godfrey Higgins in *Anacalypsis: An Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis* (1836), why did not Blavatsky simply establish the T.S., stock its library with those texts, and let the readers to the rest? The answer to that question is glaring, but is one which scholars have failed to note in all but the most general and inadvertent of terms. By 1877 thirty years of life had passed and materialist science (its foremost opponent) had produced research purporting to have at its fingertips the blueprint for human life, most importantly, Darwin had happened. All this would have to be incorporated, disproved and dispatched in order to keep the

Theosophical way alive. Consequently, what we see in Theosophy is a conscious confrontation with evolutionary theory, not only on the level of idea, but on the level of form and mode.

The Golden Dawn is the magical order about which most is known and on which the most has been written. Again, however, there is something missing from its history and interpretation. Its significance within the magical tradition is everywhere cited as being its successful blending of elements of Eastern and Western spiritual work into a comprehensive system for magical attainment. In itself, this suggests its newness. The Golden Dawn has to be regarded as a new configuration if it is to make any real sense, but within this its historical inflection must be understood to make for that newness. The chapter recalled and reinforced the 'Hermetic' name selected by its founders and emphasised that the ultimate objective of the system was embedded in that branch of magic, and that that aim was, specifically, regeneration.

From here attention turned to the Astrum Argentum and to a second phase of the Magical Revival, abruptly marked by the Golden Dawn problems, a break is nonetheless suggested by the second phases' energies towards generating a new corporeal magical experience, and to the authentication of those experiences. A subsidiary aim of this pair of chapters has been to bring the A.A. more to the fore of cultural history on the Magical Revival. Its membership, and the circumstances of its establishment is well-documented by those early occult historians who introduced the sense of the Magical Revival in the first place, but it does not figure

in cultural history at any length at all, and it deserves to. The *Astrum Argentum* should be seen not only as evidencing the desire for resolving the magical and the everyday business of living, but as a body seeking ways of harnessing the magical tradition for that purpose and at the same time drawing widely on mainstream researches at the cutting edge of twentieth-century medical and psychological thought, and feeding information found therein back into his own work for the benefit of practitioners. By informing its practices by innovations towards the better life of the physical body, and William James' groundbreaking advancing of a new scientific theory of the religious life, the *Astrum Argentum* is not only seen to be working in a general mood of regeneration, it is forging new experiences towards new modes of life for an era which had half-forgotten. The Theosophical evolution outlined by Blavatsky had given an alternative view of the history of human life which in many ways enabled the pursuit of different modes of life. Rectilinear degeneration, and *fin-de-siècle* declension did not need to be the determiner of an atrophied life. This is the case before 1900, after 1900 attention turns to transforming new modes of life into lasting categories of life. The desire here is not only for the 'more Life' but for the *clarified* life, which itself, to follow James' logic of frames and schemes, is a condition of life. On first reading, Crowley's statement of his aim for *The Equinox* ('I arranged for it to contain something like a complete programme of my proposal Operation to initiate, emancipate and relieve mankind') seemed absurd in its ambition, but taken in the context of similar desired arrangements in conventional culture, it seems quite attainable, and admirable, even.¹³

¹³ *Confessions*, p. 841.

In these discussions commonalities of principle and method between the conventional and occult culture are sharply drawn and their importance has been demonstrated insofar as they modify understanding of the Magical Revival. While the objective of the thesis was to reach exactly such a fuller view of the magical moment, before concluding there is the question of counter influence. The other side to the question of where the Magical Revival goes is not a question of periodisation, but one of discursive influence. Again, in places, the details of chapters suggest where and how this might indeed be another strand in the narrative of the Magical Revival. It was, after all, a widely recognised and widely supported movement which attracted a large number of the age's significant cultural figures and personalities. And it made its presence felt in other ways too. The early twentieth-century bookstand featured a wealth of publications penned and printed by its own people, and occult themes and personalities frequently featured in the fiction of a significant number of mainstream authors such as Somerset Maugham, and the highly popular novelist Temple Thurston.¹⁴ Norman Haire, the rejuvenation clinician and sexologist who treated W.B. Yeats, wrote an article about Crowley's employment of sex in his later magic. This can be found in *The Journal of Sex Education* which was 'A Popular-Scientific Journal for the Sexual Enlightenment of Adults'.¹⁵ There are other examples beyond that confirm, as the introduction suggested, that occultism was a felt part of the fabric of cultural and journalistic life, outside of its own orders. Most striking perhaps, especially after

¹⁴ Somerset Maugham, *The Magician* (1908); and Temple Thurston, *Man in a Black Hat* (1930). These two are selected as examples because they each feature central characters based on Aleister Crowley.

¹⁵ Norman Haire, *The Journal of Sex Education* 4: 4 (February-March 1932), 153-178.

Nordau's exclusion of the occultist, is Beatrice Webb's employment of the term 'modern mystic' in debate regarding the future reform of society.

As S.G. Hobson's *New Age* article, 'Real Value in Reconstruction', 16 August 1917, addressed in response to the announcement of the impending establishment of the Ministry of Reconstruction, the term reconstruction can be read 'in two senses': 'do we mean the rehabilitation of the old, or do we mean the deliberate scrapping of the old that the new may be built upon the old site?'¹⁶ Hobson's conclusion is that 'we must all be born again'; economic growth, it seems, relied on a spiritually attuned work force. Although the early Socialism of the *New Age* is primarily concerned with progress through the implementation of nothing less than a new social order, its vision of progress is frequently arrived at through historical comparisons, specifically, historical-occult comparisons. Forms of occultism, and the language of occultism and magic, are utilised by the *New Age* Socialists in their explication of a vision of social regeneration.

In its first editorial 'The Future of the "New Age"', editors A.R. Orage and Holbrook Jackson set the magazine's agenda 'in view of the gradual emergence from the tangle of sociological theory of a distinctly Socialist conception of Society' and suggested that 'the time seems ripe for the appearance of a weekly Review devoted to the intelligent discussion and criticism, both of existing institutions and of plans and organisations for their reform'. The language throughout the early pieces projects the view of Socialism's authentic and essential

¹⁶ *NA*, 20.8, 16 August (1917), p. 346. S.G. Hobson was a regular contributor to the *New Age*, and ran series on subjects related to the labour force, particularly the civil guilds, and the impact of war on labour.

humanity: ‘genuine philosophic reformers’, ‘transforming and creative will’, ‘nobler spiritual and imaginative faculties.’ Socialism here, beyond being simply ‘a means to the abolition of economic poverty’, is ‘more necessary’ as ‘a means to the intensification of man’.¹⁷ Its particular reflexivity was not about looking back to past institutions, to which Hodgson objected, but was about looking back into humanity, understanding its emotional and spiritual impulses and injecting society with a renewed spirituality.

With the *New Age* vision established, debate over the precise method of achieving the intensified State began. Two themes emerge: the function and form of spirituality, and the backward-looking historical imperative of reconstruction. In Volume One Number One, debate began immediately amongst the key advocates of social engineering and eminent Fabians: H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw. The leading article reported the proceedings of a public conference of the New Reform Group that invited discussion of the ‘Samurai’ of Wells’ *Modern Utopia*. Wells centres on ‘the problem of the provision of personal culture’. Wells examines how to make ‘this thing which was a dream and an ideal at last a possibility and a reality’ and asks, what ‘the culture of the citizen’ should constitute and ‘how to get that culture’:

It became clear that it was necessary to get people with a fine enthusiasm for social reconstruction, who would have faith in the ideas which that enthusiasm inspired. They would need to produce a new model of citizenship suited to the reconstructed state.

