



Philosophical  
History

A Quarterly Journal of Research

Volume VI, No. 6 April 1997

ISSN 0951-497X

# THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

A Quarterly Journal of Research

Founded by Leslie Price, 1985

Volume VI, No. 6

April 1997

## EDITOR

James A. Santucci  
*California State University, Fullerton*

## ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Robert Boyd

John Cooper  
*University of Sydney*

John Patrick Deveney  
New York, NY

April Hejka-Ekins  
*California State University, Stanislaus*

Jerry Hejka-Ekins  
*Nautilus Books*

Robert Ellwood  
*University of Southern California*

Antoine Faivre  
*École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris*

Joscelyn Godwin  
*Colgate University*

Jean-Pierre Laurant  
*École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris*

J. Gordon Melton  
Institute for the Study of American Religion  
*University of California, Santa Barbara*

Leslie Price  
Former Editor, *Theosophical History*

Gregory Tillett  
*University of Western Sydney, Nepean*

Karen-Claire Voss  
*San Jose State University*

*Theosophical History* (ISSN 0951-497X) is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by James A. Santucci (Department of Religious Studies, California State University, P.O. Box 6868, Fullerton, CA 92834-6868 U.S.A.) The journal consists of eight issues *per* volume: one volume covering a period of two years. The journal's purpose is to publish contributions specifically related to the modern Theosophical Movement, from the time of Madame Helena Blavatsky and others who were responsible in establishing the original Theosophical Society (1875), to all groups that derive their teachings—directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly—from her or her immediate follow-

ers. In addition, the journal is also receptive to related movements (including pre-Blavatskyite Theosophy, Spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, and the philosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg to give but a few examples) that have had an influence on or displayed an affinity to modern Theosophy.

The subscription rate for residents in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada is \$21.00 (one year) or \$38.00 (two years). California residents, please add \$1.62 (7.75%) sales tax onto the \$21 rate or \$2.94 onto the \$38 rate. For residents outside North America, the subscription rate is \$25.00 (one year) or \$45.00 (two years). Air mail is \$35.00 (one year) or \$65.00 (two years). Single issues are \$6.00. Subscriptions may also be paid in British sterling. All inquiries should be sent to **James Santucci**, Department of Religious Studies, California State University, P.O. Box 6868, Fullerton, CA 92834-6868 (U.S.A.). Periodicals postage paid at Fullerton, California 92631-9998. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Theosophical History (c/o James Santucci), Department of Religious Studies, California State University, P.O. Box 6868, Fullerton, CA 92834-6868.

The Editors assume no responsibility for the views expressed by authors in *Theosophical History*.

\*\*\*\*\*

## GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPTS

The final copy of all manuscripts must be submitted on 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper, double-spaced, and with margins of at least 1 1/4 inches on all sides. Words and phrases intended for *italics* output should be underlined in the manuscript. The submitter is also encouraged to submit a floppy disk of the work in ASCII or WordPerfect 5 or 5.1, in an I.B.M. or compatible format. If possible, Macintosh 3.5 inch disk files should also be submitted, saved in ASCII ("text only with line breaks" format if in ASCII), Microsoft Word 4.0-6.0, or WordPerfect. We ask, however, that details of the format codes be included so that we do not have difficulties in using the disk. Should there be any undue difficulty in fulfilling the above, we encourage you to submit the manuscript regardless.

Bibliographical entries and citations must be placed in footnote format. The citations must be complete. For books, the publisher's name and the place and date of the publication are required; for journal articles, the volume, number, and date must be included, should the information be available.

There is no limitation on the length of manuscripts. In general, articles of 30 pages or less will be published in full; articles in excess of 30 pages may be published serially.

Brief communications, review articles, and book reviews are welcome. They should be submitted double-spaced.

All correspondence, manuscripts, and subscriptions should be sent to:

Dr. James A. Santucci  
Department of Religious Studies  
California State University, P.O. Box 6868  
Fullerton, CA 92834-6868 (U.S.A.)  
FAX: 714-693-0142 E-Mail: jsantucci@ccvax.fullerton.edu  
TELEPHONE: 714-278-3727

Copyright ©1997 by James A. Santucci

Composition by Robert Hütwohl, Santa Fe, NM, using Adobe type 1 typefaces: ITC Garamond MultipleMaster, Linotype Univers and Linotext, with an adapted Sanskrit-Tibetan diacritical Garamond typeface.

Printed on acid-free paper

**Contents**

April 1997  
Volume VI, Number 6

**Editor's Comments**

James Santucci ..... 187

**Communications**

The Theosophists and the Fairies:  
A Footnote to the Story of the Cottingley Fairies  
Leslie Shepard ..... 194

“Fairies” or “There is No Religion Higher Than Truth”  
Jean Overton Fuller ..... 198

K.H. and Peter Davidson  
Joscelyn Godwin ..... 202

**From the Newspapers**

Lampsakanism  
The Illuminated Lampsakenoi  
Notes by James Santucci ..... 203

**Articles**

H. Spencer Lewis: A Bibliographical Survey  
David T. Rocks ..... 215

H. Spencer Lewis Bibliography  
David T. Rocks ..... 219

**Book Reviews**

*Madame Blavatsky's Baboon*  
Robert Boyd ..... 224

*Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*  
Robert Ellwood ..... 228

# Editor's Comments

## In This Issue

The October 1996 issue of *Theosophical History* contained the first article on a Rosicrucian subject, David T. Rocks' "Mrs. May Banks Stacey." This article focused on the important issue of AMORC founder H. Spencer Lewis' claim to having received the legitimate transmission of the "ancient" Rosicrucian heritage or lineage. The theme continues in Mr. Rocks' "H. Spencer Lewis: A Bibliographical Survey." AMORC and Lewis have often been challenged by other rosicrucian organizations regarding their genuineness. The principal defense of Lewis' claims, as might be expected, have been advanced through the conduit of AMORC periodicals. Mr. Rocks discusses the principal publications in the first article and provides an annotated bibliography of thirty titles (books and pamphlets) by and about H. Spencer Lewis that illustrate his claims and teachings.

Fairies seem to be making somewhat of a comeback. With one, perhaps two Hollywood films on the Cottingley fairies (see *TH* VI/5: 162 and Mr. Shepard's communication in this issue), two communications are included herein providing a reminiscence of the Cottingley episode: Leslie Shepard's "The Theosophists and the Fairies: A Footnote to the Story of the Cottingley Fairies" and Jean Overton Fuller's "'Fairies' or 'There is No Religion Higher Than Truth.'" Mr.

Shepard, the editor of the *Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology*, provides first hand information on one of the sisters, Elsie Wright, based on a 1978 interview he conducted with her and her husband, plus many personal observations about fairies and Theosophists' fascination with them. Miss Fuller provides a personal reaction to the claims of the sisters and the investigators, the probable fraudulency of the photographs based on anatomical inaccuracy, and an interesting reminiscence of the Theosophist clairvoyant Geoffrey Hodson.

An examination of the New York newspapers during the 1870s reveals some interesting information about the early Theosophical Society. Some of the articles from the 1877 *World* have been reprinted (see *TH* III/6, 7-8; IV/2), but there are others that further reveal Madame Blavatsky's and Col. Olcott's main interests during this same period. The present entries from the April 1 and 8 issues of the *World* reveal the existence of a Lodge devoted to the practice of magic, *as was the Theosophical lamasery (H.P.B.'s apartment) mentioned in the March 26 issue of the WORLD*. The discovery of these pieces was first announced in a paper given at a conference in Lyon (*Le défi magique*) in 1992 and subsequently published by the Presses Universitaires de Lyon (see note 12, "From the

Newspapers”). Not knowing if the claims of Ezekiel Perkins, the Lampsakan, were genuine or not, I decided to wait before making a more definitive statement on it. Although no information has turned up that would shed light on who Perkins was, it is now my hypothesis that he was most likely an illusionist who made unsubstantiated, erroneous, and outrageous claims about aspects of occult practice. He responds to all claims advanced by H.P.B. during her interview at the lamasery a few nights before (see *TH* III/6: 174-78) and even provides a similar demonstration by making an astral body or two appear. Nothing uniquely associated with his methods and practice is revealed in these entries. This and the exorbitant claims on the origins of his Lodge and his own background all point to his being both a mountebank and a gifted illusionist. Nevertheless, these articles in the *World* do provide a glimpse of the world of magic in New York during the 1870s.

\* \* \*

### **A New Associate Editor**

The world’s leading authority on that unique 19th century purveyor of practical occultism and sex magic, Paschal Beverly Randolph, is now an Associate Editor of *Theosophical History*, **John Patrick Deveney**. Mr. Deveney is the author of the recently published *Paschal Beverly Randolph* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997)<sup>1</sup>, the co-author (with Joscelyn Godwin and Christian Chanel) of *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor* (York Beach, MA: Samuel Weiser, 1995), and the forthcoming study on the purpose of the early Theosophical Society,

*Astral Projection or Liberation of the Double and the Work of the Early Theosophical Society*, to which see below. As a regular contributor to *Theosophical History*, he is the author of “A Note on Psychic Attacks” (V/6) and (with Joscelyn Godwin and Michael Gomes) “Correspondence of H.P. Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott with Thomas A. Edison” (VI/2). Mr. Deveney is also the creator of the new web site for *Theosophical History*, which is announced below.

His insights in nineteenth-century Spiritualism and occultism, and his commitment to *Theosophical History*, will be especially welcomed.

\* \* \*

### **One-hundredth Anniversary of Point Loma**

Almost unnoticed is a fairly significant event in the history of the Theosophical Movement that occurred one hundred years ago in San Diego, California: the purchase and laying of the cornerstone for the School for the Revival of the Lost Mysteries of Antiquity of what was to become the international headquarters of the then Theosophical Society in America under Katherine Tingley (1847–1929). The School was in reality not one building but the site of what was to become a community where the Theosophical ideals could be realized. If we accept Mrs. Tingley’s account, it was Gen. John Charles Frémont (b. Jan. 21, 1813–d. July 13, 1890), the mapmaker and explorer of the West, who, only a few weeks prior to his death in 1890, suggested Point Loma (Punta de la Loma), a spit of land on the western side of San Diego

Bay (about three miles from downtown San Diego), as the likely site for realizing Mrs. Tingley's childhood dream of founding a city by the Pacific that would unite people of all countries.

One week after the death of William Q. Judge on March 21, 1896, Mrs. Tingley was endorsed (on March 29) by the leaders of the Esoteric Section as Mr. Judge's successor as Outer Head of the E.S. Shortly thereafter, at the April (1896) T.S. in America convention, she revealed publicly for the first time her idea to establish a School for the Revival of the Lost Mysteries of Antiquity, obviously an allusion to the ancient Wisdom mentioned and described in *Isis Unveiled* and the *Secret Doctrine*. This announcement, together with her June (1896) announcement of a world crusade, worked hand-in-hand to publicize both the existence of another Theosophical Society besides the Adyar Society and to publicize what was to become the establishment of a new world headquarters of her Society.

Two weeks before Mrs. Tingley and her party reached San Francisco, her arrival occurring on February 13, 1897, a down payment had been placed on 132 acres of land north of Fort Rosecrans Military Reservation. Ten days later (February 23), the ceremony placing the cornerstone for the School for the Revival of the Lost Mysteries of Antiquity took place with great fanfare with about 1000 San Diegans, including the Mayor of San Diego, in attendance. Thus was the auspicious beginning of a Theosophical experiment that was to last forty-five years, at which time the land at Point Loma was sold by the then Leader of the Theosophical Society, Gottfried de Purucker,

who relocated a much smaller Theosophical community to the then small community of Covina east of Los Angeles.

Although the Point Loma Theosophical community, or Lomaland as it is sometimes called, has gone out of existence over fifty years ago, its memory has been kept alive by former residents and students who lived at the site, most notably W. Emmett Small, who first came to Point Loma in 1905 at the age of two. It was with great pleasure, therefore, that I gave a public lecture, "Theosophy at Point Loma—1897,"<sup>2</sup> as part of the celebration of another important part of San Diegan cultural life, San Diego State University, on March 12 with Mr. Small, his wife Carmen, and their son Ken in attendance. Also present was Dr. Dwayne Little, currently the Director of Planning at the Point Loma Nazarene College, which now occupies the Lomaland site. By coincidence, Dr. Little's interest in the Theosophical community has made him one of the most knowledgeable individuals of the Point Loma site. As an aside, Dr. Little is especially fortunate to have his office in the former home of A.G. Spalding, the sporting goods magnate and husband of Elizabeth Mayer Churchill—a personal pupil of H.P. Blavatsky. The house, built in 1901 or 1902, is now the administration building of the College. Thanks to the interest and support undertaken by the Nazarene College and by Dr. Little, it is still possible to visit the campus and get a fairly good idea of how Lomaland appeared in the early part of the twentieth century.

\* \* \*

## **Theosophical History: Occasional Papers Vol. VI: Astral Projection or Liberation of the Double and the Work of the Early Theosophical Society**

An information sheet on the Theosophical Society published around 1897 describes the T.S. as “an International Body . . . which was founded at New York, U.S., on the 17th day of November, 1875, with three well-defined objects. . . .” Although somewhat ambiguous, the impression given the casual reader is that the T.S. at its inception had three objects, the first of which is “to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. . . .” This is the impression that still exists today among many Theosophists and historians with passing knowledge of Theosophical history. A careful reading of the events that led to the formation of the Theosophical Society and its activities during the New York years (1875-1878) leaves no doubt that this is an erroneous view. Although a number of studies have revealed the original goals and activities of the Society, no study has exhibited such an extensive investigation of this topic as John Patrick Deveney’s *Astral Projection or Liberation of the Double and the Work of the Early Theosophical Society*. Mr. Deveney culls his information from a host of primary sources that leave the reader with little doubt that magic, occultism, or Theosophy refer more to the manipulation of the secret laws of nature rather than the speculation thereof, at least in this early period of Theosophical history. Madame Blavatsky’s famous lamasonry is mentioned as a training school for magic, especially the separation of the astral body from the

physical body. *Isis Unveiled* also is largely based on the separability of the astral and physical bodies. Madame Blavatsky herself possessed this ability or at least claimed this ability well into the 1880s. Other members, such as Damodar and Stainton Moses supposedly possessed this ability. In addition, the role of George Henry Felt in the founding of the Society, what it means to be a “chela” and achieve “Chelaship,” and the possible implications of the early objects upon the later T.S. are all discussed. In short, this study serves as a corrective to the misconceptions and general ignorance about the early T.S. that seem to be widespread to the present day.

Mr. Deveney is very well-qualified to write on this topic. The author of the newly-published *Pascal Beverly Randolph* (Albany: SUNY, 1997) and co-author of *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1995), he has a grasp of the literature of the period that is unsurpassed.

*Astral Projection or Liberation of the Double and the Work of the Early Theosophical Society*, will be released on November 25, 1997. Those interested in ordering this volume should send a check or international money order in U.S. dollars to James Santucci (Department of Religious Studies, California State University, P.O. Box 6868, Fullerton, CA 92834-6868) payable to Theosophical History. Checks or money orders in British sterling should be made out to Dr. Joscelyn Godwin and sent to Dr. Godwin c/o the Department of Music, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY 13346-1398. The **pre-publication price** (postmarked prior to October 1) is \$18.00 (£13.00); the full **publication price** of

\$22.00 (£16.00) will take effect on October 2, 1997. For air mail, please add \$4.00 (£3). There is no extra shipping and handling charge except for air mail. California residents, please add 7.75% sales tax (\$19.40 pre-publication price; \$23.71 publication price). Wholesale discounts available with the purchase of ten or more copies.

\* \* \*

### **Theosophical History Web Site**

*Theosophical History* now has a web site, and I would like to thank John Patrick Deveney for making it possible. The address is <http://idt.net/~pdeveney/index.html>. The web site will regularly upload the full text of significant articles that have appeared in this journal. In time, we hope to make it a clearinghouse of information, notes, and queries of interest in the field. Please check it out and send along your suggestions.

\* \* \*

### **International Theosophical History Conference**

Planning for the Theosophical History Conference, first announced in the April 1996 issue, is moving along very well. It will be held on July 11, 12, and 13, 1997 at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in England (50 Gloucester Place, London). Presenters include the following:

John Patrick Deveney, "Astral Projection and the Early Theosophical Society"

Frits Evelein, "Cosmogogenesis, Universal Consciousness and Evolution: Theosophy in the Works of Monrian, Lauweriks and De Bazel"

Nicholas Campion, "The Astrological Lodge of the Theosophical Society"

Joy Dixon, "Sex is Not a Freehold Possession: Feminism, Theosophy, and the New Era"

Michael Gomes, "Unveiling Isis"

K. Paul Johnson (*in absentia*), "Theosophy in the Edgar Cayce Readings"

Daniel Caracostea "Jaccoliot"

James Santucci, "Charles Sotheran's Explanation of Theosophy"

Tore Ahlbäck, "Theosophy and Socialism"

Jean Overton Fuller, "Cyril Scott and a Hidden School"

\* \* \*

### **A Request from Dr. Peter Michel**

Dr. Peter Michel informs me that he is currently researching the life of Charles Webster

Leadbeater. He requests help from anyone who can supply him with information and documentation on Leadbeater's life prior to 1900. If anyone can be of assistance, please write Dr. Michel at Voglherd 1, 85567 Grafing, Germany or fax him at 49-8092-9444.

Dr. Michel's book, *Krishnamurti—Freiheit und Liebe: Annäherung an ein Geheimnis* (Grafing: Aquamarin Verlag, 1992) has recently been published in English under the title, *Krishnamurti—Love and Freedom: Approaching a Mystery*, published by Bluestar Communications (44 Bear Glenn, Woodside, CA 94062).

\* \* \*

### **Theosophical History: Occasional Papers Vol. V: Krishnamurti and the World-Teacher Project: Some Theosophical Perceptions**

J. Krishnamurti still generates great interest among both Theosophists and non-Theosophists alike. With this in mind, the author of *Krishnamurti and the World-Teacher Project*, Govert W. Schüller, offers an overview of Theosophical perceptions of Krishnamurti the person and Krishnamurti the philosopher. From the Theosophical point of view, the overriding question concerns Krishnamurti's role as the World Teacher, to which the author gives four general assessments, of which the fourth is especially intriguing:

- (1) the project was perceived as genuine and successful;
- (2) the project was perceived as genuine, but failed;

(3) the project was perceived as not genuine and failed;

(4) the project was perceived as not genuine, but succeeded.

Mr. Schüller examines the literature-Theosophical as well as non-Theosophical-with great acumen and clarity. Included are the assessments of (in alphabetical order) John Algeo, Alice Bailey, Annie Besant, Radha Burnier, Jean Overton Fuller, Geoffrey Hodson, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Cyril Scott, Rudolf Steiner, and Albert E.S. Smythe. Mention is also made of the highly controversial charge advanced by Radha Rajagopal Sloss in her book, *Lives in the Shadow with J Krishnamurti* (reviewed in *TH* III/7-8).

*Krishnamurti and the World-Teacher Project* will be released on May 25, 1997. Those interested in ordering this volume should send a check or international money order in U.S. dollars to James Santucci (Department of Religious Studies, California State University, P.O. Box 6868, Fullerton, CA 92834-6868) payable to Theosophical History. Checks or money orders in British sterling should be made out to Dr. Joscelyn Godwin and sent to Dr. Godwin c/o the Department of Music, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY 13346-1398. The **pre-publication price** (postmarked prior to May 1) is \$14.00 (~~£10.00~~); the full **publication price** of \$17.00 (~~£12.00~~) will take effect on May 2, 1997. For air mail, please add \$3.50 (~~£2.50~~). California residents, please add 7.75% sales tax (\$15.08 pre-publication price; \$18.31 publication price). Wholesale discounts available with the purchase of ten or more copies.

## **New Telephone Number**

Beginning April 21, my telephone number has been changed from 714-773-3727 to 714-278-3727.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>A review of the book appears in *Gnosis*, no. 43 (Spring 1997): 66-67. Charles S. Clifton, the reviewer, states at the end of his review the following, with which I am in full agreement:

I wish only that the standard historians of nineteenth-century religion in America, who treat Spiritualism briefly if at all in their obsession with “awakenings” and denominational doings, would give more attention to this collection of movements that involved so many people.

<sup>2</sup>I would like to thank Professor Willard Johnson of the Department of Religious Studies for inviting me to give the talk.

# The Theosophists and the Fairies: A Footnote to the Story of the Cottingley Fairies

Leslie Shepard

The comprehensive paper by Michael W. Homer and Massimo Introvigne on “The Recoming of the Fairies” (*Theosophical History*, April 1996) was of personal interest to me and also served as a reminder of just how closely Theosophists have been concerned with the subject of fairies. As a child, I had firmly believed in the reality of fairies, and in later life, during folklore studies, had been impressed by the book *Fairy & Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* by W.B. Yeats (1888), which dealt with the subject of fairies as a living tradition in Ireland, and also Conan Doyle’s *The Coming of the Fairies* (1992).

Yeats’ book was dedicated “To my mystical friend G.R.,” clearly a reference to George Russell (“AE”), who saw and painted nature spirits he encountered in Ireland. Yeats had met Mohini Chatterji and was impressed with A.P. Sinnett’s book *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883). In 1887, Yeats visited Madame Blavatsky in London, and became briefly a member of the Esoteric Circle of the Theosophical Society before joining the Hermetic Society and, later, the Golden Dawn. Russell was an ardent Theosophist for many years.

About fifty years ago, when I lived in London, I used to haunt the old Theosophical Society bookshop in Great Russell Street, opposite the British Museum, and I recall my excitement when I discovered that the Society had issued excellent postcard reproductions of the famous Cottingley fairy photographs, and also published Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson’s *Fairies at Work and Play* (1925), which included his clairvoyant sightings at Cottingley. At that time I thought the photographs might be of thought forms, and I hoped that I might be able to investigate the case at some future date. In fact, it was not until 1978 that I eventually interviewed Elsie Hill and recorded her own account of the fairies, although at that time she was still economical with truth and did not admit faking the photographs. Meanwhile the bookshop stocked other books by Geoffrey Hodson and, in 1945, Theosophist Edward L. Gardner’s *Fairies; the Cottingley Fairies and their Sequel*. At a much later date, the Theosophical Publishing House in the U.S. published Dora van Gelder’s charming book *The Real World of Fairies* (1977), in which she claimed to have seen fairies as a child in Java, and as a grownup in New York’s Central Park.

In her youth, she had been under the instruction of Theosophist C.W. Leadbeater.

In April 1978, I contacted Elsie Hill (née Wright) through the Fairy Investigation Society, which I had joined some years earlier. The Secretary had described to me various occasions on which she had encountered fairy life, and was collecting accounts from other individuals. I spent several hours with Elsie and her husband Frank at their home in Nottingham, and made lengthy tape recordings of the interview. Elsie insisted that she and Frances had seen and played with fairies, that the idea of taking the photographs was to get their own back at grownups who had scolded Frances for continually falling in the brook and wetting her clothes, and also ridiculed the idea of the girls playing with fairies. Elsie said that grownups told lies about Father Christmas then said there wasn't any Father Christmas: "I said we'll take pictures of these fairies that we see, then we'll think up some way when everybody believes in fairies and we'll get our own back, you know, and say "There aren't any fairies! After that prove that there *are* fairies and we know there are fairies!"

The prank misfired, because the grownups never really believed that these were photographs of real fairies. Elsie had some skill in drawing, and had drawn fairies in the past, so her father believed that in some way the figures in the photographs were cut out drawings. In the event, he was right. The whole affair died down for a couple of years, until Elsie's mother Polly attended a Theosophical meeting in Bradford in 1919, at which the lecturer talked about real fairies. Polly told the lecturer that her daughter claimed to have photographed fairies

and she wondered if these were genuine after all. From the Bradford Theosophical Society, copies of the prints passed to E.L. Gardner, president of the Blavatsky Lodge in London, who had improved copy negatives and enlarged prints made. From Gardner, copies of the photographs passed to Conan Doyle. The full story of the affair has been brilliantly recounted in Joe Cooper's perceptive book, *The Case of the Cottingley Fairies* (1990).

I think it unlikely that Doyle would have accepted the photographs as genuine if he had studied the original rather crude pictures (now in the Brotherton Collection, Leeds) instead of the retouched copies made by photographic expert Harold Snelling, who believed the photographs genuine, although his artistic retouching gave the pictures a misleading veracity. Moreover, by some strange coincidence, Doyle had already been asked by the editor of the popular *Strand* magazine to write an article on fairies for their Christmas 1920 number. The Cottingley photographs were like a gift from the spirit world.

The girls did not anticipate the furor that ensued after Conan Doyle accepted the photographs at face value, and did not wish to embarrass the great man by confessing that the fairy figures were fakes. From time to time, when reporters revived the story, Elsie insisted that these were genuine photographs—which they were, of course—but did not admit openly that the fairy figures were fakes until as late as 1981. By this time, after continued hounding by overzealous and sometimes rude journalists, Elsie became blasé about the whole affair, even ridiculing simple belief in fairies. She no longer claimed to have seen or played with fairies. In 1978, she had told me that when the next

newsman started pestering her, she would say, “No, I don’t believe in fairies; I believe those were photographs of figments of our imagination!” When Conan Doyle had first published his belief in the fairy photographs, Elsie had lost her first job at a Christmas card factory through being pestered by reporters. Over the years, Frances loyally supported Elsie’s changing statements, although still quietly maintaining a personal belief in fairies.

I believe that over the years Elsie had blocked off childhood memories, eventually exulting only in the sustained fraud of the photographs. There is little doubt that both girls were psychic and did not wish to reopen a channel that involved fear and ridicule. This conflict between fairy belief and fraud was apparent when Geoffrey Hodson visited the Cottingley glen with the girls in 1921. The girls did not like him, and played tricks on him, pointing out fictitious fairies which they claimed to see, and which he then confirmed seeing. I do not think this invalidates all the fairy life that Hodson reported seeing in Cottingley and elsewhere, cited in his book *Fairies at Work and Play*. I think the girls were a little scared of Hodson and his clairvoyance and may have thought they invented fairy life which they had actually contacted psychically. Elsie told me that Hodson had frightened Frances by taking her to a spiritualist séance. Elsie also related that when she herself was a child of about 5, she had been haunted by a grim phantom lady who stood by her bed at night, and a grinning ghostly dog that frightened her.

The complex story of the Cottingley fairy photographs has reopened interest in the sub-

ject of fairies. In my new introduction to an American reprint of the scholarly book, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* by W.Y. Evans-Wentz (first published 1911; reprinted 1960), I recalled various theories of fairy life—that fairies were a folk recollection of an ancient pygmy race, that they were mythological personifications of nature phenomena, or remnants of ancient religious beliefs. Evans-Wentz concluded that “we can postulate scientifically, on the showing of the data of psychical research, the existence of such invisible intelligences as gods, genii, daemons, all kinds of true fairies, and disembodied men.”