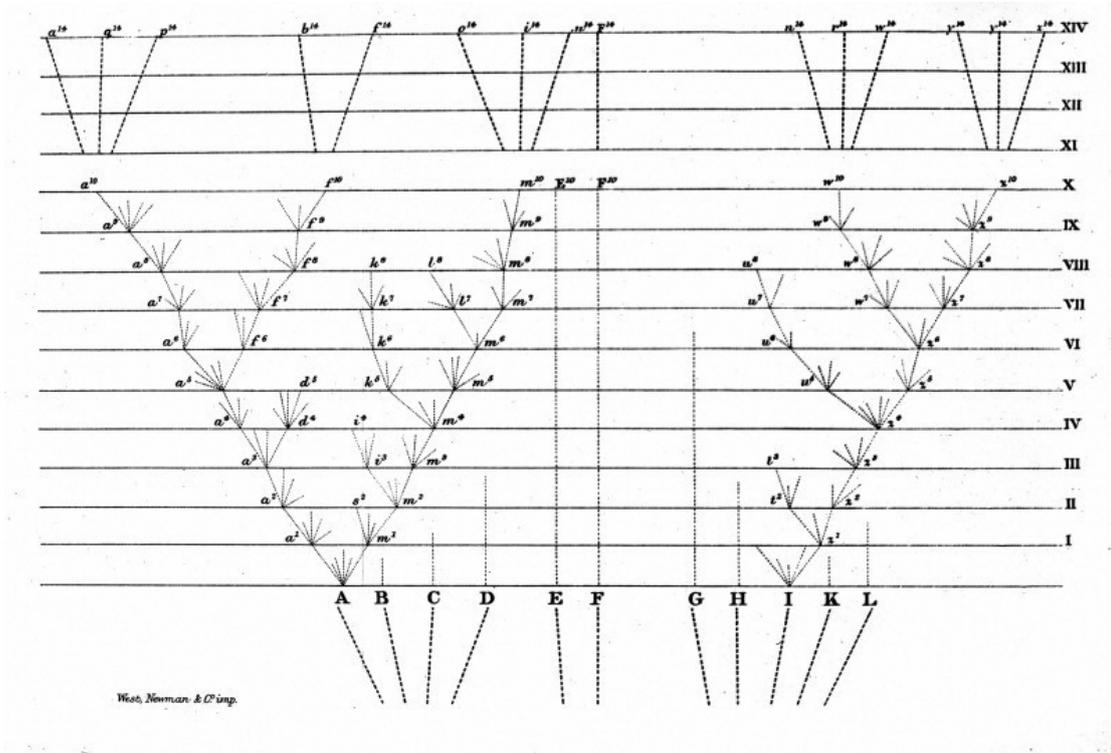
¹⁷ *NA*, I.I, May 2 (1907), p. 8.

Wells defers the responsibility of running the new state to others, and in *Modern Utopia* these people are sketched as the Samurai. Wells outlines a number of rules by which the Samurai must live. The most important of these comprise a Sandow-like 'personal efficiency' and the more complicated imposition of 'moral and intellectual training' through 'clear and definite study' and the creation of an exclusive 'circle of ideas' by which the dependence on personal gain would be checked and replaced with a 'distinctive religious quality'. Finally, and according to Wells, most importantly, the achievement of a distinctive religious quality is dependent on 'the creation of an atmosphere' to keep the Samurai 'in touch with the very impulse of the movement' through 'private devotions' and 'ritual'.¹⁸ What Wells identifies as the crucial factor is the spiritual connection of man with his world-view and it is this that makes him the ideal citizen. Demonstrating a development beyond that forged internally by the Magical Revival, Beatrice Webb encapsulates the development, since Nordau especially, in wider perception of the place of varieties of occultism in twentieth-century society when she declares that 'Socialists would not succeed till they had become practical mystics'.¹⁹

¹⁸ *NA*, I.I, May 2 (1907), p. 9.

¹⁹ *NA*, I.I, May 2 (1907), p. 10.

Appendix 2



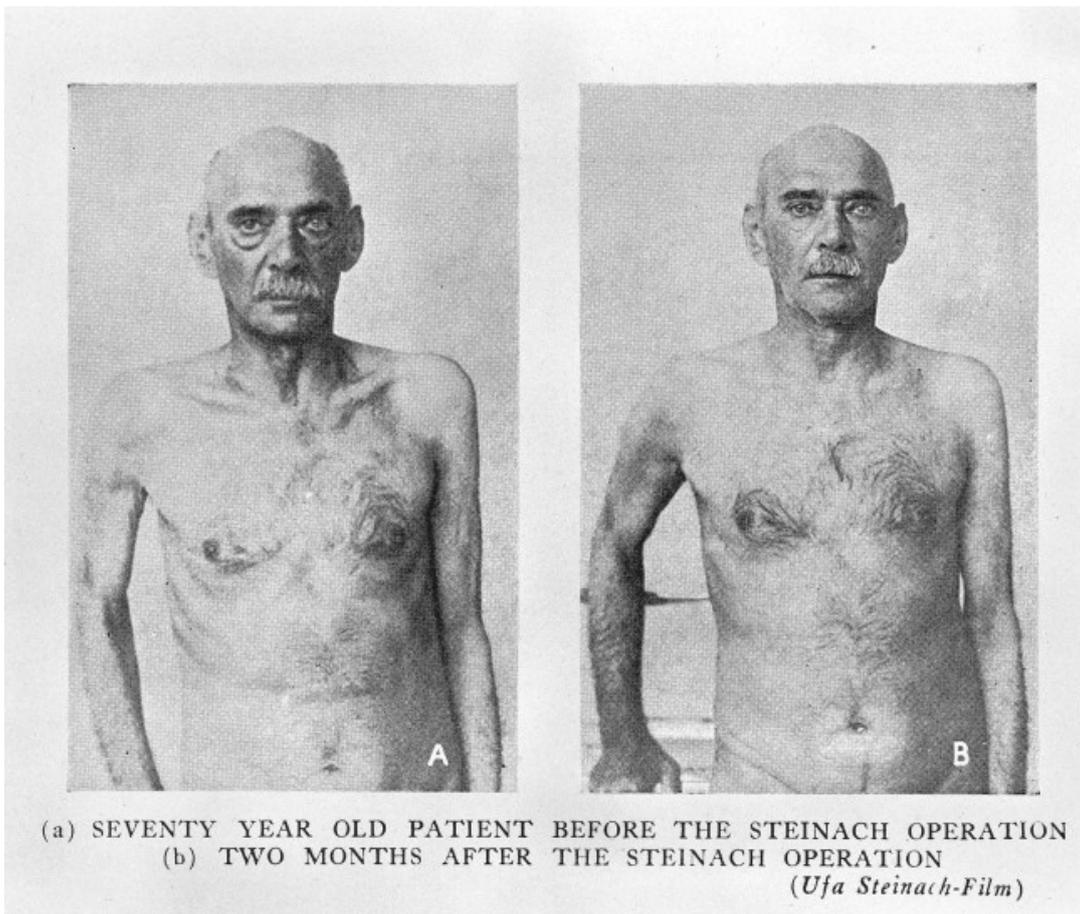
'Darwin's scheme showing the evolution of species' from, Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 2nd edn. (1872), facing p. 91, Wellcome Library, London (Historical Images M0011261)

Appendix 3



'An old lady asking her doctor about "Violet Ray", referring to ultra rays. Reproduction of a drawing after H.M. Brock' (1925), Wellcome Library, London (Historical Images V0011525)