While editing three editions of the *Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology* for an American publisher between 1968 and 1991, I formed the theory that fairies might be one aspect of an impersonal Protean force in nature that takes on appearance and personality according to the convention of the viewer at one time or another. Thus, where some have seen angels, gods and goddesses, apparitions of the Virgin Mary, ghosts and demons, others have seen fairies, while in a technological age, yet others have seen or been abducted by alien visitors from outer space in shining flying saucers. The coincidence between claimed fairy and UFO abductions is striking. Fairies vary in size and nature from country to country. The wee folk of Britain become the size of small children in Ireland, while some people have reported sightings of fairies in eighteenth century ballroom costumes.

But it seems that there may also be a more tangible form of fairy life than imagination, second sight or ectoplasm. In 1907, Lady Archibald Campbell spoke with an old man and

his wife living in an Irish glen who claimed to have *caught* a leprechaun and kept it captive for two weeks in a cage. They fed it on bread and milk out of a cup at the end of a spoon. But it escaped and they had bad luck ever after.

I have never seen a fairy myself, but have spoken with various people who say they have. The preoccupation of Theosophists with fairies is understandable in the light of Indian traditions of *devas* (shining ones), the divine beings, thirty-three in number, eleven for each of the three worlds. This is echoed in the old Irish tradition of the Tuatha de Danann, the people of the ancient goddess Dana. In 1889, Colonel Olcott gave a lecture in London at the Ancient Concert Rooms, Great Brunswick Street, entitled: "The Irish Fairies Scientifically Considered." He claimed that "under the classification of Nature Spirits, or Elementals, the existence of their fairies is believed in by a vast majority of mankind." In accounting for the disappearance of fairy tradition in the name of Science, he stated that "the cultivation of the lower rationalistic faculty tends to cut off the finer soul-perceptions which put man in close touch with the finer forces of Nature, and to destroy whatever clairvoyant faculty he may have inherited."

There was a large and attentive audience at the lecture, including Theosophist W.Q. Judge, who had been visiting relatives in Ireland. The vote of thanks was moved by the Irish scholar of folklore and fairy tradition, Douglas Hyde.

Theosophists have certainly been responsible for keeping alive interest in fairies over the years, but it now seems that the fairies are coming back again for a wider public. In modern times, the powerful influence of media themes of occultism has created and focused conventions

of paranormal experience. Books, films, radio and television programmes have popularized such subjects as channelling and UFOs. Recent New Age preoccupation with the theme of angels is now shifting back to fairies. A version of the story of the Cottingley fairy photographs is now being filmed in Hollywood under the title "One Golden Afternoon," starring Peter O'Toole. A rival film on the same theme has been planned in which Mel Gibson might play the part of Conan Doyle. Director John Boorman has been working on "The Fairy Queen," based on Irish mythology, while the Royal Shakespeare Company had been producing "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Michele Camards, producer of the American production, "Photographing Fairies," stated in 1996: "We are tapping into the millennium fever, where people are seeking something they cannot find in conventional religion."

Last summer, a Fairy Appreciation Society was founded, while the Fairy League promotes a green policy of protecting fairy dells from developers. The Faery Shop has been set up in Marlborough, Wiltshire. Dillons Bookshop in London said that it could not get enough copies of Cicely Mary Barker's *Flower Fairy* series.

Appropriately enough, after years of work, the Secretary of the Fairy Investigation Society has just completed a comprehensive book on fairy sightings. This includes hundreds of claimed sightings of fairies from people in various walks of life and from different countries into modern times. I have the typescript with me now, awaiting the interest of a suitable publisher.

\* \* \*

# “Fairies” or “There Is No Religion Higher Than Truth”

Jean Overton Fuller

In 1945 appeared *Fairies, the Cottingley Photos and Their Sequel*.<sup>1</sup> Two little girls had apparently taken photographs of each other with fairies. Although these looked artificial, I bought it because it was by Edward L. Gardner, in whose *Web of the Universe* I had studied the Platonic solids. I had hardly brought it home when my mother called, picked it up, and opening it at random, said, “That photograph is a fake.” She was looking at one seemingly showing a fairy perched on a branch. She said, “If the body were seated on something hard and narrow, the flesh of the buttock and thigh would be pressed up against the bone at the point of contact and the displaced fullness would bulge out over the support.”

This I subjected to experiment, by undressing and perching on the hard wooden arm of a chair in front of a looking-glass. It was as she said.

I said that the caption did refer to “a leaping fairy.” She retorted, “It was meant to look as though it were sitting on a branch. The line of the buttock comes down to meet that of the branch exactly.” She suggested the man who wrote the book noticed that the opposing limb was on the same side of the branch, and so thought safer to say “leaping” than “sitting.” She said, “Probably they cut it out of a magazine.” She flicked over the pages to find the frontis-

piece, and said, “That fairy has three legs, the middle one much too long.” She was pointing to the fairy blowing a trumpet, second from the left in the ring apparently dancing round a child’s face. She pointed out that a first attempt had been made to make the rear leg look as though it were kicking backwards, and that the toe and heel could still be discerned in a curl of the drapery when a decision had been taken to substitute for it a new leg, going much deeper down, much too long and without foot on the end. The same thing had happened with the fairy extreme right: also in the one under Frances’s chin, the arms of which grew at impossible angles from the chin. “They’re very bad drawings. Too bad to have been from a magazine. Done by themselves.”

Mother was an artist, and had studied anatomy.

My confidence in Gardner and in the Theosophical imprint was shaken. I nevertheless read the text. This told me that in May 1925 Gardner had received two of the prints through the post from a friend. The friend said he had been giving a lecture when after it a woman had come up to him and asked him if he believed in fairies and given him these. He wanted Gardner’s opinion. The woman was a Mrs. Wright, who said they had been taken by her daughter, Elsie,

and a friend Frances Griffiths, in 1917, their ages being then ten and thirteen.

Gardner took the photographs to Kodak, whose Mr. Snelling told him they were “straight, open air, single exposure shots.” The head of Kodak said the same, though he added that the fairies could have been painted onto an original print and the whole re-photographed. Gardner thought this would have been beyond the technical ability of the little girls.

It did not occur to Gardner to consult an artist, and so, not having the benefit of observations such as my mother made, he took the train to Bradford, and thence the tram to Cottingley. There he met Mr. and Mrs. Wright, neither of whom believed their daughter, Elsie, now aged sixteen. Gardner asked her if she could take some more photographs, with him watching. She explained to him that the fairies would not come out except in the presence of someone exceptionally sympathetic, but he did not find this suspicious. He told the parents that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would be writing an article. They asked for their names not to be mentioned in it, and refused payment. *The Strand Magazine* of December 1920 carried an article by Doyle and Gardner: “An Epoch-making event; Fairies Photographed.”

In 1921, Gardner persuaded the New Zealander, Geoffrey Hodson, and his wife, to spend a few days at Cottingley, to train his clairvoyant eye upon the glen. Hodson said the glen was swarming with elemental life: fairies, gnomes, everything; but though he tried to take photographs of them he was unsuccessful. So, apparently, were the girls, who came with him and saw the same as he did. But he sent his notes on what he had seen to Conan Doyle.

Gardner pointed out that had the fairies in the pictures been dangling from strings, these most certainly would have been evident in the pictures. I considered this and asked myself how they were done. All I could think of was that the cut-outs, if not dangled, were propped up from behind. I could see no props, but thought they could have been spiked on thorns or specially sharpened twigs. The unnaturally long middle leg in the frontispiece was, I thought, probably for slotting into a slit in some kind of stand.

Forty-five years later, there was a book about it. The girls had confessed. Elsie had drawn the fairies on Bristol board, then they had cut out the drawings and propped them up from behind on hat pins.<sup>2</sup>

Gardner died in 1970, aged a hundred; Hodson died at his home in New Zealand, in January 1983, aged ninety-six. How did these men come to be so badly deceived?

Hodson I once heard speak. He said he had once told Leadbeater he feared he might only be imagining the things he saw clairvoyantly, and Leadbeater answered him, “How do you expect to become clairvoyant if you don’t use your imagination—if you kill its first delicate beginnings?” From a hall filled with Theosophists, he got a sympathetic laugh, but yet I feel Leadbeater’s advice was dangerous, since it could lead to taking the forms created by one’s own imagination for objective reality. And yet again, Hodson had the look that I associate with a seer.

Gardner I never saw. But I attended several lectures (not about fairies) by his wife, Adelaide Gardner; she was a serious, respect-worthy woman. Only shortly before he died, Gardner published a pamphlet entitled, *There is No*

*Religion Higher than Truth*: the words ringed round the seal of the Theosophical Society. He believed Leadbeater to have become a victim of “unconscious *kriyashakti*”—that is, precisely, seeing thought-forms projected by himself and mistaking them for objective realities. Gardner’s target was the figure of Krishnamurti:<sup>3</sup>

About forty-five years ago an announcement of the Coming of the World Teacher was made by Mrs. Annie Besant and Bishop Leadbeater . . . Obviously, there has been no Coming . . . Truth is a priority amongst Theosophists . . .

In making this charge, Gardner may have been off-beam. He had not perceived the depths, the freshness, the radical newness of Krishnamurti’s teaching—and even at that age, he failed to foresee that he was himself, by that requirement of Truth which he invoked against Mrs. Besant and Leadbeater, destined to be by posterity exhibited as having been rendered, through his desire to believe, vulnerable to trickery by two little girls.

I am not knocking fairies or other elementals. There are long traditions concerning such entities. Only, *those* fairies are cardboard cut-outs. To those saddened, I offer a gleam of comfort. It has not yet been proved that the girls did not see fairies: they could have seen them, found they did not come out in the photographs they took and therefore contrived to fake the “proofs” of their assertion they had seen fairies. I have always seen the brilliant darting points of light that chase one another, that Leadbeater calls “vitality globules,” but I have never seen them come up in a photograph. To see them, I have to let my eyes go out of focus so that physical objects

lose their clarity and become a blur: the camera cannot do this. It must be the same with a great range of things seen when for a moment one sees with altered focus. Frances never let go the claim she really had seen fairies. She even claimed that the fifth and last of the photographs, “Fairies and their Sunbath,” taken by herself, was genuine. This I do not believe. The eleven “fairies” dotted about are all unconvincing. The most easily visible, in silhouette, center right, shows the artist’s usual inability to fit an arm to a body as though it extended from it naturally, and what I feel was originally intended to be the head has been made into part of the bodice when the head above was substituted, as better fitting to the body.

As to the strange hangings, when first I saw them fifty years ago, I took them to be spider-webs, of a kind one used to see amongst grasses and herbage. Only the folds puzzled me because they suggested chiffon drapery. Today, I wondered if those folds could, however, be caused by dropping something into the web—for in it was a “fairy” apparently sitting up in her bath. I could not, to test the matter, find any of the outdoor webs of the kind I had in mind, but I went into the hut within my chicken-run, and found there webs hanging from the eaves, and experimented by dropping into them small pieces of paper or cardboard of different weights. It was not easy: too heavy and the web broke, too light or flat and it merely lay on the web without disturbing it. But, inserting a piece of shape and weight appropriate to affect the web without breaking it, I was able to induce in it folds of the type shown.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Edward L. Gardner, *Fairies, The Cottingley Photos and Their Sequel* (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1945).

<sup>2</sup> Joe Cooper, *The Case of the Cottingley Fairies*. Foreword by Colin Wilson (London: Hale, 1990), 124, 129.

<sup>3</sup> Edward L. Gardner, *There is No Religion Higher than Truth* (London, Theosophical Publishing House, 1963), 5.

\* \* \* \* \*

# K.H. and Peter Davidson

Joscelyn Godwin

Mr. John Cooper, of Bega, Australia, has drawn my attention to a paragraph in the *First Report of the Committee of the Society for Psychical Research Appointed to Investigate the Evidence for Marvellous Phenomena Offered by Certain Members of the Theosophical Society*, p. 104. This is part of the evidence of Babajee D. Nath, sent to the Committee through Dr. Franz Hartmann. The paragraph reads:

Mr. Peter Davidson (F.T.S., of 9, Arbeadic Terrace, Banchory, Kincardineshire), wrote a letter dated 27th February, 1884, to the address of Mr. W.T. Brown, who is now with us here. Mr. Brown handed over the letter to Damodar in the morning, as soon as the letter was received by the mail, after reading it. The two founders, Madame B. and Col. O., had left India then. Damodar left Davidson's letter on our office table. As I was all along [alone?] in the office and writing on the table, I know that the letter remained uninterfered with, until in the afternoon we found an endorsement in blue pencil by Mahatma K. H., directing me to answer Mr. Davidson, to whom I accordingly wrote a letter, dated 21st March, 1884.

Had this come to my notice earlier, I would have included it among the documents gathered in *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, Initiatic and Historical Documents of an Order of Practical Occultism*, edited by Christian Chanel, John P. Deveney, and myself (York

Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1995). Peter Davidson believed himself to have been initiated by an Oriental adept who appeared to him in astral form; and that in founding the H.B. of L. later in 1884, he was reviving or adding to an ancient Order. (See *H.B. of L.*, 24-25). Here is corroboration from the other side, showing that the Oriental adept K.H. had a particular interest in Davidson. This does not help to solve the enigmas of (a) what or who K.H. was, and (b) the relationship of Davidson's 1884 H.B. of L. to the Founders' "Brotherhood of Luxor" of the 1870s. On the contrary, it thickens the plot of the occult-historical drama, of which our publication was merely the first act.

\* \* \* \* \*

# From the Newspapers

**LAMPSAKANISM: HOW IT HAPPENED THAT  
THE THEOSOPHISTS WERE SOLD**  
[*New York World*, April 1 (Sunday), 1877:3]

and

**THE ILLUMINATED LAMPSAKENOI  
A CONFERENCE WITH THE GRAND KOPHT  
CONCERNING THEOSOPHISTS**  
[*New York World*, April 8 (Sunday), 1877:3]

Introduction and Notes by James A. Santucci

In order to put these two articles in their proper context, we need to look to earlier articles that discuss H.P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society. On January 23, 1877, there appeared an article in the *World* announcing the coming publication of Madame Blavatsky's new book, *Isis Unveiled*. The article ("A Coming Buddhist Book. 'The Veil of Isis' and the Lady Who Is Writing It")<sup>1</sup> generated interest not only in the book but in her assertion that she was a Buddhist.<sup>2</sup> This interest persisted and so prompted the well-known interview with Madame H.P. Blavatsky conducted by the *World* reporter David Curtis and an editorial summarizing its contents. The interview, en-

titled "A Lamasery in New York,"<sup>3</sup> allowed Blavatsky to demonstrate her knowledge of magic, the latter described by her as "the great original religion. . . handed down from father to son among the people who live in 'the cradle of humanity'—the East."<sup>4</sup> What is revealed in the interview is the emphasis on Eastern (*i.e.*, Indian or more specifically, Hindu) mastery of the magical arts. Claiming to have spent thirty years in Oriental countries (she does not specify which countries) and having become a Buddhist, she claims that she has "taken some steps in the initiation in the great societies of the East in which Knowledge of the mysteries is handed down from father to son<sup>5</sup>, from one member of

the society to another.” Her teachers, “adepts,” are defined by her as those “who [have] nothing more to learn,” who have mastered “the principles of knowledge” but not necessarily the “details of every branch of knowledge.” Such claims were designed to establish Blavatsky’s authority as one who knew the key to the mysteries, and who would reveal those mysteries in her forthcoming book. Furthermore, she informs the reporter that “true magic” (as opposed to black magic and “sleight-of-hand feats”) is based upon an “understanding of the [threefold] constitution of man”: the physical body, astral body, and the soul. The highest achievement of magic is separation of the astral body from the physical, a feat that allows the astral body to assume near omnipotence.<sup>6</sup> Many years later, Olcott confirmed these interests of early Theosophists. He mentioned that

Our object was to learn, experimentally, whatever was possible about the constitution of man, his intelligence, and his place in nature. Especially Mind, active as WILL, was a great problem for us.<sup>7</sup>

The astral body, the main object of attention in the article, is described by Blavatsky as the same as the “spiritual body” of St. Paul and the “irrational soul” of Plato. She adds that though not the same as the physical body, the astral body occupies the same position in space with the physical body.

The highlight of the evening, however, is what the guests were probably anticipating. The interview was designed to divulge some of the contents of her book. What was unexpected, however, was an actual demonstration of the separation of the astral body from the physical body. The opening to this was Curtis’ question whether Blavatsky had actually witnessed this phenom-

enon. As if on cue, all in the room, Blavatsky, Curtis, and five guests<sup>8</sup>, witnessed what appeared to be an astral body, which the reporter called a “shadow,” passing across a window in the second-story room. A discussion following the event ruled out any person casting a shadow from inside the apartment; nor were the gas street lamps capable of casting a shadow. Yet the “shadow was as distinct as if cast by the noonday sun.” The suspicion on the part of the reporter was that the shadow was cast by a physical body near the window. An eighteen-inch wide ledge passed below the window, but Curtis was convinced that no person was on the ledge as the shadow passed. Requesting an explanation, Blavatsky identified the shadow as the astral body of an adept whose physical body remained in his home on the Mediterranean. Soon thereafter, a music box was heard. What seems strange, however, is that immediately after the demonstration Blavatsky had left the room claiming to go to the adjacent room in her apartment in order to converse there with the astral personage. Upon her return, she announced to her guests that a music box would be heard although the source of the music was not the room but presumably in the adept’s own home on the Mediterranean. In an almost nonchalant manner, she claimed that these visitations were frequent, the only difference being that instead of coming to the room where the guests were present, the adept had come to the other room. Blavatsky’s leaving the room and announcing on her return the sound of a music box is enough to give the skeptic suspicion that the events that evening were not necessarily legitimate expressions of magical phenomena. Whether those present had similar suspicions is not evident, however.

This display of occult phenomena was sure to capture the public's attention. The editorial, "Lamaseries," appearing in the same issue of the *World*, commented, somewhat tongue in cheek, that "the lamasery appears to be far in advance of the ordinary American university, and if the professors in those institutions would consent to advertise in our newspapers, there can be no doubt that Harvard, Yale and Columbia would be deserted for the more erudite colleges of the East."

One day later<sup>9</sup>, in a letter to the editor under the caption, "The New York School of Magic. A Disciple of the Adept Lady Tells of Levitations. The Scin Lecca and How it and Other Wonders Accord with Natural Law" [*TH* 3/7-8 (July-October 1991): 224], one of the guests present, H.S. Olcott, set forth to correct a false impression based on a statement by Madame Blavatsky.<sup>10</sup> When she stated that the natural laws *admitted to by science* can all be broken but not the *real laws of nature*, she meant to convey that true and total understanding of the laws of nature is *not* within the grasp of Western men of science. Only in the East are "the real laws and limitations of nature" understood. As an example, she cited the ability to levitate by humans as a fact verifiable by numerous eyewitness accounts, thereby suggesting that the natural law of gravitation can be contravened. Or again, life can be sustained despite the practices of "self-mutilation, self-dismemberment, self-disembowelling, the exposure of the human body to fire, without chemical or other preparation; inhumation for days, weeks and even months, and subsequent resuscitation," as mentioned in a number of accounts.

One more observation of note. Olcott maintains that *two* shadows "were seen to pass and re-pass twice" across the window, identifying them

as the "projection of the *Scin Lecca*, or astral body, of an adept whose physical form was at that moment asleep at the other side of the ocean."<sup>11</sup>

This brings us to the response to the Blavatsky interview and Olcott letter. In the April 1, 1877 issue, the *World* published a letter from an individual identifying himself merely as "A Reforming Lampsakan," later identified as Ezekiel Perkins.<sup>12</sup> The letter and subsequent interview in the April 8 issue have been completely overlooked, but it does explain the references in Blavatsky's April 2 letter (appearing, however, in the April 6 issue of the *World*) to the editor of the *World*, reprinted in the *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings* (I, 238-241). She refers to the name three times, once in a derisive manner: "lampsakano," "Lamp-sickener," and "Lampsakanoi."

The April 1 letter makes the following points. First, the Theosophists are not the only game in town when it comes to a knowledge and demonstration of magic. The Lodge of the Lampsakanoi not only is a rival school of magic but a superior one at that. Second, if Blavatsky's disclosure that she is a Buddhist gives credence to her claim of possessing the mysteries of the East, so too does the claim of the Lodge of the Lampsakanoi. Their claim is that the Sacred Books<sup>13</sup> of the Lampsakanoi, mentioned by Hindus around 1000 BCE and discovered in a *Buddhist* monastery in Chinese Tartary around 200 BCE, are far more ancient and, by implication, more potent than sources claimed by the Theosophists. As if to strengthen his claim, Perkins then identifies the founder of the Lampsakan order to be Lampsakos, "a Persian possessed of powers with which he astonished the world during the reign of Cyrus the Great (b. between 590 and 580 BCE and d. ca. 529 BCE).

Third, if Blavatsky has “taken some steps in the initiation in the great societies of the East,” the Lampsakan, Perkins, was himself “one of the Initiated.” Fourth, if the separation of the astral body from the physical body is the pinnacle of magical training, this practice is viewed as mere “child’s play” for the initiated Lampsakan. Finally, what of the demonstration in the lamasery of a shadow passing across the window? According to Perkins, it was all a trick played on Blavatsky and her guests not only that night but over the period of several months (mindful that she claimed the astral body “comes frequently”). What actually appeared, so Perkins claimed, was the “hyprastral body of a man who never saw the Mediterranean and who is, in fact, a clerk in a [d]own-town counting house.” This same clerk played another trick on Blavatsky some years previous, so Perkins claimed, by supposedly producing the medal that was buried with her father in Russia. Not the real medal, however, as Blavatsky thought it was, but rather a semblance of it. This claim could be verified, Perkins states in an off-handed manner, by simply going to Russia and opening the tomb of her father.

An interview with Perkins conducted a week later reveals more information about the man. Claiming to be “but a primary pupil in Lampsakene occultism,” thus portraying himself as on the same relative occult level as Blavatsky in relation to her adept teachers, he professes not only Eastern knowledge but also an Eastern heritage: his father a Thug from the Panjab, his mother a descendent of Bengali princes who were learned in the wisdom of the East. Like Blavatsky, he went on a long journey in search of wisdom, visiting Baghdad, Allahabad, and Chinese Tartary.<sup>14</sup> In the latter country he studied white

magic (the designation used by Blavatsky to refer to “true magic”) in a Buddhist lamasery with Jains, who, he claims, are very powerful magicians. Like Blavatsky, he relates stories of their feats. Then to demonstrate his magical adeptness to the skeptical reporter (Curtis again?), an outline of a rabbit’s head moving its ears and jaws materialized. The *scin-laeca* (so spelled here) of an elephant also materialized, proving that the Lampsakans had a power that the Theosophists lacked, and could produce the astral bodies of animals as well as humans.

What is one to make of the claims of both Blavatsky and Perkins? What seems to be obvious is not the pursuit merely of the speculative truth of magic but rather an attempt to demonstrate to the outside world (through the publicity of a newspaper) that both Blavatsky and Perkins had the knowledge and the power to affect natural laws. Like Spiritualist séances, the main purpose lay in the demonstration, in this instance, of magical prowess. Such mastery in turn confirms the practitioner’s (be it H.P.B.’s or Perkins’) genuine connection or lineage with those beings who do possess the true wisdom, be they adepts, Jains, Buddhists, or whoever. If bluster, the bending of the facts, or the invention of extraordinary incidents contribute to the goal of convincing the general public or a select group of one’s *bona fides*, then both Blavatsky and Perkins display little or no hesitation in making exorbitant claims pertaining to their abilities. In Perkins’ case, it would appear that the *scin-laecas* or the rabbit’s head and of elephant were in fact shadows cast by his fingers, perhaps his way of commenting on the reality of H.P.B.’s adept’s projection. If this is the case, then Perkins’ demonstrations were merely spoofs to poke fun at the Theosophists’ pretensions.

## LAMPSAKANISM: HOW IT HAPPENED THAT THE THEOSOPHISTS WERE SOLD

[*New York World*,  
April 1 (Sunday), 1877:3]

*To the Editor of The World:*

One final note. What of the name Lampsakan or its variants? According to Perkins, Lampsakos refers to the founder of the order, “a Persian possessed of powers with which he astonished the world during the reign of Cyrus the Great.” Lampsakos (modern Lapseki), however, is a city located on the east coast of the Hellespont (Turkey) in the northern Troad (the northwest region in Asia Minor or Turkey with its center in Troy). Founded by the Phokaians (Phocaea, an Ionian city: now Foça, situated on the west coast about 100 miles due south), it came under Lydian, Persian, Athenian, and Spartan control, allying itself with Rome in 190 BCE and surviving up to the third century CE.<sup>15</sup> It is only in the 19th century, however, that its ancient walls were uncovered. Its name is said to derive from Lampsake, the daughter of a Phrygian king (Mandron).<sup>16</sup> Lampsakos was the birthplace of Anaximenes, Charon, Adimantus, and Metrodorus.<sup>17</sup> It was also famous for its wine and for its being the chief seat of worship of the god Priapus, his birth place.<sup>18</sup> According to Lemprière<sup>19</sup> his “temple. . . was the asylum of lewdness and debauchery, and exhibited scenes of the most unnatural lust, and hence the epithet *Lampsacius* is usual to express immodesty and wantonness.” Although the divinity is usually associated with fertility and the generative power of nature, prophetic powers are also attributed to him.<sup>20</sup>

Perkins must have been aware of some of the information given above, since he found the name from some contemporary source at the time. Whether he used the name in jest or because it sounded mysterious is anyone’s guess, but it certainly does not add to his credibility.