Appendix 4

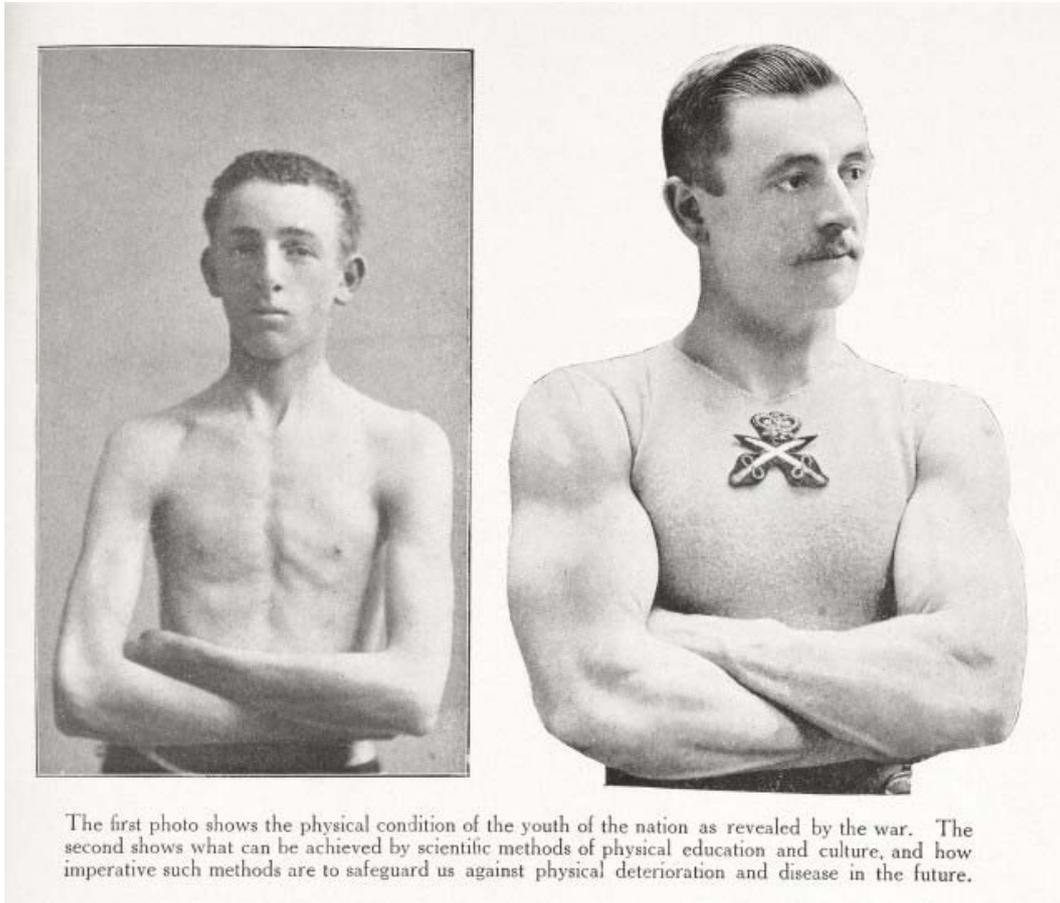


Appendix 5



'Power in Repose. Photo of the Author Eugen Sandow, showing excellence in physique at 52', from Eugen Sandow, *Life is Movement: the Physical Reconstruction and Regeneration of the People*, London: [n. pub.], 1920), p. 1, Wellcome Library, London (Historical Images L0034497)

Appendix 6



The first photo shows the physical condition of the youth of the nation as revealed by the war. The second shows what can be achieved by scientific methods of physical education and culture, and how imperative such methods are to safeguard us against physical deterioration and disease in the future.

From, Eugen Sandow, *Life is Movement: the Physical Reconstruction and Regeneration of the People* (London: [n. pub.], 1920), p. 47, Wellcome Library, London (Historical Images L034501)



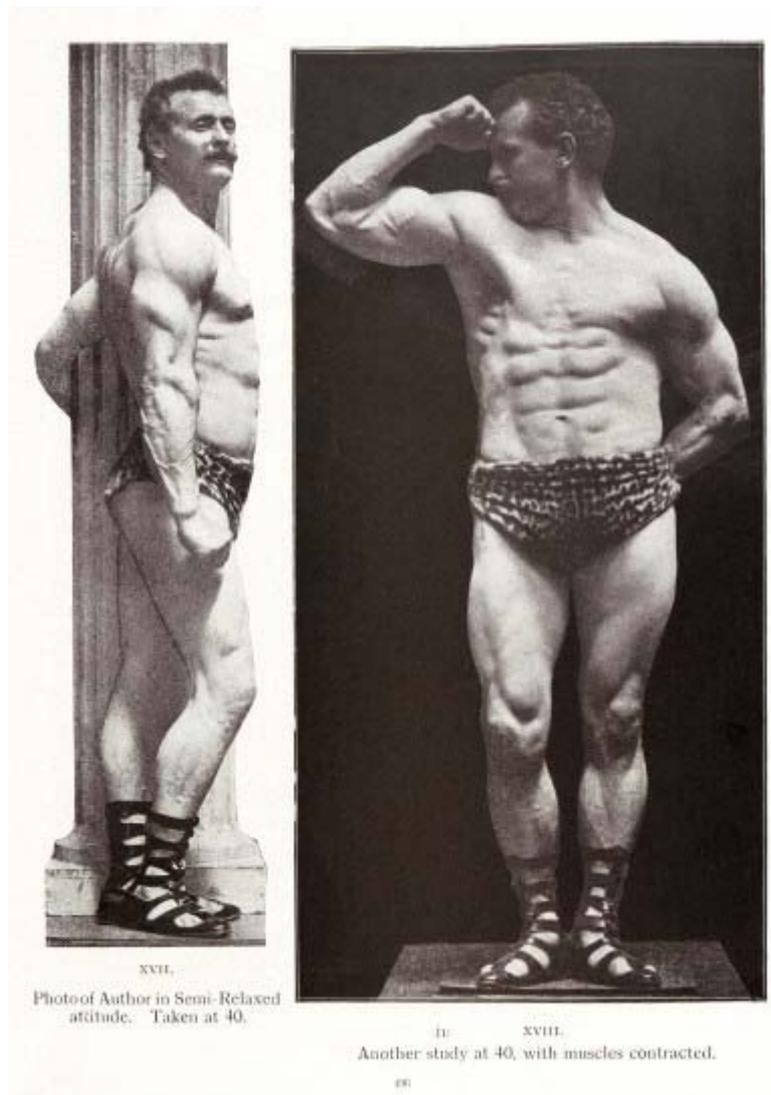
'The Author at the Age of 10...', from, Eugen Sandow, *Life is Movement: the Physical Reconstruction and Regeneration of the People* (London: [n. pub.], 1920), p. 482, Wellcome Library, London (Historical Images L0033344)

Appendix 8



'The original Farnese Hercules, to whom the Author has been compared...' from Eugen Sandow, *Life is Movement: the Physical Reconstruction and Regeneration of the People* (London: [n. pub.], 1920), p. 500, Wellcome Library, London, (Historical Images L0033355)

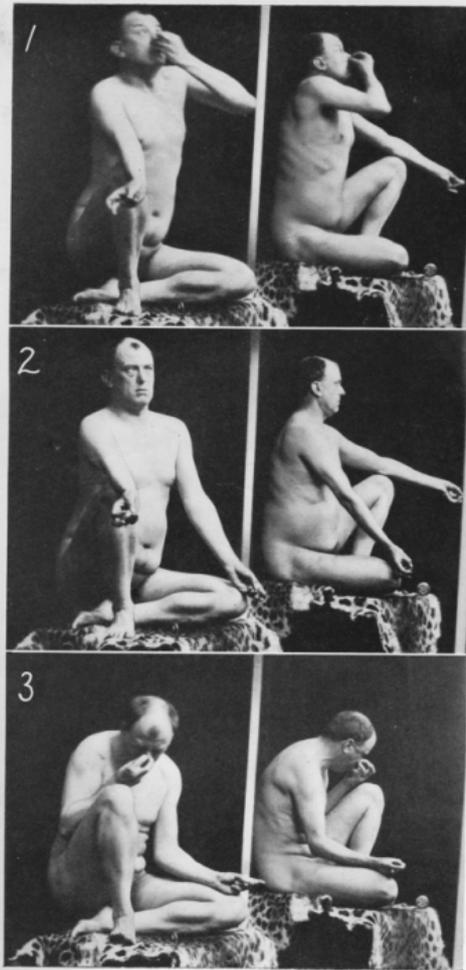
Appendix 9



‘xvii Photo of Author in Semi-Relaxed attitude. Taken at 40’, and ‘xviii Another study at 40. With muscles contracted’, from, Eugen Sandow, *Life is Movement: the Physical Reconstruction and Regeneration of the People* (London: [n. pub.], 1920), p. 494, Wellcome Library, London (Historical Images L0033353)