\* \* \*

SIR: As the Theosophical Society has just emerged again in the form of a Lamasery, its attention should be directed to the fact that in New York to-day there is an assembly or Lodge of the Lampsakanoi, which far exceeds in magic power even the society of which Colonel Olcott is so illustrious a member and Mme. Blavatsky so tempestuous an expositor. The Sacred Books of the Lampsakanoi were rediscovered in a Buddhist monastery in Chinese Tartary two hundred years before the Christian era, and are mentioned in the tenth century before Christ by Hindoo writers<sup>21</sup>, among whom are the Gamoojah Jam Go-Woundah, author of the “Mahapootri Doola-Jah,” or “The Three Feathers of the Wise,” and the Koptic Glumpti, the celebrated Gowakum Bakkani, whose work on “The Four Fiddles of Folly” is soon to be published, in translation, for gratuitous distribution by the late Calvin Blanchered<sup>22</sup>, through a process known only to the Illuminated Lampsakanoi. Lampsakos, the founder of the order, was a Persian possessed of powers with which he astonished the world during the reign of Cyrus the Great. The Caliph Haroun Alraschid, Plotinus, Celsus, the late Mr. Greeley<sup>23</sup>, Count Cagliostro and Mr. Joseph Bradley<sup>24</sup> have been, and indeed are at present, members of the order, which is widely diffused throughout both worlds,

although that is neither here nor there. As the writer is himself one of the Initiated, it is impossible for him to disclose the more occult secrets of the Lampsakanoi. It will be sufficient to refer to the “Demonstratio” of Marcus Minucius Felix (*Libraria Academica Wagneriana* 1871), where on page 9, he says: “Et ut semper mare etiam positus flatibus inquietum est, etsi non canis spumosisque fluctibus exhibat ad torram, tamen crispis tortuosisque ibidem erroribus delectati perquam sumus, cum in ipso acquoris limine plantas tingeremus, quod vicissim nunc appulsum nostris pedibus alluderet fluctus, nunc relabens ac[?] vestigia retrabens in sese resorbet.”<sup>25</sup> To the initiated the separation of the astral from the physical body is the merest child’s play, and is frequently accomplished for the sake of amusement, as, for example, was done a few evenings ago at the house of Mme. Blavatsky when a shadow passed before her window, which she mistook for the astral body of a “friend of hers, an adept who lives on the Mediterranean and who was at that moment at home.” The trick has been played upon the Theosophists for several months past, for that shadow was the hyprastral body of a man who never saw the Mediterranean and who is, in fact, a clerk in a [d]own-town counting house. His name is at your disposal at any time when you may require it. The joke is a sufficiently harmless one and, in the present circumstances, it is altogether too good to keep. Likewise—though I confess that the jest was rather ungentlemanly—it was this same Lampsakan clerk who some time ago brought to Mme. Blavatsky from the tomb of her father a medal which had been buried with him in Russia, if I mistake not, and “materialized” it for her at a séance. She recognized it at once and now has it among her treasures. Unfortunately, however, it is

not the medal at all, but a simulacrum thereof which was foisted upon her for a “a [*sic*] lark.” The real medal is yet in her father’s tomb, and if she doubts this she has but to go to the grave in Russia and examine it where it lies as of yore on his breast. In other words, she is the victim of deception which was entered upon only to show how easily the Lampsakanoi can impose upon those who suppose that they are really Illuminati and adepts.

Doubtless both she and your Theosophist correspondent in last Monday’s *WORLD* will hasten to reply that such deeds are in themselves impossible. It will be urged that Mme. Blavatsky “is too learned a person, too familiar with the progress of Oriental science,” to be deceived in this way, but to this the ready answer is, that though it may suit the prejudices of her hour to jest over Lampsakan powers, there are many instances on record where persons who have believed in what they choose to call the “solid ground” of magic have been grossly deceived. This is at least one such instance recorded in history; it may be found in the “Opuscula” of Maximius Valerius Pomponius Robertus Hellerius (iv., 11-44. Ed. Novi Eboraci). Other instances, I doubt not, will readily occur to all who have travelled much in *Novum Eboracum*.

Perhaps it will be said that, with such powers at our command, it was an unworthy thing thus to deceive the Theosophists; indeed, I am of that opinion myself, and am ready to bear without a murmur all the odium that may be cast upon me. It is wrong to mislead the innocent, half-taught and illogical, and hence we Lampsakanoi have determined to do so no longer, and to submit to all the

ridicule which so richly we deserve. *Peccavimus!* and as there is no other way to punish us for our crime, by all means let the public grin at us and our pretensions; but if we put a good face on the matter and grow virtuously indignant, who shall say us nay? Human nature will crop out, for all our serene hyprastral bodies. By the way, do you know where Mayor Hall<sup>26</sup> is? He was a Lampsakan, and could separate his astral and physical bodies at will. I merely throw this out as a hint that might be worked up by the detectives.

A REFORMING LAMPSAKAN.

\* \* \*

**THE ILLUMINATED  
LAMPSAKENOI  
A CONFERENCE WITH  
THE GRAND KOPHT  
CONCERNING THEOSOPHISTS**

[From the *New York World*, Sunday, April 8, 1877, page 3]

Yesterday a reporter of THE WORLD visited the “Reforming Lampsakene” who recently made public the existence of a lodge of Lampsakenoi in this city who are, or claim to be, possessed of magical powers which are far superior to those of fakirs or any to which the Theosophical Society may hope to attain under the priesthood of Mme. Blavatsky. The real name of the “Reforming Lampsakene” is Ezekiel

Perkins. In person he is remarkably tall and gaunt, and is troubled with an affection of the bronchial tubes which at times prostrates him for weeks together. His hair is fine as floss-silk, and his eyes are black, piercing and deep-set; his nose is like that of a hawk; his legs are long and largely gifted at the ends with a pair of singularly robust feet, which he perpetually crosses and tangles when he is engaged in earnest conversation or profound thought.

“Yes,” said he, as the reporter entered his chambers, “it was I that wrote an account of the Lampsakenoi for THE WORLD. I am willing to be interviewed. I am sick of the Theosophists and their pretensions; all that they do, or may hope to learn, is but child’s play. The Lampsakenoi are the true masters of magic. I am but a primary pupil in Lampsakene occultism, and yet, though the possibility of motion is out of the question, I can walk into the next room. Would you like to see me do so?”

“Do I understand you correctly?” asked the reporter. “What do you mean by saying that motion is impossible?”

“Pardon me,” said Mr. Perkins. “I know that purblind science teaches that heat, light, electricity, and so on, are but modes of motion, but yet Zeus Eleates taught that motion was impossible. Much being the case, the correlated forces—that is, all force—are impossible. The argument has often been reiterated; it is as follows: A thing must move either in the place where it is or out of the place where it is. It cannot move in the place where it is, for then it would stand still; it cannot move out of the place where it is, because it is not there. Motion is therefore impossible: yet I, a Lampsakene pupil, can move.”

“So can I,” urged the reporter.

“So you cannot,” replied Mr. Perkins.

Why?" asked the reporter.

"Because it is impossible," was the reply.

"Then you can't," the reporter replied.

"But I can," said Mr. Perkins.

"Why?" said the reporter.

"Because I am a Lampsakene," came the reply.

"You only seem to move, for the same reason that the sun seems to move around the world. All people in the world really stand still except the illuminated Lampsakenoi. Motion is relative. If I retire three steps from you, we are by so much distant from each other the same as if you moved three steps from me, supposing that you could really do so. People only seem to move because their relations to some Lampsakene are changed by his change of place. The same is the case with inanimate objects, all of which partake of the Lampsakene principle when they are touched or have been once touched by an adept. In this way can the apparent miracle wrought when Joshua commanded the sun to stand still be explained. All the Lampsakenoi in the world stood still and, of course, motion being impossible except to them, the earth not only really did stand still—for it always does that—but seemed to, as well, as also did the sun. Many of the planets are Lampsakenoi, for which you may consult Philo Judaeus. The fixed stars are not however, and therefore remain forever in one place."

"Are you not getting things somewhat mixed?" asked the reporter.

"No," replied Mr. Perkins, "mixture implies change of place, which I have just shown to be impossible."

"You must have passed a strange life, Mr. Perkins," said the reporter, after a short time

spent in watching his host's feet perform the most surprising of miracles; "will you give me a brief account of it?" "Strange indeed," said Mr. Perkins, wearily coughing seven times, "and eventful beyond all the thoughts of man. My father was a small Thug, with a modest walk in the Punjab. My mother's name was Ayasha Maria Perkinje, and she was the descendant of a long line of Asiatic princes of Bengal who were learned in all the wisdom of the East and could construct clocks and wooden nutmegs through the aid of the superior powers. When I was eighteen years of age I was placed in charge of a caravan going from Delhi to Cashmere with a cargo of pumpkins and broomhandles. Having disposed of my merchandise on excellent terms, I set out on a journey to Balsora, visiting Bagdad and Allahabad on my way. At last I reached Chinese Tartary, and there, in a Buddhist Lamasery, I studied white magic under the Jains, who taught me many wonderful things and deep mysteries, such, for example, as how to stand on my head and part my back hair without the aid of a mirror. The Jains, as you know, and as Mme. Blavatsky truly says, are especially careful about animal life. They carry little brooms with them to brush away the insects that may get in their paths. They are among the most powerful of magicians, and never drink water that has not been boiled two or three times, in order that they may not kill the microscopic animalculae within it, as they assuredly would do should they swallow them. Animalculae, as these learned Jains know, can easily withstand a temperature of over 212 degrees. They are the most holy of men; and, indeed, in travelling I have often seen large grove [*sic*] of them hanging by the heels

from trees like so many dormant bats. I once mistook a grove [*sic*] of them for these animals and discharged my fowling piece at them, whereupon they all rose together in the air and flew away, darkening the sun for hours.

“Can they crow?” asked the reporter.

“I have never heard them crow,” was the reply, “but as they flew away they emitted sounds somewhat like the creaking noise of swallows. They can whistle out of their eyes, though, and perform many other mystical and holy rites. It is a sin for them to look upon a woman, and if a Jain has happened to do so, he will separate his astral from his material body, the former taking the shape of a large cowhide goad and the latter that of a dog. The former will then flog the latter most severely. I have frequently witnessed the operation, which will often be kept up for hours, till one or the other falls exhausted. Once, to my knowledge, the astral body of a Jain of my acquaintance flogged itself all to pieces in the operation, and had to get a new handle before it could reunite with the material body. Ever afterwards he was looked upon as an exceedingly holy man, but, as he disliked titles, he refused to have a handle to his name. Frequently a man’s astral body is merely his name—his reputation.”

“But these things are common,” said the reporter, “and have been witnessed by hundreds of European travellers in the East. The adepts in the Lamasery of New York are on the track of them, and will soon be able to outshine all the mysterious phenomena which you have so vividly and accurately described. In what do the Lampsakanoi excel the Theosophists and their teachers?”

“The Lampsakanoi,” replied Mr. Perkins,

“have sacred books,—which I studied in the Buddhist monastery in Chinese Tartary, where they were discovered centuries before the Christian era. Approach, or seem to approach thy head and look. Look there!”

The startled reporter dropped his under jaw, for there on the wall—although there was only an astral lamp in the room, and not the slightest trace of an animal of any sort—was distinctly outlined the head of a rabbit, with its ears working rapidly, while its jaws seemed to nibble at a tuft of grass or something of the sort. Its eye was distinctly marked—its identity was unmistakable. Mr. Perkins was between the lamp and the wall, and had no rabbit in his hands, his fingers worked in cabalistic signs and the reporter bowed his head in awe!”

“Behold!” said Mr. Perkins. “Yonder is the *scin-laeca* of an elephant.” And there in truth it was.

“The Theosophists,” said the Master, “can produce only the *scin-laeca* of men with their astral bodies. Lo! the Lampsakoovi [*sic*] can produce those of beasts. Yes: the beasts, like men, have souls.”

“I understood thee to say, O! Grand Kopht,” said the reporter, “that it was the hyprastral body of a down-town clerk who deceived the Theosophists by pretending to be the ‘astral body of a friend of Mme. Blavatsky who was then at [?] home [?] in the Mediterranean.’ What, then, is the hyprastral body?”

“Dost thou comprehend the astral body?” queried the great Master.

“I do not; I dare not,” said the reporter.

“Lo! now, I will show thee. The natural man is two selfs. They may be separated by him who is willing to be beside himself. Savey?”

“Lo! now, I twig,” said the reporter. “But what is the hyprastral body?”

“Now, when the astral body is thus sundered and apart from the other, how shall it still further separate itself from itself and become One everlasting and single?” said the Master.

Then in a low, monotonous tone he chanted to a weird air the weird lines of the Lampsakene Coleridge:

Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes in holy dread;  
For he on honey-dew hath fed  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

“Dare I say more? Dost thou not perpend? Behold then the mystery. When thou hast once become beside thyself, and the astral body stands apart from the material, what saith the Illuminated Lampsakene? How doth his astral body become his hyprastral and cahoot no more with its baseness. Speak, Brahma! The mystery is told. The astral only needs to get a little ‘off color,’ and lo! it is the hyprastral. Wouldst thou like to ask me some more hard questions, young man?”

“But one thing remains,” said the reporter. “In yesterday’s WORLD Mme. Blavatsky said:

“I remember I was once in the bungalow of a rich Indian where a fakir and a juggler both performed their feats. In the room were a tame tiger, chained, a monkey and a parrot. While the fakir was performing they all showed symptoms of great delight, but when the sorcerer began the tiger leaped, around in evident terror, roaring in a frightful manner, and at last became so violent that he broke his chain, leaped through the window, ran away and was never seen again. The monkey fled to his perch, grasped it

with his tail and hung in a fainting fit, while the parrot fell to the floor nearly dead.’

“What do you make of this?”

“Simply,” replied the Master, “that to look upon this as strange shows how slight a knowledge of magic is possessed by the Theosophists. Why should not the lower animals act thus? Have you not just seen the astral bodies of a rabbit and an elephant? But inanimate objects will act in the same way. List to the words of Lampsakos, which show passion in a common household utensil:

“The sow came in with the saddle,  
The little pig rocked the cradle,  
The spit stood behind the door  
And threw the dishelout [*sic*] on the floor,  
“Oda apluda!” said the gridiron; “Can’t you agree?”

I’m the head constable! Fetch ‘em to me!” ’ ”  
And the reporter departed, saddened and depressed with many thoughts.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Mention of the article appears in the *Spiritual Scientist*, V/ 22 (Feb. 1, 1877): 261. It was reprinted in its entirety in the *Banner of Light* 40/19 (February 5, 1877). The following day, on January 24, Blavatsky wrote a letter to the *World* (reproduced in Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: 1874-1878*. Compiled by Boris de Zirkoff. Third edition. Volume I (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1988), 237-38.

<sup>2</sup>An interview with Madame Blavatsky conducted by the New York *Sun* (May 7, 1877: 6) regarding her knowledge of Buddhism is particularly revealing. The headline and sub-headlines read “Catechizing A Buddhist. The Religion Which

Sixteen Theosophs Intend to Profess. The Doctrines of a Faith Which in its Purity has no Dogmas. Its Practical Workings as a Religion. The Story of Jesus Christ Anticipated by Two Thousand Years." The article will appear in a future issue of *Theosophical History*, with commentary by John Patrick Deveney.

<sup>3</sup>Both the interview and editorial were reprinted in *Theosophical History* III/6 (April 1991): 174-79].

<sup>4</sup>Such a description establishes "magic" to be closely associated with "theosophy."

<sup>5</sup>One wonders whether these secrets were open to non-family members, and if so, whether they were open to women. In other words, we might ask how Blavatsky ingratiated herself with the members of these societies.

<sup>6</sup>The interest in astral projection is discussed in great detail in John Patrick Deveney's forthcoming *Astral Projection or Liberation of the Double and the Work of the Early Theosophical Society*.

<sup>7</sup>Henry Steel Olcott, "Old Diary Leaves." Chapter IX. *The Theosophist*, vol. XIV/3 (December 1892): 139. Repeated in *Old Diary Leaves*, First Series (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1974 [reprint of the second edition, 1941], 140.

<sup>8</sup>H.S. Olcott is the only other person identified as present during the interview. In a subsequent entry ("The New York School of Magic," on which see below, the correspondent identifies "one lawyer, two physicians and two writers for the press, besides myself." This points to, but not necessarily confirms, the presence of a few of the "formers" of the T.S.: W.Q. Judge (a lawyer), Dr. Charles E. Simmons, Dr. Seth Pancoast (both physicians), W.L. Alden (an editorial writer for the *New York Times*), Curtis, and the unsigned correspondent, Henry S. Olcott.

<sup>9</sup>A correction. Although "The New York School of Magic" was identified in *Theosophical History* III/7-8 (July-October 1991) as appearing in the March 28, 1877 issue of the *World*, it actually appeared one day earlier, Tuesday, March 27, 1877.

<sup>10</sup>The editorial in the *World*, "Levitation and Other Light Matters" [reprinted in *Theosophical History* III/7-8): 227-28] defends the original reporting of the statement. The editorial writer states:

What science calls the natural laws can every one of them be broken, but the reals laws of nature cannot," seems to convey succinctly and correctly the very idea which he is at so much pains to elucidate in a column letter. To the clumsy Anglo-Saxon mind the use of the word "calls" explains the whole thing.

In other words, natural laws are not disproven; rather, they are not completely understood.

<sup>11</sup>Why Olcott maintains that two shadows are the equivalent to one astral body is not clear. *Scin Lecca* is claimed to have been introduced by Bulwer-Lytton in *A Strange Story* (1861).

<sup>12</sup>For an earlier article on Perkins, see my "Forgotten Magi: George Henry Felt and Ezekiel Perkins" in *Le Défi Magique*, textes réunis by Jean-Baptiste. Volume I: *Ésotérisme, Occultisme, Spiritisme* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1994), 131-142.

<sup>13</sup>Note the reference to the *Sacred Books of the East* series, whose general editor was Max Müller.

<sup>14</sup>Tartary is located east of the Caspian Sea, including the area surrounding the Aral Sea, what is today Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

<sup>15</sup>Michael Grant, *A Guide to the Ancient World* (H.W. Wilson Company, 1986), 327.

<sup>16</sup>*Der Kleine Pauly: Lexikon der Antike*. Volume III (Stuttgart: Alfred Druckenmüller Verlag, 1969), 473. The name is rendered as Mandion by Lemprière, J., *Lemprière's Classical Dictionary of Proper Names mentioned in Ancient Authors Writ Large*, third edition. With an Introduction by R. Willets (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 318. First published in 1788. I thank John Patrick Deveney for the references.

<sup>17</sup>*Harper's Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities*, edited by Harry Thurston Peck (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1965), 918.

<sup>18</sup>Lemprière, 318 and 518; *Harper's Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities*, 918 and 1311; *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, edited by N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 577 and 876; *A*

*Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, edited by William Smith. Volume III (London: John Murray, 1880), 522-23.

<sup>19</sup>*Op. cit.*, 318.

<sup>20</sup>*A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, 523.

<sup>21</sup>One wonders where they are mentioned.

<sup>22</sup>I could find no person of that name or title that remotely resembles the one given above.

<sup>23</sup>Claims such as Perkins' are easily made but impossible to prove or disprove. Why Horace Greeley (1811–1872) or the other individuals named above are mentioned is not clear, except of course for the fact that their notoriety adds prestige to the person making the claim and to the organization he represents.

On a whim, I consulted Greeley's *Reflections of a Busy Life* (N.Y.: J.B. Ford and Co., 1868) to confirm Mr. Perkins' claim. No mention, however, is made of the Lampsakenoi.

<sup>24</sup>It is uncertain who Joseph Bradley is, but perhaps it refers to the jurist Joseph Bradley (1813-1892).

<sup>25</sup>"And, as always, the sea was restless, even without storms, and without standing out with grey, frothy waves jetting up to a peak; however, we are very much, in the same way, tossed about by curling and tortuous errors, when we put the soles of our feet down on the watery threshold, because now, in turn, its approach is against us—the wave dashes in, now returns, taking back its traces and reforms itself once again."

My thanks to Professor Daniel Brown of the Religious Studies Department for providing the translation from the Latin.

<sup>26</sup>Abraham Oakey Hall (1826–1898) was mayor of New York from 1868 to 1872. Known as "Boss Tweed's mayor" (after William Marcy Tweed [1823–1878]), Hall joined the Tammany machine in 1864 (Tammany Hall referred to the executive committee of the Democratic Party in New York City) and as mayor became part of a quartet of leaders that controlled patronage and nominations of candidates. By 1870, the Tammany machine—consisting of the governor

of New York (John Thompson Hoffman), the president of the Parks Department (Peter Barr Sweeney), State Senator Tweed, and Hall—took advantage of a newly created board of audit established through a reform charter—of which Hall, Tweed, and Sweeney were members—that could be easily manipulated by them. Robbing the city of between \$30,000,000 and \$200,000,000, revelations coming in part from the *New York Times* led to Hall being indicted. His trial, resulting in a mistrial, was held in February 1872. Twenty years later, a second trial was conducted, wherein Hall was declared innocent of any wrong-doing. See *Biographical Dictionary of American Mayors, 1820–1980*, edited by Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones (Westport, Connecticut and London, England: Greenwood Press, 1981), 146-47.

Around this time, there was a great deal of interest in the disappearance of former Mayor Hall. His disappearance was first reported in the March 21 issue of *The Sun* ("Where is Ex-Mayor Hall?") repeating rumors, admittedly false, that he had eloped with a stage actress. The story was given more detailed analysis the next day by *The Sun* ("The Oakey Hall Mystery"), with speculation abounding in this and subsequent articles (March 24, "The Fate of the Ex-Mayor"; March 25, "Is the Mystery Solved?"; March 26, "Mr. Hall's Whereabouts"; March 27, "Oakey Hall Speculations"; April 2, "More About A. Oakey Hall"; April 3, "Hall, alias Sutcliffe"; April 6, "Oakey Hall and Miss Grey" and "The Mystery of Oakey Hall"). According to the last two articles, he turned up in London.

# H. Spencer Lewis: A Bibliographical Survey

David T. Rocks

During his twenty-four years as Imperator,<sup>1</sup> Harvey Spencer Lewis (1883-1939), founder of the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, made numerous claims of authenticity for himself and for his organization. In doing so AMORC became the target of rival rosicrucian organizations who were also touting their own authenticity. Consequently, allegations by and about Lewis were published so frequently that the only means of determining what was or was not claimed by Lewis requires a thorough examination of his writings.

Therefore, the logical starting point for this survey is AMORC's periodicals because the bulk of Lewis' claims were published therein. AMORC's first official periodical was *The American Rosae Crucis*. Beginning in January 1916 twelve issues comprising volume one were published and, nine issues of volume two were published in 1917. However, by October of 1916 AMORC was experiencing conspicuous difficulty in maintaining its publishing schedule. As a result, nearly every issue of the magazine from that point on carried an editorial comment reflecting their situation. The tone of AMORC's plea was unmistakable:

Hereafter the magazine will be issued promptly and in order to prevent any delay, or skip of issue, in your receipt of the magazine for the coming year, be sure to send in your renewal for 1917 issues as quickly as possible.

Next, the December 1916 issue was prefaced as follows:

NOTICE TO OUR READERS. This issue is late, but we have gained some on the time lost in the past. This is the second issue we have mailed during the month of February [1917] and in March two more, the January and February [1917] issues, will be mailed.

Then, in April 1917 the editors wrote:

It is useless to comment further on the lateness of our issues. Try as we will, we cannot rush the issuing of our publication without injustice to the quality and diversity of matter we wish to produce. This February issue will be in the mails before May first, although many may not receive it until May. The March issue is under way and will follow in the mails about May 10th to 15th. It may be possible to put the April issue in the mails before June first; if so, we can expect to have the July issue on time by gaining a little each month.

This was followed by the June 1917 notice which read:

IMPORTANT NOTICE. This issue of the magazine is dated June, 1917, although it is Number 3 of Volume 2. Our last issue was dated February, 1917, which was Number 2 of Volume 2. In order to bring our magazine up to date we have secured permission from the Post

Office Department to skip three issues and date the present issue June, 1917. To compensate our subscribers for the loss of the March, April and May issues all subscriptions ending in June, 1917, or thereafter will be extended three months. By this means we hope to keep our magazine up to date and to issue it monthly on or about the 10th of the month.

Finally, the discontinuance of *The American Rosae Crucis* was announced in November of 1917. The two reasons given were:

First, this is one step in our plan for ending, slowly and effectively, the outward, public propaganda of our work. Secondly, the magazine as it has been published during the past two years has not afforded an opportunity for the proper presentation of those articles, subjects and study-references which we would like to place into the hands of our members. Therefore, beginning with January [1918] we will issue a new monthly publication in the form of a unique magazine.

At that time, any state with members could be chartered with a Grand Lodge of its own, as was common in Masonry. Also, there were no home-study members or initiations by mail as there are today. Lectures were sent to the Masters of Lodges who read them to the members. In 1918-19, it was with this in mind that a new publication called *Cromaat* was introduced, for members only, by special subscription. The seven issues published were lettered A through G, with each issue focusing on a single subject.

A-“An International Language for Rosicrucians with Complete Grammar and Dictionary.”

The Rosicrucian language was an artificial language based on Esperanto. However, the project was soon discontinued because of time constraints and the lack of qualified personnel to maintain the dictionary and grammar changes.

B-“Official Manual for Officers and Members of the AMORC.”

This was the first edition of *The Rosicrucian Manual*. (New York: AMORC College Library, 1918).

C- “A Complete System of Natural Harmonics.”

The law of vibrations and the universal cosmic keyboard were introduced to the membership in this issue. Lewis later incorporated these subjects into the monographs [official teachings] of the Order.

D-“The Village of the Devil.”

The story written by Lewis was purported to represent one of the oldest traditions of the Order in France, although the tradition was cryptically stated. Later, the story was reprinted for members as a Supplemental Discourse (unofficial teachings in manuscript form).

E-“Cosmic Geomancy.”

A small amount of the material in this issue was incorporated into the official teachings, however, the greater portion of the material was expanded and became Lewis' book *SelfMastery and Fate with the Cycles of Life*. (San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1929).

F-“The Emperor’s Personal Message. The Annual Address to all Member’s in which the Emperor Explains the Paramount Problems of our Order.”

By this time the organization was on the verge of collapse.<sup>2</sup>

G-“An Official Communication from the Supreme RC Authorities to the Order in North America.”

Lewis published a letter which he claimed was from his superiors in France with his reply to the membership. Surprisingly, this early letter was not included in Ralph Lewis’s<sup>3</sup> book of important *Rosicrucian Documents*. (San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1975).

In 1920, the April, May, and June issues of *The American Rosae Crucis* were published as volume three, comprising a total of twenty-four issues of that magazine.

Next, eight issues of *The Triangle* were published between March 23, 1921 and January 24, 1922. Each issue was published in a four-page newsletter format. Then, *The Triangle* was revived as a fourteen-page magazine in August 1923; followed by the September and October issues, it was discontinued with the February 1924 issue.

In May 1925, the first issue of *The Mystic Triangle* appeared and thereafter was published monthly until September, 1929. In October 1929, the magazine’s title was changed to *The Rosicrucian Digest*. This final change seemed to be part of a program to stabilize the organization’s public image. Additionally, the directors of AMORC apparently realized that their magazine could be a more useful tool if made

available to members and non-members alike. Therefore, in August 1930 the first issue of *The Rosicrucian Forum* was introduced as a private publication, for members only, giving AMORC a means of public and of private propaganda. In the preface of his book, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers with Complete History of the Rosicrucian Order*, Lewis wrote that:

The history of the Brotherhood must be divided into two general classifications. First, that which has come down to the present time by word of mouth, supported by more or less definite references in ancient writings or symbolical passages in the rituals or teachings; and second, that which is truly historical and supported by the records found in the various branches of the organization throughout the world.<sup>4</sup>

Later, Lewis boasted that “No one has ever [*sic*] been able to successfully refute the historical outline given by us in our literature.”<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Lewis never proved that it was correct.

From its inception, *The Rosicrucian Digest* was published monthly until 1987 when it became a bimonthly publication like the *Rosicrucian Forum*, which always had been a bimonthly periodical. However, in 1991 both the *Digest* and the *Forum* became quarterlies. Interestingly, April 1990 was the seventy-fifth anniversary of AMORC and it passed unnoticed or, rather was surpassed by the news that Emperor (1987-1990) Gary L. Stewart had been removed from office and accused of embezzlement.<sup>6</sup> That aside, the publications of AMORC are unquestionably the most reliable source of what was or was not claimed by Lewis. Even so, the validity of his claims must be treated as a separate issue.