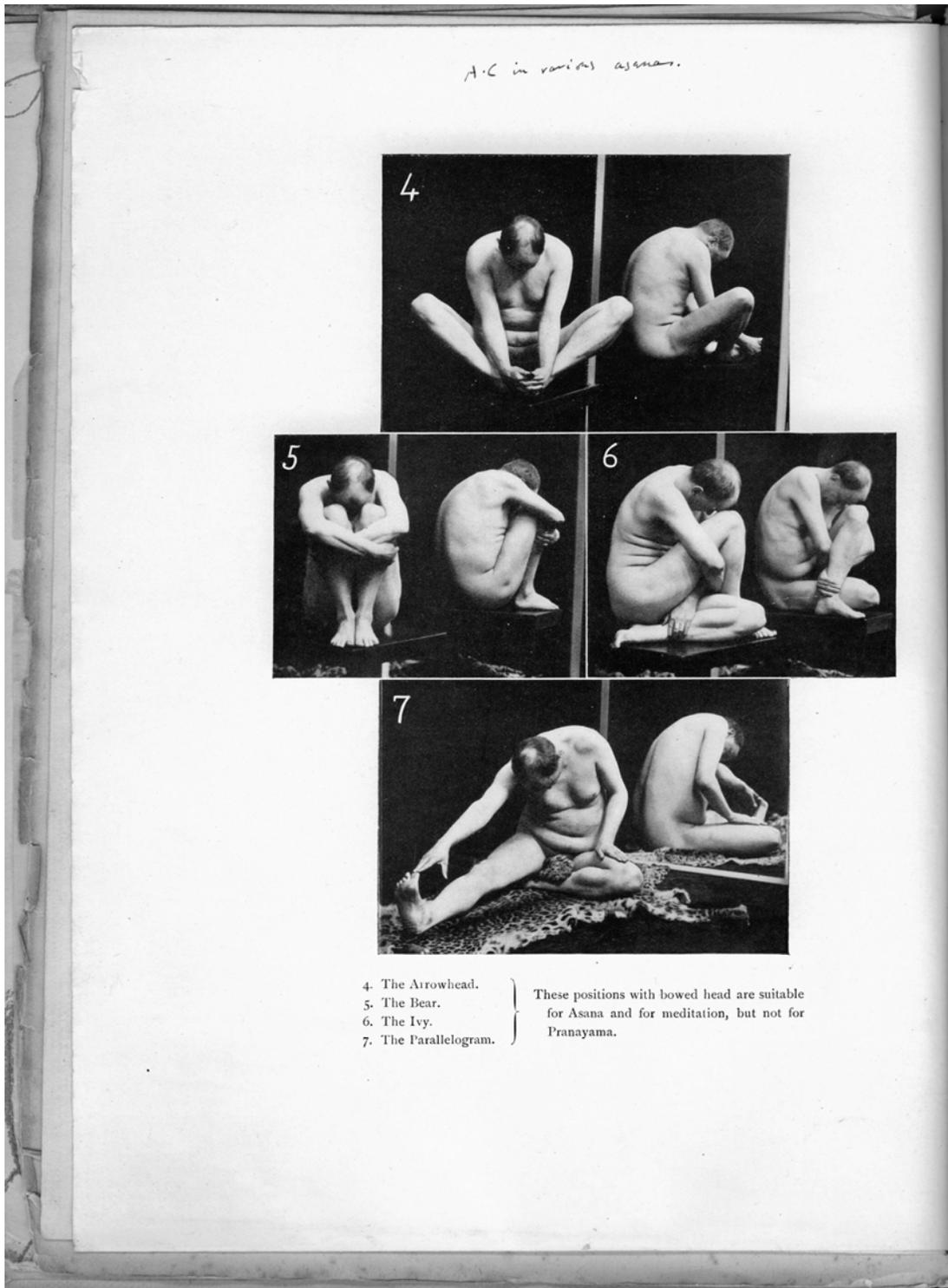
PRAMAYAMA PROPERLY PERFORMED.

[It has been found necessary to show this because students were trying to do it without exertion, and in other ways incorrectly.—Ed.]



1. The end of Purakam. The bad definition of the image is due to the spasmodic trembling which accompanies the action.
 2. Kunbhakam.
 3. The end of Rekakam.

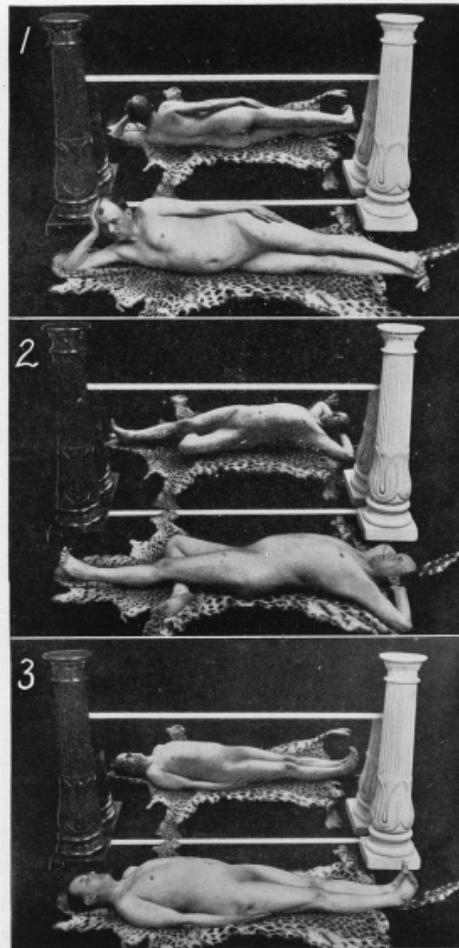
Appendix 11



'iv. The Arrowhead; v. The Bear; vi. The Ivy; vii. The Parallelogram' from, *The Equinox*, I: VII (1912), facing chancellor page, Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute, University of London

Appendix 12

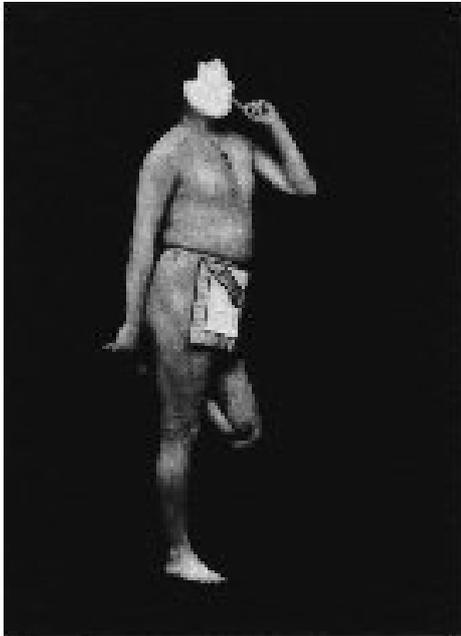
LIBER E. SUPPLEMENTARY INSTRUCTION IN ASANA.



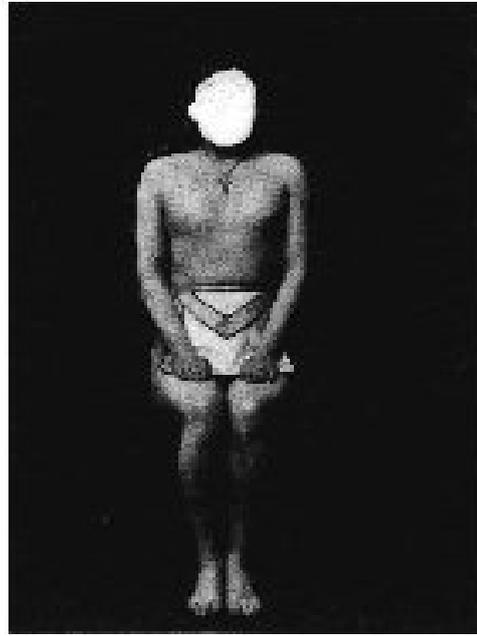
1. The Dying Buddha
 2. The Hanged Man.
 3. The Corpse.

These three recumbent positions are more suitable for repose after meditation than for meditation itself.

Appendix 13



THE IBIS



THE GOD



THE THUNDERBOLT



THE DRAGON

In the Ibis the head is tilted very slightly toward back; in the Thunderbolt the right foot might be a little higher and the right knee lower with advantage.

'The Four Positions: The Ibis, The God, The Thunderbolt, The Dragon' from, *The Equinox*, 1: 1 (1909), p. 29, Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute, University of London

Appendix 14

Notes on publication of *The Equinox* ed. by Aleister Crowley unless otherwise stated

An. V, Vol. I, No I, (March MCMIX O.S. [1909])

(London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent)

Special Supplement, 'John St. John: The Record of the Magical Retirement of G.H.Frater O:M:'

pp. 0-233. Supplement pp. 0-139

5 s (price of back copies of number increased to 10 s after 21 Oct 1910, see:

Editorial of Vol. 1, No. 4)

An. V, Vol. I, No. II, (September MCMIX O.S. [1909])

(London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent)

pp. 0-393

5 s

An. VI, Vol. I, No. III, (March MCMX O.S. [1910])

(London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent)

pp. 0-327. Supplement pp. 0-74

5s

An. VI, Vol. I, No. IV, (September MCMX O.S. [1910])

(pub. ?)