In evaluating claims of Rosicrucian authenticity it would be prudent to bear in mind the admonition of Manly P. Hall (1901-1990):

A book was written [*Fama Fraternitatis*, 1614] by an unknown person, advancing the claims of an unknown society, making promises that were never fulfilled, and inviting the learned to membership in an organization that never was discovered. The Society of the Rose Cross taught an esoteric philosophy that has never been explained or revealed. It claimed a membership, yet no bona fide member of it has ever been found. And it describes as its founder and originator a man whose identity, concealed under the symbolic letters C.R.C. remains unknown. A stalwart group of followers who admitted that they could not find the society wrote an elaborate literature in defense of it. This literature was answered, at least in part, by a series of theological criticisms and condemnations, and by others who could neither prove nor disprove the existence of the society. Upon this slender and exceedingly attenuated strand of circumstances, a number of modern organizations make high-flown and concrete claims. But these claims, for the most part, evaporate into the same vagueness which surrounded the entire subject for more than three hundred years.<sup>7</sup>

Accordingly, a bibliography of thirty pamphlets and books by and about Harvey Spencer Lewis follows this survey. Combined with the periodicals, the pamphlets and books should contain sufficient evidence to illustrate what Lewis did or did not claim.

\* \* \*

# H.S. Lewis Bibliography

## Pamphlets

01. *The Constitution of the A::M::O::R::C of North America*. Adopted Ratified by all Lodges of this Order, Represented at the First National Convention, Held in Pittsburgh, Pa., July 31-Aug. 4, 1917. To Which is Added Specimen By-Laws for All Lodges. New York: Supreme Grand Lodge, 1917. 20cm x 15cm, pp.30.

AMORC's first constitution and by-laws.

02. *Confessio R.:C.:. Fraternitatis*. Prepared by Bro. Profundis.<sup>8</sup> 1918. Third edition. In Five Parts. San Jose: AMORC, 1978. 23.5cm x 15.5cm, pp.14, 23, 14, 14, 12.

Harvey Lewis' confession is now shown only to twelfth degree members. In his introduction, Ralph Lewis wrote that "all of the facts concerning the Order's reestablishment in this jurisdiction could not be too quickly and frankly divulged."

03. *Rosicrucian Initiation. A Sealed Book of Instructions for Neophyte Initiates*. San Francisco: The National RC Lodge of the AMORC, Copyright ©1921. 23cm x 15.6cm, pp.17, [3].

Contains information for new members.

04. *Man Triumphant and The Mastery of Fate*. Containing the Secret Decalogue by H. Spencer Lewis. San Francisco: AMORC Movement, copyright ©1921. 23cm x 15.6cm, [32]pp.

Promotional Booklet.

05. *Rosicrucian Illumination. A Sealed Book of Information and Preliminary Instruction*. The Rosicrucian Order of the Aquarian Age by Sri Ramatherio. Third Edition. San Francisco: The Supreme Grand Lodge of the AMORC, [1926]. 23cm x 15.6cm, 28pp.

06. *The Light of Egypt. The Strange Story of the Rosicrucians* by Sri Ramatherio. Tampa, Florida: Rosicrucian Square, 1927. 23cm x 15.6cm, 32pp.

Promotional Booklet. Official Publication No. 15.

07. *The Light of Egypt. The Strange Story of the Rosicrucians* by Sri Ramatherio. Fourth edition. San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge, 1928. 23cm x 15.6cm, pp.34, [2].

Promotional Booklet.

08. 'White Book C' *The Mysterious Origin of the Rosicrucians*. A Challenge of Facts Ac-

cepted by AMORC. San Jose: Supreme Council of AMORC for North America, 1928. 20.7cm x 9.2cm, 40pp.

AMORC's official response to Clymer's allegations.

09. *Internationales Hauptquartier von/ Obersten Rat des Alten Mys-/tischen Ordens Rosae Crucis/ International Headquarters of the/ Supreme Council of the Ancient/ Mystic Order Rosae Crucis/ S.: S.: S.: / Berlin, Germany/ 1930/ Official Communication/ to all Humanity/ I. Manifestatio/ II. Invitatio/ III. Proclamatio/ Issued through the United Organizations/ of the Rose Cross/ . . . / Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC)/ Brotherhood of the Rose Cross/ Fraternitatis Hermetica Lucis/ Ordo Templi Orientis/ Collegium Pansophia/ Societas Pansophia/ This is the Second Official FAMA issued by the Original/ Fraternity Rosae Crucis since the Seventeenth Century. 23.6cm x 18.5cm, 8pp.*

Cover title: *Pronunziamento/to all the/ World*. This fantasy later became an embarrassment to AMORC.

10. *The Wisdom of the Sages. A Story of the Rosicrucians* by Frater R. T. XII. Second Edition. San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of the AMORC, 1932. 25cm x 17cm, 32pp.

Official Publication No. 16. Promotional Booklet.

11. *In the Superior Court. Santa Clara County, California*. 'Guilty' is the Verdict of the Judge in this Case of Conspiracy and Libel against the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, AMORC. Of Special Interest to all Freemasons, Theosophists, Rosicrucians, and Members of Fraternal Organizations. Editor's edition. San Jose: Department of Publication, AMORC, 1933. 20.7cm x 9.2cm, 12pp.

"(This edition prepared especially for the Editors of Newspapers and Magazines of North America.)"

12. *White Book 'D' Audi Alteram Partem (Hear the Other Side)*. San Jose: The Rosicrucian Press, Ltd., 1935. 22.8cm x 15.3cm, 41pp.

AMORC's further reply to the allegations of Clymer, *et al*.

13. *The Secret Heritage. A Sealed Book. Profundis XIII*. First edition. San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1935. 24cm x 17.3cm, 32pp.

Official Publication No. 17. Promotional Booklet.

Approximately three years after Lewis' death the contents of the promotional booklets were revised and re-titled *The Mastery of Life*. Official Publication No. 18.

## Books

14. *A Thousand Years of Yesterdays. A Strange Story of Mystic Revelations* with an introduction by Reverend George R. Chambers.<sup>9</sup> San Francisco: AMORC, 1920. 19.5cm x 13cm, 75pp.

Although written as fiction, Lewis wrote that this book “will tell you the real facts of reincarnation.” In Chapter 8, Lewis introduced as characters, those whom he claimed authorized him to establish the Rosicrucian Order in America.

15. *Unto Thee I Grant*. Revised by Sri Ramatherio. San Francisco: The Oriental Literature Syndicate, 1925. 18.3cm x 12.4cm, 98pp.

Lewis wrote only the preface and notes on the terms used in the manuscript, pp.i-vii, 93-98. He claimed that the book was “translated by special permission of the Grand Lama and Disciples of the Sacred College in the Grand Temple in Tibet.”

16. *The Mystical Life of Jesus*. San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1929. 19.5cm x 14cm, 320pp.

This was the first of two books relating to this topic. Also see number 25.

17. *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers with Complete History of the Rosicrucian*

*Order*. San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1929. 19.5cm x 13.5cm, 341pp. + ads.

This version of Rosicrucian history has been embellished since its first appearance in the *American Rosae Crucis*.

18. *Rosicrucian Principles for the Home and Business*. San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1929. 19.5cm x 13.5cm, 241pp.

A self-help book.

19. *Self-Mastery and Fate with the Cycles of Life*. San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1929. 19.5cm x 13.5cm, 253pp.

Although Lewis personally believed in astrology and other pseudo-sciences he was convinced that his system was better.

20. *Mansions of the Soul. The Cosmic Conception*. San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1930. 19.5cm x 13.5cm, 338pp.

Lewis' attempt to explain reincarnation in detail.

21. *Lemuria. The Lost Continent of the Pacific*. By W. S. Cervé with a Special Chapter by Dr. James D. Ward.<sup>10</sup> San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1931. 19.5cm x 13.5cm, 274pp.

The author's name is a pseudonym for H. S. Lewis.

22. *The Book of Jasher. One of the Sacred Books of the Bible Long Lost or Undiscovered.* Now offered in Photographic Reproduction of the Version by Alcuin [1829 edition]. San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1934. 27.5cm x 20cm, pp.[4], xi, [3], 63, [1], 9, [1].
- Lewis wrote only a preliminary explanation of the text.
23. *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians.* An Exact Reproduction of the Original but with the Text and Terms Literally Translated. Limited Edition. Chicago: The Aries Press, 1935. 45.5cm x 30.3cm, pp.xiv, 58.
- Preface and bibliography by Lewis. Reprinted in 1967 by Abdiel Lodge of Long Beach, CA. Currently published in San Jose.
24. *The Symbolic Prophecy of the Great Pyramid.* San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1936. 19.5cm x 13.3cm, 192pp.
- A weak contribution to pyramid lore.
25. *The Secret Doctrines of Jesus.* San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1937. 19.5cm x 13.3cm, 237pp.
- Written as a companion volume to number 16 above.
26. *Mental Poisoning.* San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1937. 19.5cm x 13.5cm, 104pp.
- Written as a self-help book. Lewis considered himself something of a psychologist.
27. *An Anthology of Latin Axioms and Epigrams in Latin and English* compiled, classified, lettered and dedicated to the lovers and students of Philosophy and Metaphysics by John W. Lang. Editio Princeps. Preface by Dr. H. Spencer Lewis. New York: the Author, Copyright ©1942. 14cm x 10cm, 118pp.
- Preface by Lewis was published posthumously.
28. *Essays of a Modern Mystic.* From the Writings of H. Spencer Lewis, Imperator (1915-1939). San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1962. 19.5cm x 13.5cm, pp.195, [1].
- Contains twenty-three articles reprinted from *The Rosicrucian Digest* and *The Rosicrucian Forum*. Many of Lewis' articles were reprinted and sold as booklets.
29. *Cosmic Mission Fulfilled* by Ralph M. Lewis. San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1966. 19.5cm x 13.5cm, pp.379, [1].
- Biography of Harvey S. Lewis. Ralph Lewis quoted extensively from his father's periodical articles and books, as well as from number two above.

30. *Rosicrucian Documents. AMORC.* by Ralph M. Lewis. San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1975. 26.8cm x 19.3cm, pp.39, [1].

First edition. Contains three photos and thirty three historical documents with descriptions in English, French, and Spanish. The second edition, 1978, contained changes in text: page 12, Obligation of German Grand Master Wilhelm Raub, dated 1973. Last page [40] has a synoptic history of AMORC.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Although Lewis preferred to call himself Imperator, meaning supreme leader, he laid claim to many other titles during his tenure. A few examples were: Generalissimo, Grand Master General, and Supreme Pontiff.

<sup>2</sup>R. Swinburne Clymer. *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America*. Two volumes (Quakertown, Pa.: The Rosicrucian Foundation, 1935), II: 869. Facsimile Reproduction No. 65. "Grand Imperator Grieved at arrest." *The [New York] Sun* (19 June 1918).

<sup>3</sup>Ralph Maxwell Lewis (1904-1987) was the son and successor of Harvey Spencer Lewis as Imperator (1939-1987). He had previously served as Supreme Secretary of AMORC.

<sup>4</sup>H. Spencer Lewis. *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers with Complete History of the Rosicrucian Order* (San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1975), 17. First published in 1929.

<sup>5</sup>H. Spencer Lewis. "Errors in Rosicrucian History," *The Rosicrucian Forum* 7/4 (February, 1937): 112-13.

<sup>6</sup>Cathie Calvert. "Rosicrucians name new leader." *San Jose Mercury News* (February 25, 1987), 4B. Ann W. O'Neill. "Rosicrucian infighting ousts leader." *San Jose Mercury News*. (April 18, 1990), 1. Since his case was not adjudicated, Mr. Stewart must be presumed innocent of the charge.

<sup>7</sup>Manley P. Hall, *The Riddle of the Rosicrucians* (Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society, 1941), 14-15.

<sup>8</sup>The names Brother Profundis, Sri Ramatherio, Frater R. T. XII, and Profundis XIII were a few of the pseudonyms used by Lewis. His initial use of pseudonyms stemmed from the lack of an editorial staff.

<sup>9</sup>H. Spencer Lewis. "Rev. George Robert Chambers, K.R.C., Grand Master, State Lodge, Iowa Jurisdiction." *The American Rosae Crucis*. 1-10 (October, 1916): 17. "Brother Chambers is today the Rector of St. Paul's Parish in Harlan. He is a Vice-Grand and State Lecturer for the I.O.O.F. in Iowa, Chaplain of a Masonic Lodge, Principal Sojourner of the Royal Arch Masons, Prelate of the Knights Templar. In addition he has been honored with the degrees of Ph.B., Honorary M.A., and D.C." [*Editor's note*: Ph.B. is correct, but what it refers to is unknown. D.C. refers to Doctor of Chiropractic.]

<sup>10</sup>H. Spencer Lewis. "A Message From India." By Frater James D. Ward, M. D., F. R. C. *The Rosicrucian Digest*. 8-2 (March 1930): 39. "Brother Ward is the only American living today who entered the mystic monasteries of the Arcane schools of India many years ago and pursued the complete course of sacred mystical sciences under the direction of the secret chiefs of the Rosicrucian and Hindu mystic brotherhoods.

# Book Reviews

**MADAME BLAVATSKY'S BABOON: A HISTORY OF THE MYSTICS, MEDIUMS, AND MISFITS WHO BROUGHT SPIRITUALISM TO AMERICA.** By Peter Washington. New York: Schocken Books, 1995. (Originally published in London: Martin Secker & Warburg Limited, 1993.) Pp. 470 with bibliographical references, index, and illustrations. ISBN 0-8052-1024-5 (pbk.), 0-8052-4125-6 (hardcover). \$27.50 (hardcover), \$14.00 (pbk.).

Over the past decade, possibly nothing has been more damaging to the vital interests of the Theosophical Society than the recurrent spate of biographies of its founders and their insightful examination that has tended to reveal frequently uncertain or misguided objectives. The quest for spiritual renewal that began in 1875 in New York under Helena Petrovna Blavatsky later turned to social reform and preoccupation with Indian nationalism under Annie Besant, and in turn has given way to flirtation with the subculture of the New Age and environmentalism to name but a few of the more current enthusiasms.

Once dynamic, charismatic leadership that was centered round a cult of often bizarre and mendacious personalities supported by wealthy dilettantes has been eroded by lesser lights of lower social standing who have assumed the role of public scolds. Thus beholden to and burdened by its own past it would appear that nowadays the Society seeks a level of respectability consonant with more sclerotic ideals. In

view of all that, it is most instructive to read Peter Washington's book attentively so as to consider some of the finer points that elsewhere have gone unnoticed or been purposely overlooked. A long-standing need for a social history of Theosophy unencumbered by previous propaganda with failed intent has been achieved, for it puts into better historical perspective the Western world's attachment to Eastern gurus and the results, particularly from the last half of the 19th century up to the present.

However odious comparisons may be, this reviewer cannot think of another book to have covered so much territory since Rom Landau's *God Is My Adventure* published by Knopf back in 1936. Indeed, it came as something of a jolt to be reminded again of Count Hermann Keyserling and his School of the Wisdom (*Schule der Weisheit*) at Darmstadt back in the 1920s, not to mention Gurdjieff, Rudolf Steiner and even Rodney Collin. And as for Krishnamurti, read Rom Landau's interview with him sixty years ago and then go on to what Mr. Washington has to add. There is a case to be made for Krishnamurti having become the Theosophical Society's first canonized martyr and ultimate prophet. Of late Theosophy has seized on Krishnamurti's statement made in the late 1920s that "truth is a pathless land." In case Krishnamurti never found it, he at least provided a useful dictum that can serve to keep Theosophists busy so long as the Society survives.

Peter Washington's conclusions in regard to his subjects are worthy of more consideration if only to provide more perspective on the contributions of the international occult community as it exists at present. For instance, Anglo-American geopolitical concerns have generated an interest in Buddhism since the end of World War II surely superseding the efforts of early pioneers. All that may serve yet as material for another welcome book.

In recounting the early history of the Theosophical Society, this book treads on ground so familiar that it is scarcely necessary to repeat the details. A few salient points that deserve attention nevertheless are, amongst others, Professor Washington's contention that Madame Blavatsky's abandonment of Egypt, "home of Tuitit Bey, Serapis and the Luxor Brotherhood" appeared to be "symptomatic of a general shift of interest in occult circles from Egypt to the Himalayas, and after 1878 we hear little from Blavatsky about Egyptian masters." (57) Was it because, as he suggests, that Egypt had been opened up to travelers at that time by Thomas Cook and Company, and so becoming more familiar to Europeans it was necessary to shift emphasis to a more remote locale?

Second, the author notes that the three basic goals of the Theosophical Society as defined in 1896 show an uncertainty about Theosophy's purpose and identity because these goals are less straightforward and mutually compatible than they seem. To him, the wording is ambiguous and to imply that objectivism and non-partisanship are inherent in them is nonsense since "(t)here is nothing objective about the study of occult phenomena by a society that has already decided that they exist and merely

remain to be located and explained." (69) More simply put, "the larger the goals and the vaguer the formulation, the wider the membership could be." (70) They may indeed have served as a useful cover for political prejudices of a well-meaning Victorian bourgeoisie.

Third, in the 19th century, "spirituality was one of the few areas of life outside literature open to Western women," and eventually through "[b]ypassing [more recognized] establishment [outposts], the New Age has proved a popular route to female empowerment, which may be one reason for its continuing growth." (2) As Peter Steinfelds noted in his *New York Times* article of May 1, 1996 in regard to the beginnings of spiritualism in New England, "[t]he movement drew on Ralph Waldo Emerson's Transcendentalism, on a fashionable interest in mesmerism, as hypnotism was then called, and on metaphysical beliefs in a divine mind or spirit linking earthly and higher realms." This was fertile ground to be thoroughly worked by feminists in the coming years. Now let's consider the American economic scene about the time of the Theosophical Society's founding in 1875 and shortly thereafter. As David Reynolds notes in his recent work, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography*, "in 1873 the new America was threatened with ruin. In September the banking house of the financier Jay Cooke collapsed, and the country was thrown into what would prove to be its longest and most severe downturn until the Great Depression of the 1930s." (511) These conditions were to last until the late 1870s, perhaps providing a reason for Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott to hastily seek a more stable climate. Regardless of Madame Blavatsky's in-

terest in founding an outpost in India, surprisingly little attention is ever paid to the fact that she spent very little time in Adyar, that becoming the preserve of Colonel Olcott and his continuing interest in Buddhism up until the time of his death.

Peter Washington rightly notes another important fact largely ignored by scholars today in assessing the cultural climate of the late 19th century, namely that the medium that attracted the most attention was the public lecture at working-class and scholarly institutes, and might have added that while that day has passed in the Western world, it is still very much in vogue in developing countries and more isolated parts of the world which have not yet quite experienced the encroachments of modern technology. That being the case, the stage was set, upon the death of Madame Blavatsky in 1891, for the grand entrance of Annie Besant and all those who were to follow in her trail who appeared “to provide a secure source of spiritual authority . . . that made disciples so very vulnerable to charismatic teachers.”(9) George Bernard Shaw thought Annie Besant “saw herself . . . in a series of glorious roles, each new one coming along opportunely just as she tired of the last.”(96) And sure enough, Annie Besant proved to be a shrewd manipulator of the membership of the Society to meet her own ends, so that eventually “barely united on the one hand by the vaguest social and spiritual ideals, Theosophy was split on the other by bitter personal rivalry disguised as occult research.”(104) One is tempted to add that such is still the case, though disagreements never seem to surface perhaps owing to a less impassioned and more somnolent modern membership. Virtually all of the Society’s lead-

ers felt the need to reinvent themselves as they perceived a change in events surrounding them.

The entrance of Krishnamurti upon the Theosophical scene was carefully staged by both Annie Besant and Charles Webster Leadbeater so as to provide a World Teacher, a Second Messiah who would come forth with oracular bromides enough to keep the faithful enthralled. That Krishnamurti survived the catastrophe was no small miracle in itself, and his ability to later detach himself from the drama and even denounce his persecutors speaks greatly for his innate strength of character. In his book, Mr. Washington has taken Krishnamurti’s story as the point of departure for other early figures of the Society such as Rudolf Steiner who repudiated his masters’ claims and began his own Anthroposophical Society in Germany in 1913. He notes, “In its early days (as now) the Society was very much the preserve of the elderly. For a brief, glorious decade from 1919 to 1928 it flourished among the world’s youth as a sort of junior League of Nations.”(270) Thus, while Steiner may have opted out, Krishnamurti served as a catalyst to encourage young people to follow in the wake of his Theosophical ideals. Strangely, now in the late 20th century, the reluctant spirit of Krishnamurti seems to have re-awakened in a call for Theosophists to reunite under his banner. Back in 1936 Rom Landau thought that “English excursions into the world of the spirit had their roots either in emotionalism or in the traditional reverence for ‘scientific truth’,” and he placed Theosophy squarely under the category of emotionalism. Krishnamurti, along with Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, made a point of claiming that it was only through individuals that any real change

could take place in the world, so faced with international political problems in the 1930s they mostly went into a period of retreat until the Second World War ended.

Midway through this book, a study is made of the philosophy of Gurdjieff, Ouspensky, Steiner and Rodney Collin, which will be dispensed in this review. Of far greater interest, and worthy of a study to be done in future, is the submissive air of the disciples who surrounded the lead figures and let themselves be constantly bullied into submission, nay humiliation, by their masters. For many, it was the path to suicide, madness and death. The common factor amongst all the so-called cult groups was—and is—a tendency toward masochism of the most pathological variety. These pages make colorful reading, and the intensity of the suffering of students, their apparent need of it, serves as a startling reminder of the indefinable limits of the human spirit and its lack of rationality. Did they pursue absurd notions as Peter Washington suggests? Aren't there absurd notions in almost all belief systems at some point? It isn't altogether certain that a consensus exists as to what may be humane and tolerable since again, as Rom Landau has noted, "there are few people with exacting minds and independent spiritual ambitions—and millions without either of these—" allowing for the straining of credulity to the point where people of this kind could be converted to almost any creed.

Having discussed so many different spiritual leaders in detail, it remains a surprise that Peter Washington's conclusions leave the reader only partly satisfied, at least for this reviewer. In the case of the Theosophical Society, it may be that

it has experienced, in his words, "only a modest revival despite the huge increase of interest in all things occult over the last forty years."(382) His belief that scandal is a necessary ingredient for success may not be one that is shared by those who voluntarily became members of the Society over the years.

More likely, one can agree that its members now "combine the study of esoteric wisdom with humanitarian enterprises in a thoroughly dignified and worthwhile way"(382) and that its ambitions are now closer to those of the "Women's Institute than to the United Nations or the Catholic Church." There is also no doubt that "[t]he row about evolution, which prompted Blavatsky's anti-Darwinian tirade in the first place, is therefore on the agenda again, but this time what is at stake is nothing less than the future of the planet."(387) True, ecological concerns that take on chiliastic overtones have also become a bore for the multitudes, and undoubtedly spicier topics would appeal to those who seek diversion philosophically, spiritually or otherwise. That is not to say that adventuring back into the phenomenal is required either. Rather, it points up the seeming fact that spiritual groups have just run out of steam for the time being, leaving the half-serious and the half-interested to fend for themselves. Now nobody is even willing to invent a new church or religious ritual because everybody is tired of everything. Maybe we're all waiting for the millennium, but with a yawn.

Oh, yes, about that tiresome baboon mentioned in the book's title. Darwin's *Origin of the Species* published in 1859 brought forth a number of monkey cartoons in the press and

has always figured prominently in the debate over evolution. Madame Blavatsky kept a stuffed baboon in the middle of her New York flat labeled Professor Fiske after a prominent Darwinian follower. Animal rights activists take note.

**Robert Boyd**

\* \* \*

**SITES OF MEMORY, SITES OF MOURNING: THE GREAT WAR IN EUROPEAN CULTURAL HISTORY.** By Jay Winter. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. 310. ISBN 0 521 49682 9. \$18.95 (Pbk).

This somber but fascinating study explores the impact of the First World War's immense harvest of death on wartime and postwar cultural life, both popular and elite. Winter treats of war memorials, relevant aspects of popular religion, and the presentation of the war dead in film, art, and literature. One chapter examines the era's upsurge of interest in Spiritualism, as represented by such apostles of mediumship as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Sir Oliver Lodge, author of the spiritualist classic *Raymond*.

Theosophy and Steiner's Anthroposophy make a brief but significant appearance in a chapter on "The Apocalyptic Imagination in Art"; here Winter is primarily interested in their influence on such artists as Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee. Their search for "the spiritual in art" is viewed as part of a desperate attempt to

understand events whose horror exceeded what could be handled by conventional nineteenth-century forms of "reason," through a compensating quest for meaning "beyond reason." Theosophy, like other forms of esotericism and occultism, could, after 1914, supply creative and undogmatic minds with the tools to fabricate "visions of war which mixed old and new in profound and enduring ways."

Though perhaps overdoing the "beyond reason" aspect, Winter treats Theosophy's intellectual structures with respect, and his handling of the movement is reasonably well informed. A glance at the notes shows that he has drawn from reliable and balanced sources, including the writings of the editor of this journal, James Santucci. Most readers of *Theosophical History* are undoubtedly aware that modern Theosophy achieved its greatest numbers, and probably its greatest general cultural influence, during the teens and twenties of this century, the period of the Great War and its immediate aftermath. Winter's book suggests the possibility of a study in much greater depth than he has attempted of interconnections. While it is interesting to look at Theosophy as he apparently does, as a resource for use by artistic types in times so *in extremis* that ordinary rationality fails, much is left out: Theosophy's association with Progressivism, social reform, and pacifism; Theosophy as millennialism (Krishnamurti), as social utopianism (Point Loma), as Bhagavad-Gita apocalyptic militarism (Besant and Arundale). Like Theosophically-related "modern" art, all had major prewar roots, yet the Theosophical forms they took in the wartime and postwar world can hardly be separated from the huge overshadowing fact indicated in these lines by

Poe which Barbara Tuchman used as the epigraph of her book, *The Proud Tower*, on the world of 1890-1914:

While from a proud tower in the town  
Death looks gigantically down.

Winter paints on a large canvas, and rather than fault him for what is not there it would be more seemly to praise him for sketching the outlines of a period and approach in which others can, and one hopes will, fill in more details on such matters as Theosophy. Despite a few scattered disagreements and regrets (*e.g.*, on German writers, I felt that Winter was much too easy on that cryptofascist romanticizer of war Ernst Jünger, while very sorry that he did not mention the gentle and truly spiritual Hermann Hesse, whose novels of the 1920s like *The Journey to the East* can hardly be understood apart from the immediate postwar context), I found *Sites of Memory*, *Sites of Mourning* always fresh, provocative, and engrossing. I am sure many Theosophical historians will appreciate this portrayal of the deep background behind one of modern Theosophy's most lively and important periods.

**Robert Ellwood**

University of Southern California  
Los Angeles, CA (U.S.A.) 90089-0355

\* \* \*