Special Supplement, 'The High History of Sir Palmedes the Saracen Knight and of his Following the Questing Beast'

pp. 0-352. Supplement pp. 0-176

5 s

An. VII, Vol. I, No. V, (March MCMXI O.S. [1911])

(pub.?)

Special Supplement, 'Liber CCCCXVIII (XXX AERUM)

pp. 0-177, Special Supplement pp. 0-176

10-12 s (depending of grade of edition)

An. VII, Vol. I, No. VI, (September MCMXI O.S. [1911])

(Weiland and Co., London, & Turnbull and Spears, Edinburgh)

Special Supplement 'The Rites of Eleusis'

pp. 0-160, Special Supplement 0-124

10-12 s

An. VII, Vol. I, No. VII, (March MCMXII O.S. [1912])

Weiland and Co., London

Turnbull and Spears, Edinburgh: preliminaries, pp. 1-248, and pp. 355-400a;
 Chiswick Press, London: the remainder
 pp. 0-419
 10-12 s

An. VII, Vol. I, No. VIII, (September MCMXII O.S. [1912])

Edited by Soror Virakram (Mary D'Esti/Mary d'Estes Sturges (1871-1931)), & sub-
 Editor Fra. Lampada Tradam (Neuburg)
 Weiland and Co., London
 Special Supplement, 'Sepher Sephiroth'
 Atheneum Press: pp. 49-96; Richard Clay and Sons, Ltd. London and Bungay: the
 remainder
 pp.0-253, Special Supplement pp 0-101

An. IX, Vol. I, No. IX, (March MCMXIII O.S. [1913])

Ed. Soror Virakam, Sub-Ed. Fra. Lampada Trudam
 Weiland & Co. Ltd, London & Richard Clay and Sons, Ltd
 pp 0-309

An. IX, Vol. I, No. X, (March MCMXIII O.S. [1913])

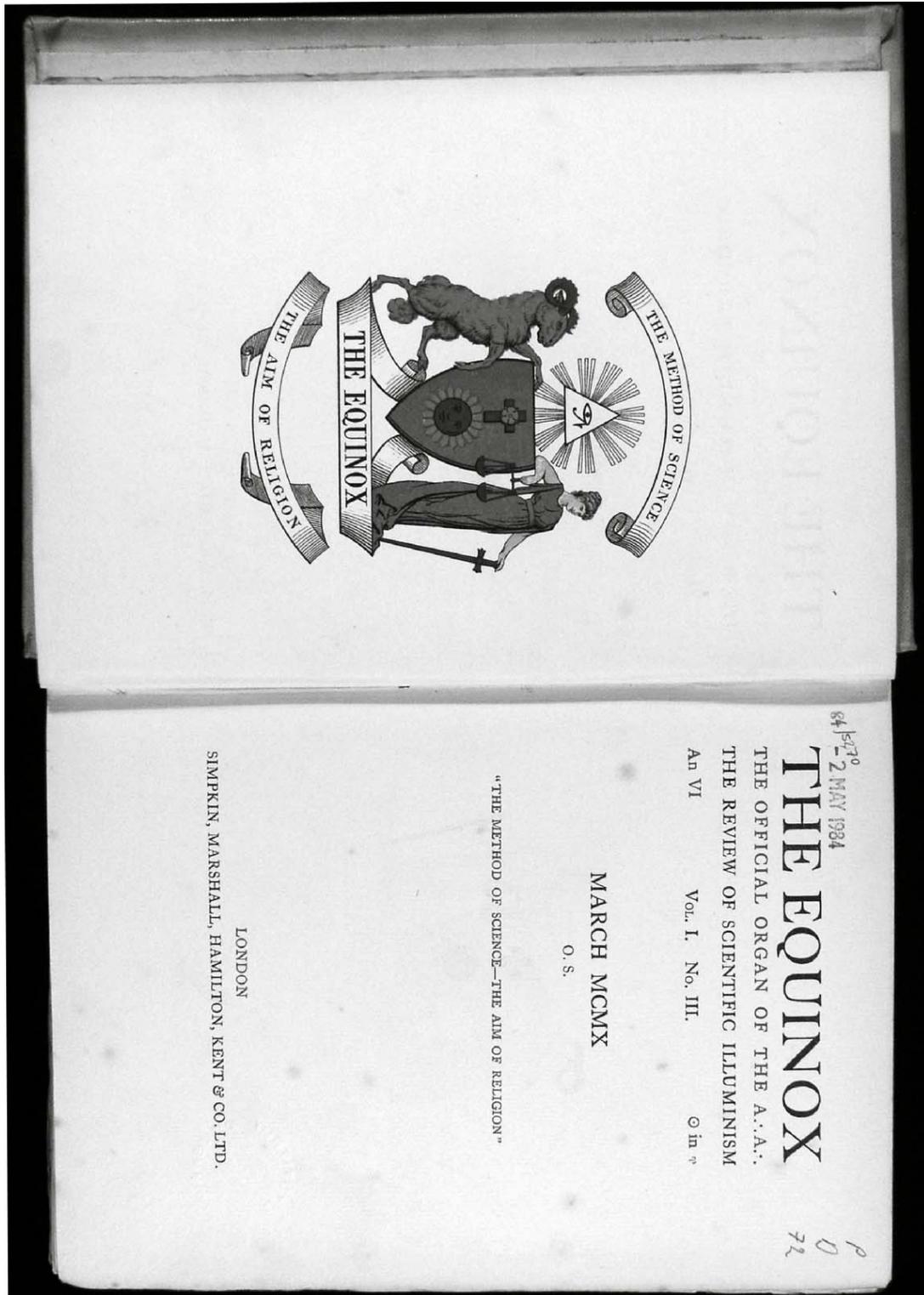
Weiland & Co. Ltd, London
 Richard Clay & Sons, Ltd
 pp 0-223, then 'The Key to The Mysteries' starts nos. again a-xiv (intro), then I-236

—Vol. II, Nos. I-X: 'Period of Silence'—

An. XV, Vol. III, No. I, (March MCMXIX E.V. [1919])

Detroit
 Special Supplement 'Liber LXXI71'
 pp 0-275

Appendix 15



Title page from, *The Equinox*, I: III, (1910), Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute, University of London

THE RITES OF ELEUSIS AS
PERFORMED AT CAXTON
HALL WESTMINSTER IN
OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER
1910 BY MISS LEILA WAD-
DELL AND MR ALEISTER
CROWLEY WITH DIS-
TINGUISHED ASSISTANCE

Bibliography

i. Archive Material

Yorke Collection, Warburg Institute, University of London

OS D2	O.T.O Material
OS E21	Letters
OS 43	AC's address book
NS 4	Early G.D. Material 1899-1900
NS 7	Early G.D. Material
NS 8	Folder of notes pertaining to the G.D.
NS 9	Letters
NS 35	Letters
NS 43	Articles on AC
NS 44	MMM Material
NS 45	Pamphlets and prospectuses
NS 63	Soft-bound notebooks formerly belonging to F.L Gardiner
NS 92	A.A. Material

The Equinox, An. V, Vol. I, No I, (March MCMIX O.S.1909)

The Equinox, An. V, Vol. I, No. II, (September MCMIX O.S. 1909)

The Equinox, An. VI, Vol. I, No. III, (March MCMX O.S. 1910)

The Equinox, An. VI, Vol. I, No. IV, (September MCMX O.S. 1910)

The Equinox, An. VII, Vol. I, No. V, (March MCMXI O.S. 1911)

The Equinox, An. VII, Vol. I, No. VI, (September MCMXI O.S. 1911)

The Equinox, An. VIII, Vol. I, No. VII, (March MCMXII O.S. 1912)

The Equinox, An. VIII, Vol. I, No. VIII, (September MCMXII O.S. 1912)

The Equinox, An. IX, Vol. I, No. IX, (March MCMXIII O.S. 1913)

The Equinox, An. IX, Vol. I, No. X, (March MCMXIII O.S. 1913)

The Equinox, An. XV, Vol. III, No. I, (March MCMXIX E.V. 1919)

Harry Price Library, Senate House Library, University of London

HPL 1/22/90 'The Elixir of Life: Our Magical Medicine', A lecture delivered before the National Psychological Institute in 1932

ii. Journals, Periodicals and Newspapers

Lucifer

Notes and Queries

Occult Review

The Equinox [electronic version] <<http://www.the-equinox.org/>> [most recently accessed 22 February 2007]

The New Age

The Times

Theosophical Review

Theosophist

iii. Primary Sources

ANON., *Regeneration, A Reply to Max Nordau* (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1895)

ANON., *The Theosophical Movement 1875-1925, A History and a Survey* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1925)

BARRETT, FRANCIS, *The Magus; or, Celestial Intelligencer; being a Complete System of Occult Philosophy* (1801) (Northants: Aquarian, 1989), and [electronic version] <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/grim/magus/>> [accessed 02 December 2006]

BERGSON, HENRI, *Matter and Memory* (1896), trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul, and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1911)

—, *Creative Evolution* (1907), (New York: Cosimo, 2005)

—, *Mind Energy: Lectures and Essays*, trans. by H. Wildon Carr (London: Macmillan, 1920)

BESANT, ANNIE, *Birth and Evolution of the Soul, Two Lectures* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1895)

—, *Theosophy and The New Psychology, A course of Six Lectures* (London & Benares: Theosophical Publication Society, 1904)

BLACKWOOD, ALGERNON, *Tales of the Mysterious and the Macabre* (London: Hamlyn, 1967)

- BLAVATSKY, H. P., *Isis Unveiled; A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern*, 2nd edn (New York: J.W. Bouton, 1877)
- , *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy* (1888), (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1952)
- , *The Key to Theosophy; being a clear exposition, in the form of question and answer, of the ethics, science, and philosophy for the study of which the theosophical society has been founded* (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1889)
- , *The Theosophical Glossary*, ed. by G.R.S. Mead (London: [n.p.], 1892)
- , *Instructions* (Glasgow: William McLellen, 1921)
- , *Nightmare Tales* (Montana: Kessinger, [n.d.])
- , *Occult Tales* (Montana: Kessinger, [n.d.])
- , *The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society, & Preliminary Memorandum of the Esoteric Section* (1931), ed. by C. Jinarājadāsa (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing, 1966)
- CHAMBERS, ROBERT, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation, and Other Evolutionary Writings* (1844, and 1845-60), ed. by James A. Secord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994)
- CROWLEY, ALEISTER [P.], 'The Rites of Eleusis', *Occult Review*, 12: 4 (1910), 213-220
- , *Moonchild* (1929) (ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2002)
- , *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1929) [electronic version] <<http://www.hermetic.com/crowley.aba/>> [accessed 12 June 2004]
- , *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley* (1929), ed. by John Symonds and Kenneth Grant (London: Penguin Arkana, 1989)
- , *The Stratagem and other stories* (1929), ed. by Keith Rhys (Brighton: Temple Press, 1990)
- DARWIN, CHARLES, *The Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection; or, the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859), ed. by Gillian Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)
- , *Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, (1879), ed. by James Moore and Adrian Desmond (London: Penguin, 2004)

ELIOT, T.S., 'Swinburne as Poet', *The Sacred Wood* (1920) (London: Methuen, 1974), pp. 144-150

[FARR, FLORENCE, and ELAINE SIMPSON,] 'Flying Roll No. 4', *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic and Alchemy...Being Hitherto Unpublished Golden Dawn Material*, ed. by Francis King (Northants: Aquarian, 1987), pp. 57-59

FARR, FLORENCE, *The Enochian Experiments of the Golden Dawn: The Enochian Alphabet Clairvoyantly Examined* (1901) ed. by Darcy Küntz (Edmonds, WA: Holmes Publishing Group, 1996)

FORTUNE, DION, *The Demon Lover* (1929) (London: Society of The Inner Light, 1996)

—, 'Penetration of the Astral Plane', *Occult Review*, 49 (1929), 308-313

—, 'Ceremonial Magic Unveiled', *Occult Review*, 57 (1933), 13-24

—, *The Winged Bull* (1935) (London: Society of The Inner Light, 1998)

—, *The Sea Priestess* (1935) (Boston, MA: Weiser, 2003)

—, *The Goat-Foot God* (1936) (Northants: Aquarian, [n. d.])

—, *Moon Magic* (1956) (Boston, MA: Weiser, 2003)

—, *The Secrets of Doctor Taverner* (Northants: Aquarian, 1989)

—, *What is Occultism?* ed. by Gareth Knight (1967) (ME: Weiser, 2001)

HAIRE, NORMAN, *The Journal of Sex Education* 4: 4 (February-March 1932)

HIGGINS, GODFREY, *Anacalypsis: An Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis* (1836) (Montana: Kessinger, 2002)

JAMES, WILLIAM, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902), ed. by Martin E. Marty (New York and London: Penguin, 1985)

—, *The Will To Believe, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1897) (New York: Longmans Green, 1903)

KAMMERER, PAUL, *Rejuvenation and the Prolongation of human efficiency* (London: Methuen, 1924)

LANGE, FREDERICK ALBERT, *The History of Materialism: And Criticism of Its Present Importance* (1865), 2nd edn, introd. Bertrand Russell, 3 vols (London: Routledge, 2000)

- LÉVI, ELIPHAS, *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual* (1896), trans. by A.E. Waite (London: Rider & Company, 1984)
- LODGE, OLIVER, *The War and After short chapters on subjects of serious practical import for the average citizen in A.D. 1915 onwards* (London: [n. pub.], 1916)
- MACHEN, ARTHUR, 'The Three Impostors' (1895), *The Eighteen-Nineties: A Period Anthology in Prose and Verse chosen by Martin Secker* (London: The Richards Press, 1948)
- MACHEN, ARTHUR, and A.E. WAITE, *The House of the Hidden Light* [1904], ed. by R.A. Gilbert (N. Yorks: Tartarus Press, 2003)
- MACHEN, ARTHUR, *Far off Things* (London: Martin Secker, 1922)
- MACGREGOR MATHERS, S.L., *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra Melin the Mage* (1883: Author)
- , *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (1887: Author)
- , *The Key of Solomon the King* (London: George Redway, 1889)
- MAITLAND, EDWARD, *Anna Kingsford: Her Life, Letters, Diary and Work*, 2 vols, ed. by Samuel Hopgood Hart (London: John Watkins, 1913)
- MAUDSLEY, HENRY, *Body and Mind: An inquiry into their connection and mutual influence, specially in reference to mental disorders* (London: Macmillan, 1870)
- , *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1886)
- MAUGHAM, SOMERSET, *The Magician*, (London: [n.p.], 1908)
- NORDAU, MAX, *Degeneration*, 2nd edn (London: Heineman, trans. 1895)
- PODMORE, FRANK, *Studies in Psychical Research* (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1897)
- SANDOW, EUGEN, *On Physical Training: Study in the Perfect Type of Human Form*, ed. by G Mercer Adan (London: [n. pub.] 1896)
- , *Strength and How to Obtain It* (London: [n. pub.] 1897)
- , *The construction and reconstruction of the Human Body: A Manual of the Therapeutics of Exercise* (London: [n. pub.] 1907)

- , *Body-Building, or, Man in the Making: How to Become Healthy and Strong* (London: [n. pub.] 1919)
- , *Life is Movement: The Physical Reconstruction and Regeneration of the People (A Diseaseless World)* (Herts.: [n. pub.], 1920)
- SINNETT, A.P., *The Occult World* (London: Trübner, 1881)
- SMILES, SAMUEL, *Self-Help; with illustrations of character and conduct* (London: John Murray, 1859)
- STEINER, RUDOLPH, *An Outline of Occult Science* (London: Theosophical Society, 1914)
- , *The Occult Movement in the Nineteenth Century* (1915) (London: Rudolph Steiner Press, 1973)
- , *Selected Poems*, ed. by Timothy Webb (London: Penguin, 2000)
- THURSTON, TEMPLE, *The Man in the Black Hat* (London: [n.p.], 1930)
- WESTCOTT, WILLIAM WYNN, *Suicide, Its History, Literature, Jurisprudence, Causation, and Prevention* (London: H.K. Lewis, 1885)

iv. Secondary Sources

- ADORNO, THEODOR, 'Theses Against Occultism', *The Stars Down to Earth* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 128-134
- ALEGO, JOHN, 'The Integrated Alien: Ritual Magic in the Fiction of Dion Fortune' in *The Shape of the Fantastic: Selected Essays from the Seventh International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts*, ed. by Olena H. Saciuk (Westport: Greenwood, 1990), pp. 212-218
- ARMSTRONG, TIM, *Modernism, technology and the body: A cultural study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)
- BALDICK, CHRIS and ROBERT MIGHALL, 'Gothic Criticism', *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 209-228
- BARCLAY, GLEN ST. JOHN, *Anatomy of Horror: the Masters of Occult Fiction* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1978)

- BARNES, JON, 'Review', Arthur Machen and A.E.Waite, *The House of the Hidden Light*, *TLS*, 7 November 2003, 'Books in Brief section', p. 152
- BEER, GILLIAN, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1983)
- BELL, MICHAEL, *The Context of English Literature: 1900-1930* (London: Methuen, 1980)
- BOOTH, MARTIN, *A Magick Life: A Biography of Aleister Crowley* (London: Coronet, 2000)
- BOTTING, FRED, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996)
- BOWN, NICOLA, CAROLYN BURDETT, and PAMELA THURSHWELL (eds) *The Victorian Supernatural* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- BRADSHAW, DAVID, *A Concise Companion to Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003)
- BRANNER, ROBERT, *Gothic Architecture* (New York: Braziller, 1961) [electronic edition] <<http://www.columbia.edu/~eer1/branner.html>> [accessed 12 June 2004]
- BROOKER, PETER, and PETER WIDDOWSON, 'A Literature for England', in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds) *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 116-159
- BRIGGS, ASA, *Victorian Things* (1988) (Stroud: Sutton, 2003)
- BROWN, J.F., 'Aleister Crowley's Rites of Eleusis', *The Drama Review*, 22: 2 (1978), pp. 3-26
- BUTLER, ALISON, 'Magical Beginnings: The Intellectual Origins of the Victorian Occult Revival', *Limina*, 9 (2003), 78-95
- BUTLER, ALISON, and DAVE EVANS (eds.) *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic*, 1, (2003)
- BUTLER, E.M., *The Myth of The Magus* (1948) (Cambridge University Press, 1993)
- BYNUM, W. F., and ROY PORTER, (eds.) *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine* 2 vols (London and New York: Routledge, 1993)
- BYRON, GLENNIS, 'Gothic in the 1890s', *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 132-142

- CASE, SUE-ELLEN, 'Luminous Writing, Embodiment, and Modern Drama: Mme Blavatsky and Bertolt Brecht' in *Modern Drama*, 43 (2000), 567-582
- CAVENDISH, RICHARD, *A History of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977)
- CHAPMAN, JANINE, *Quest for Dion Fortune* (Maine: Weiser, 1993)
- CHILDS, PETER, *Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2000)
- COLCLOUGH, DAVID, 'Scientific Writing', *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. by Michael Hattaway (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 565-575
- [CROWLEY, ALEISTER], *Amrita: Essays in Magical Rejuvenation*, ed. by Martin P. Starr (California: Thelema Publications, 1990)
- DALY, NICHOLAS, *Modernism, Romance and the fin de siècle: Popular Fiction and British Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)
- D'ARCH SMITH, TIMOTHY, "'The Books of the Beast": Prolegomena to a Bibliography of Aleister Crowley', *The Books of The Beast: Essays on Aleister Crowley, Montague Summers, Francis Barrett and Others* (London: Crucible, 1987), pp. 13-48
- DAVIS, PHILIP, *The Oxford English Literary History, Volume 8, 1830-1880, The Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)
- DE BLÉCOURT, WILLEM, RONALD HUTTON and JEAN LA FONTAINE, *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, vol. VI *The Twentieth Century*, Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (eds) (London: Athlone, 1999-2002, 1999)
- DEAN, STELLA, *Challenging Modernism: New Readings in Literature and Culture, 1914-45* (London: Ashgate, 2002)
- DIBATTISTA, MARIA and LUCY MCDIARMID (eds.) *High and Low Moderns: Literature and Culture, 1889-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)
- DIXON, JOY, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001)
- ELIADE, MIRCEA, *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976)
- , *A History of Religious Ideas; II, From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity*, trans. by Willard R Trask (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982)

- FAIVRE, ANTON, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994)
- , *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition*, trans. by Christine Rhone (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).
- FOUCAULT, MICHEL, 'What is Enlightenment?', *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. by Paul Rainbow (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 32-50
- FORD, BORIS (ed.) *The Cambridge Guide to The Arts in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988-1989), VII: *The Later Victorian Age*, (1989)
- , (ed.), VIII: *The Edwardian Age and the Inter-War Years* (1989)
- FOWDEN, GARTH, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)
- GALBREATH, ROBERT, 'The History of Modern Occultism: A Bibliographical Survey', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 5: 3 (1971), 98-126
- GARRETT, PETER K., *Gothic Reflections: Narrative Force in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003)
- GIBBONS, B.J., *Spirituality and The Occult: From the Renaissance to The Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 2001)
- GIJSWIT-HOFSTRA, MARIJKE, BRAIN P. LEVACK, and ROY PORTER *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, vol. v *The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (eds) (London: Athlone, 1999-2002, 1999)
- GILBERT, R.A., *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians, the Rise and Fall of a Magical Order* (Northants: Aquarian, 1983)
- , *Revelations of the Golden Dawn: The Rise and Fall of a Magical Order* (Berks.: Quantum, 1997)
- GITRE, EDWARD J.K., 'William James on divine intimacy: psychical research, cosmological realism and a circumscribed re-reading of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*', *History of the Human Sciences*, 19: 2 (2006), 1-21
- GLENDENING, LOGAN, *Behind the Doctor* (London: Heinemann, 1933)
- GODWIN, JOCELYN, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994)

- GRAHAM, KENNETH W. (ed.), *Gothic Fictions: Prohibition/transgression* (New York: AMS Press, 1989)
- GRANT, KENNETH, *The Magical Revival* (London: Muller, 1972)
- GREENSLADE, WILLIAM, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)
- GUTHRIE, DOUGLAS, *A History of Medicine* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1945)
- HAPGOOD, LYNNE, and NANCY L. PAXTON (eds) *Outside Modernism: In Pursuit of The English novel 1900-1930* (London: Macmillan, 2000)
- HARPER, GEORGE MILLS, *Yeats and the Occult* (London: Macmillan, 1976)
- HARPER, MARGARET MILLS, 'Yeats and The Occult', *Cambridge Companion to W.B. Yeats*, ed. by Marjorie Howes and John Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 144-166
- HAYWARD, RHODRI, 'Demonology, Neurology, and Medicine in Edwardian Britain', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 78 (2004), 37-58
- HORKHEIMER, MAX and THEODOR W. ADORNO, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), trans. by John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1998)
- HOWE, ELLIC, *The Magicians of The Golden Dawn: A Documentary History of a Magical Order, 1887-1923* (Northants: Aquarian, 1985)
- HURLEY, KELLY, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- HUYSSSEN, ANDREAS, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Indiana: Indiana Univeristy Press, 1986)
- HUTCHINSON, ROGER, *Aleister Crowley: The Beast Demystified* (London: Mainstream, 1998)
- HUTTON, RONALD, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)
- INGLIS, BRIAN, *A History of Medicine* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965)
- JAHIEL, JESSICA 'Rejuvenation Research and the American Medical Association in the Early Twentieth Century: Paradigms in Conflict' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Boston University, 1992)
- JACKSON, HOLBROOK, *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (1913) (London: Penguin, 1939)

- JUNG, C. G., *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature* (1942), trans. by R.E.C. Hull (London: Ark-Routledge, 1989)
- KAVALER, ETHAN MATT, 'Renaissance Gothic: Pictures of Geometry and Narratives of Ornament', *Art History*, 29: 1 (2006), 1-46
- KERMODE, FRANK, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (1966) (London & New York: Oxford University Press, 1968)
- KILGOUR, MAGGIE, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London: Routledge, 1995)
- KING, FRANCIS, *Modern Ritual Magic: The Rise of Western Occultism* (1970) (Dorset: Prism, 1989)
- KNIGHT, GARETH, 'The Sea Priestess and Moon Magic' in *Quadriga*, 3 (1977), 4-7
- , 'Occult Secrecy and Dion Fortune' in *Quadriga*, 6 (1978), 9-13
- , 'The Individuality and The Ghost', in *Quadriga*, 15 (1980), 4-22
- , *Dion Fortune and The Inner Light* (Loughborough: Thoeth, 2000)
- KOLOCTRONI, VASSILIKI, JANE GOLDMAN, and OLGA TAXIDOU, (eds.), *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998)
- LACHMAN, GARY, *The Dedalus Book of the Occult: A Dark Muse* (Cambs.: Dedalus, 2003)
- LANGE, RAMAN L., and HANS H. HECHT, 'The Mechanism of Cheyne-Stokes Respiration', *Journal of Clinical Investigation*, 41: 1 (1962), 42-52
- LAWRENCE, CHRIS, and ANNA K. MAYER, (eds.), *Regenerating England: Medicine and Culture in Inter-War Britain* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000)
- LAQUEUR, THOMAS, 'Why the Margins Matter: Occultism and the Making of Modernity', *Modern Intellectual History*, 3: 1 (2006), 111-135
- LEDGER, SALLY, and SCOTT MCCRACKEN, (eds.), *Cultural Politics at the fin de siècle* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
- LEFF, S. & V., *From Witchcraft to World Health* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1956)
- LEVENSON, MICHAEL, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

- LLOYD, WYNDHAM E.B., *A Hundred Years of Medicine* (London: Duckworth, 1936)
- MERKUR, DAN, 'Reflections of the Meaning of Theosophy', *Theosophical History*, VII: I (January 1998), 18-34
- , 'Stages of Ascension in Hermetic Rebirth', *Esoterica*, I (1999), 79-96 [electronic edition] <<http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/Merkur.html> [accessed 09 November 2005]
- MEYERS, GERALD E., 'Introduction: The Intellectual Context', *The Works of William James: The Principles of Psychology, Volume 1*, ed. by Frederick H. Burkhardt and others (Harvard MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1981)
- MILES, ROBERT, *Gothic Writing 1750-1820: A Genealogy*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002)
- MULVEY-ROBERTS, MARIE (ed.), *The Handbook to Gothic Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1998)
- NAPIER, ELIZABETH R., *The Failure of the Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-century Literary Form* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987)
- NATAF, ANDRÉ, *Dictionary of the Occult* (Herts.: Wordsworth, 1994)
- NICHOLLS, PETER, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (California: California University Press, 1995)
- OPPENHEIM, JANET, *The other world: Spiritualism and psychical research in England. 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
- ORWELL, GEORGE, 'W.B. Yeats', *Essays* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 233-238
- OTIS, LAURA, *Literature and Science in the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)
- 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
- , *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004)
- PICK, DANIEL, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848- c. 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

- PORTER, ROY, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present* (London: HarperCollins, 1997)
- PUNTER, DAVID, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the present day* (1980), II: *The Modern Gothic* (London: Longman, 1996)
- , 'Ceremonial Gothic', *Spectral Readings: Towards a Gothic Geography*, Glennis Byron and David Punter (eds.) (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 37-52
- RAIT, SUSAN, 'Early British Psychoanalysis and the Medico-Psychological Clinic', *History Workshop Journal*, 58 (2004), 63-85
- READ, DONALD, *Edwardian England*, (London: The Historical Association, 1972)
- REGARDIE, ISRAEL, *The Golden Dawn: An Account of the Teachings, Rites and Ceremonies of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, (1971), 6th edn (Minnesota: Llewellyn, 2002)
- RICHARDSON, ALAN, *Priestess* (Northants: Aquarian, 1987)
- RICHARDSON, ANGELIQUE, 'The Life Sciences: "Everybody nowadays talks about evolution"', *A Concise Companion to Modernism*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 6-33
- ROBERTS, MARIE MULVEY, *Gothic Immortals: The Fiction of the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London: Routledge, 1990)
- ROGERS, TIMOTHY, *Georgian Poetry 1911-1922: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977)
- ROSS, ROGERS, *The Georgian Revolt: The Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal, 1910-1922* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967)
- SALER, MICHAEL, "'Clap if you believe in Sherlock Holmes": Mass Culture and the Re-Enchantment of Modernity, c. 1890 – c. 1940', *The Historical Journal*, 46: 3 (2003), 599-622
- SCHLECHT, LUDWIG F., 'Re-reading "The Will to Believe"', *Religious Studies*, 33 (1997), pp. 217-225
- SEDGWICK, EVE KOSOFSKY, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1976)
- SHOWALTER, ELAINE, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Viking, 1990; and London: Bloomsbury, 1991)

- SINGER, CHARLES, *A Short History of Medicine: Introducing Medical Principles to Students and Non-Medical Readers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928)
- SMITH, ANDREW and JEFF WALLACE (eds.), *Gothic Modernisms* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001)
- SMITH, JOHN E., 'Introduction', *The Varieties of Religious Experience, The Works of William James*, ed. by Frederick H. Burkhardt and Others (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985)
- SMITH, WARREN SYLVESTER, *The London Heretics 1870-1914* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1968)
- STOKES, JOHN, *In The Nineties* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989)
- , (ed.), *Fin de Siècle/Fin du Globe* (London: Macmillan, 1992)
- SURETTE, LEON, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, and The Occult* (McGill: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993)
- SUTIN, LAWRENCE, *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley* (New York: St Martin's Griffin, 2000)
- TATE, TRUDI, *Modernism, History and The First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998)
- TEICH, MIKULÁŠ, and ROY PORTER, (eds.), *Fin de Siècle and Its Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
- THURSCHELL, PAMELA, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)
- TIRYAKIN, EDWARD, A., *On the Margin of the Visible: Sociology, The Esoteric, and The Occult* (New York: John Wiley, 1974)
- TREITEL, CORINNA, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004)
- TROTTER, DAVID, *The English Novel in History, 1895 – 1920* (London: Routledge, 1993)
- URBAN, HUGH B., 'The Power of the Impure: Transgression, Violence and Secrecy in Bengali Śākta Tantra and Modern Western Magic', *Numen*, 50 (2003), 269-308
- , 'Unleashing the Beast: Aleister Crowley, Tantra and Sex Magic in Late Victorian England', *Esoterica*, V (2003), 139-192 [electronic edition]

- <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeV/Unleashing_the_Beast.htm> [accessed 24 May 2004]
- , ‘*Magia Sexualis: Sex, Secrecy, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism*’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 72: 3 (2004), 695-731
- VERTER, BRADFORD J.M., ‘Dark Star Rising: The Emergence of Modern Occultism 1800-1950’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Princeton University, 1997)
- VON MÜCKE, DOROTHEA E., *The Seduction of the Occult and the Rise of the Fantastic Tale* (California: University of Stanford Press, 2003)
- WADE, ALLAN, *The Letters of W.B. Yeats* (London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1954)
- WAITE, ARTHUR EDWARD, *The Book of Spells: A magical enquiry into the rituals of sorcery and witchcraft* (1911) (Herts.: Wordsworth, 1995)
- WALKER, KENNETH, *The Story of Medicine* (London: Hutchinson, 1954)
- WEBB, JAMES, *The Occult Establishment* (Illinois: Open Court, 1976)
- WILLIAMS, RAYMOND, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958) (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960)
- , *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1983)
- WILSON, COLIN, *The Occult* (London: Mayflower, 1973)
- WOLFFRAM, HEATHER, ‘Supernormal Biology: Vitalism, Parapsychology and the German Crisis of Modernity, c. 1890-1933’, *The European Legacy*, 8: 2 (2003), 149-163
- WOOD, ANTHONY, *Nineteenth Century Britain, 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1960)
- WYNDHAM, D., ‘Verse-making and Lovemaking – W. B. Yeats’ ‘strange second puberty’: Norman Haire and the Steinach rejuvenation operation’, *Journal of the History of Behavioural Science*, 39: 1 (2003), 25-50

CHANTRELL, GLYNNIS, (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Word History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

CRAIG, E. (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (London: Routledge) <http://0-www.rep.routledge.com.libsys.wellcome.ac.uk> [most recently accessed 20 December 2006]

WIENER, PHILIP P. (ed.) *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas* <<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/DicHist/dict.html>> [accessed 20 December 2006]

MHRA, *MHRA Style Guide: A Handbook for Authors, Editors, and Writers of Theses* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2002)

ODNB [electronic version] <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/>> [most recently accessed 10 February 2007]

OED, 2nd edn, ed. by J.A. Simpson, and E.S.C. Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989)

OED [electronic version] <<http://www.dictionary.oed.com/>> [most recently accessed 20 December 2006]

SOPHOCLES, E.A., *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (1914) (Hildesham and New York: Georg Olms, 1975)